

# Field Note on Field Study on the Project "Happy Children in Rural Areas"

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CEDAC started the 'Happy Children in Rural Areas' project in 2007. The initial funding came from an Australian volunteer who had been working with CEDAC. The project's goal is to ensure the children in the target villages get basic education and are taught about nutrition, health and sanitation.

A kindergarten was built in the first target village and CEDAC recently opened a second; it is hoped more will follow. We spoke to **Nget Mao**, 47 and a mother from the Tramkok district of Takeo province. Her village, Trapeung Srange is one of CEDAC's target villages and is waiting for the funds to build its first kindergarten. Mao explained what CEDAC is doing to help the village before this arrives.



The parents from the village and surrounding villages meet once a month as well as quarterly when their children also attend. These meetings provide an opportunity for CEDAC to introduce new ideas and for the parents to discuss them. Topics discussed include health, sanitation and nutrition for both the parents and children. The focus has fallen as such things as:

- boiling water to drink;
- eating non-fertilized vegetables and fruit;
- keeping the household clean;
- washing your hands with soap before eating; and
- Good clothes washing.

The parent group uses the meetings as an opportunity to plan saving money for their families and to talk about other CEDAC initiatives, such as multi-purpose farming. CEDAC staff and sometimes commune officials attend the quarterly meetings and lead question and answer session.

Rewards are given to those parents and children that show they are most knowledgeable about for example the food they should be eating.

Angtasom Commune Council, which is responsible for Mao's village supports the construction of the kindergarten; but has made it clear that they cannot provide any financial support and that the parents must pay the teacher's salary. All of the parents will struggle to do this, but feel it is important they do for their children. The target age of the kindergarten is 3 – 5 year olds; parents feel that attending this would better prepare the children for school. The school itself is several kilometres away and parents would feel more comfortable sending their children to this school, after they had attended the kindergarten.

This year the project will target 10 villages and provide them with basic education; approximately 800 children will be involved. CEDAC hopes to raise enough money to build two new kindergartens in 2008.