



IL NODO

cooperazione
internazionale onlus

Activity Report 2014

My Own Hands

“My Own Hands” aims to contribute to the economic independence of young people by providing them access to dignified work opportunities finding roots in their own culture.

We have created the Bottega dell’Arte, a Social Design School in Phnom Penh where students selected from very poor households coming from different provinces of Cambodia, learn to develop their creative potential and to master new techniques and manufacturing processes to create silver objects, but always respecting the traditional ways of craftsmanship.

Every year, we enroll 10 new students into our school. All are young adults from very poor

backgrounds with limited education.

At the Bottega, they follow a two-year course in silversmith where besides receiving a valuable new skill, they get a daily stipend to support their families. They learn silversmithing from a local teacher, follow workshops with Italian artists and designers, learn drawing to put their ideas on paper and bookkeeping to be able to run a business of their own, When they graduate, they are guaranteed employment with one of our partner organization.

**Location: Phnom Penh,
Cambodia**



Beneficiaries 2014: 20 students

2014 PROGRESS REPORT

The year started with the graduation ceremony of the 4 students who completed the two-years course in December 2013. In January we selected the students who would be studying at the Bottega dell'Arte in 2014 and on February 17th a new course was opened for 10 new students, 9 boys and 1 girl, aged 16 to 24 years old. This year we have also provided advanced training to the 5 students that are continuing the course from last year on jewelry design.

During month of April, Dorothée Etienne, a French designer, held a

workshop of creative design for all students. At the beginning of her workshop she brought the students around the city and invited them to search for decorative motives that inspired them in a typical street of Phnom Penh and then asked them to turn those designs into jewelry. Before working with silver, the students went through an intermediate prototype stage with cardboard, modeling clay and wire. In September we organized a field trip to Royal Palace and National Museum for all students, teacher and staff to learn about the beauty of Cambodian traditional art and

handicraft and get inspiration from it. For next year, it was decided to align the school calendar with that of public schools starting in early October, so the selection of new students took place in September. We selected 9 new students, 8 boys and one girl, aged between 16 and 26. On November 10th the new course was inaugurated. At the end of 2014, attending the Bottega dell'Arte there were 9 students attending 1st year and 8 students attending 2nd year.

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In Dorothée's own words

"In Cambodia we can find amazing handicrafts skills, but an unfortunate lack of creativity. Indeed, Khmer education system is based on learning through copying and does not promote the development of the imagination. Many products are inspired by existing products and copying is a customary fact. I have tried to address the problem of developing the imagination of the artisans by teaching them how

to look for new ideas and inspiration around the streets of Phnom Penh. Most artisans have neither the time nor the habit of observing their surroundings for ideas. Yet the most mundane city walks can be a breeding ground for them. I accompanied the students and artisans for a walk around a very popular neighborhood encouraging them to observe an amount of interesting details on the facades, the gates, the sidewalks, etc.



After drawing these elements, I taught them how to transform them into jewelry by using a series of different techniques. First I asked them to make a quick prototype (with cardboard, modeling clay or wire) and then more sophisticated ones with copper and brass, before the working at their final piece of jewelry in silver."



PROJECT

Schooling for Children

The objective of this project is to contribute to the improvement of the living conditions of the Cambodian children by providing them access to formal education. Many factors hinder access of children to education, limited family income available for the expenses needed to send their children to school being the most important one. Public school is not entirely free in Cambodia and for a poor family with many children registration fees, school material and uniform may make school inaccessible. Given their low wages teachers are used to ask a small fee to accept children in class.

The project is based on actions that will help tackle the problem

concerning the lack of income of the families for children expenses related to health, food, and schooling in order to help increase the first time enrollment and continuation of children in the school system and prevent their abandonment.

All children attending school receive a monthly delivery of food items and hygiene products. Young students become money earners in the family.

**Location: Kompong Chhnang
& Kompong Speu, Cambodia**

Beneficiaries 2014: 76 children



2014 PROGRESS REPORT

During 2014, Il Nodo supported 70 school-aged children in the remote and poor villages of Tang Pon, Chrok Kov and Soksenchey in Kompong Chhnang Province and 6 children living in Kompong Speu Government orphanage. Monthly, food items were delivered to all the families. This includes 20 kg of rice, oil, condensed milk, dried fish and other foodstuffs, as well as basic personal hygiene products such as soap, shampoo and toothpaste. The family in this way sees school attendance of children as a paid activity and can afford to give up the children's work. At the beginning of the school year children have been equipped with everything they need to attend: school uniform, pens and pencils, books, notebooks and a pair of shoes. Il Nodo throughout the school year kept in touch with the teachers and checked attendance and academic performance. Moreover Il Nodo takes under its protection the whole family and tries to meet the needs of a sick relative, a roof to be refurbished, a mosquito net, assistance securing a job or a filter of drinking water.



PROJECT

Clean Water for All

According to the State of the World's Children 2005, only 34% of the Cambodian population has access to drinking water. In a country where 20% of the population is urban and 80% rural, aqueducts reach 60% of the population in the cities and only 20% in the rural areas. Moreover, owing to structural deficiencies, water plants and their distribution networks do not deliver safe water.

Everyone deserves access to proper health, but in Cambodia, 14% of children die before reaching the age of five and 9.7% before reaching 12 months. Many of these deaths could be prevented if people had access to drinking water. The use of unsafe water is a major cause of illness and

poverty.

Most of the population suffers from constant diarrhea, typhoid and other diseases due to consumption of unsafe water. Such diseases prevent children from attending school regularly and cause precarious work conditions for adults. Childbirth deaths and neonatal mortality are also often attributable to the lack of safe water.

