



WORLD EDUCATION

Peer tutors make a difference in Cambodia

At a school in Siem Reap, a province in Northern Cambodia, students crowd to the school library during break times. At the sound of the bell dismissing morning classes, the room fills with students who move quickly, pulling books from the shelves and settling into a corner to read.

Among them are Theory and Kosal, Kannitha and Chivy. But unlike their peers, these students are not here for independent reading. Theory and Kannitha are peer tutors trained to help struggling students learn to read.

A fifth-grader, Theory is twelve and has one older sister. In his free time he likes to play soccer and basketball, and to meet with Kosal, a nine-year-old student in the second grade who is a struggling reader.

Kosal is the youngest of a family of four boys, all living with their grandparents. His parents have migrated to Thailand to find work and send money home to support the family, a common story in Siem Reap, as it is elsewhere in Cambodia. When asked how Theory is helping him to learn to read, Kosal points to the Aan Khmer app, an mLearning app developed by World Education as part of its Total Reading Approach for Children (TRAC) Pilot Project, funded under the All Children Reading Initiative. The app is a colorful, engaging collection of games and interactive stories, all in Khmer and linked closely to the national reading curriculum. Peer tutors work with younger students to choose games and stories from the app and guide them through the work. When asked what his favorite game is, Kosal taps on a spaceship icon to open up a game with hovering UFOs that teaches sound blending skills.

Top of page:
Theory and Kosal take a break from a peer-tutoring session at the school library.

Bottom left:
Kannitha and Chivy play reading games with the Aan Khmer app.

Now in its expanded phase, World Education is in Theory and Kosal's school to implement the TRAC+ Project with funding from World Vision. Nearby the boys, fourteen-year-old Kannitha, a sixth grader, sits with ten-year-old Chivy, a second grader. Chivy is reading an interactive story as Kannitha guides and encourages her.

Kannitha lives with her aunt and four siblings; her parents have migrated to a place near the Thai border to work on a potato farm. She explains that her favorite hobby is reading books, and that her favorites are Khmer folk tales. Kannitha also likes to skateboard on a board donated by a Korean NGO. Chivy, her tutee, looks up from her story to explain that she enjoys soccer and reading, and that she is a good jumper. Her parents have also migrated to Thailand to work in construction, and she lives with her grandmother and four sisters.

Among both tutor-tutee pairs the positive influence of an older peer can readily be seen in the motivation of the younger, struggling student. Both Kosal and Chivy beam with pride when they get an answer right on the app, and their tutors are right beside them, encouraging them to continue.

For more information about World Education's work in Cambodia, please visit our website at cambodia.worlded.org