Access to safe drinking water is therefore of fundamental importance: it improves the general health situation and has effects on many aspects of people's welfare: their health, their productivity and their possible income, safer births, lower infant mortality rate, longer

life expectancy and increased school attendance, especially for girls whose duty is to collect and carry water.

The objective of the project "Clean Water for All" is to decrease the morbidity rates of children living in Cambodia by improving access to potable water and providing training on healthy habits to their families.

The strategy of intervention is based on the extended use of water filters as an effective and economic method of making water drinkable. Filters are extremely easy to use and require very simple maintenance centered on a proper cleaning frequency. All the families that are benefited by the project will receive one water filter and will be trained on how to use and keep it fit.

A water filter can only be a temporary solution for the problem unless a change of habits is also achieved. The importance of the use of clean water on a daily basis must be stressed to the point that it becomes a priority. All beneficiary families receive extensive training on the importance of using clean water and on the different ways to prevent the illnesses that are caused by the use of unsafe water.

**Location: Kompong Cham
& Kompong Chhnang, Cambodia**

Beneficiaries 2014: 250 families

2014 PROGRESS REPORT

During 2014, Il Nodo provided water filters to 50 new families in Soksenchey village, Kompong Chhnang province. The first week of February, Il Nodo held the training course on clean water and good hygiene habits to both adults and children of 50 new families. The workshop addressed the following topics:

- Water: the importance of safe drinking; how to use clean water for all household chores; how to make water fit for consumption.
- Water Filters: how to use the water filter and keep it as an efficient tool.
- Nutrition: how to treat and handle foods and ingredients to prepare healthy meals; hygienic norms to be met in purchasing and preparing the food; how to grow a vegetable garden for healthier eating.
- Health: personal hygiene; how to diagnose the most common illnesses; how to treat minor injuries; when to go to the traditional doctor and when it is advisable to turn to a health center.
- The first years of life: best hygiene

practices for mothers, infants and children; the importance of breastfeeding and risks of traditional local practices connected with births.

- Lightning: lightning safety and recovery information.

To reach the child population, more prone to changes, Marilia Albanese, a professor in Asian studies at the university of Milan and well published author, has written a tale teaching the use of the filter through the popular myths of the Cambodian tradition, *The Veil of the Fish Queen*, whose main characters are gods and spirits from the local popular Khmer culture. Maurizio Dotti, a famous Italian cartoonist, illustrated it. The book was distributed to all school age children of the 50 families, the story was read with them and at the end the children were asked to play the story so that they could more easily identify with the problems of the characters.

Prior to distribution of filters, all children under 14 years old of the beneficiating families undergo medical check-ups to determine their state of health and inform families of the problems and

potential risks.

Beneficiating families are followed for two years after the filters' distribution, they are visited once a month to review what they have learned, check the proper use of the filter and health of the family. After two years of supervision, only when beneficiary families prove to have acquired the habit of using the filters properly, they are given a new filter and we leave them to continue independently. Il Nodo's assistance is still there, but only upon request. During 2014 IL NODO staff also conducted regular monthly visits to the 200 families (150 in K.Chhnang province & 50 in K. Cham province) who had done the water filter training in the past, providing our continuous support.



Children in Prison

In Cambodian detention centers children, mothers and pregnant women are systematically denied access to care, adequate nutrition, education and to basic human rights.

According to a recent law (December 2011), all prisoners are entitled to 2800 Riel (about 50 cents) per day for food and health needs, children only to 50% of this figure. Enrollment of children in the list of claimants is so complex that most prison directors do not bother applying for funds. In all detention centers, mothers share their scarce meals with their children. New mothers who have given birth in prison, malnourished and with no milk, feed infants with water left

from cooked rice. In most detention centers schooling and health care are not available and if so are for payment only. The meager wages of all the public administration staff endorse rampant corruption at high and low levels. National law and international conventions on human rights are systematically violated.

Lack of healthy food, clean water, medicine and education seriously endanger health and development of the children. In all prisons cells live daily up to 15 people, men, women and children, cramped in spaces no bigger than a normal room, and very often without any protection from weather conditions and floods during the monsoon

season. Mothers who must take care of their children without any kind of assistance, pregnant women to whom medical professionals do not offer any sort of attention and children, prisoners without guilt and without choice, all live in such unhealthy and risky conditions.

The project aims to promote children and women's rights through the improvement of their living conditions inside Cambodian prisons.

Our project reaches twelve prisons in the country. Mothers and children receive every month a delivery of rice, dried fish, oil, soy sauce, milk, powdered milk for infants (0-24 months), other food products, personal hygiene

Beneficiaries 2014: 48 children, 40 mothers, and 36 pregnant women

products and detergents for clothing and environments. On request we also deliver: medicines, children's clothing, baby bottles, hammocks, mats, mattresses and bed sheets for children who would otherwise have to sleep on the dirty floor.

Il Nodo has also been able to negotiate with the Ministry to give birth in hospital for pregnant women, post-natal medical care for babies and periodic medical examination and implementation of the national vaccination program for children.

In the four prisons with the largest number of children, Il Nodo has built cells with toilets only for mothers and children, and play-study rooms with toys where small prisoners may spend the day outside the cell attended by a teacher.

Locations: Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Pursat, Kampot, Kompong Cham, Kompong Chhnang, Kompong Som, Kompong Thom, Koh Kong, Pailin and Siem Reap, Cambodia

2014 PROGRESS REPORT

During 2014, Il Nodo supported 48 children (25 boys and 23 girls) and their mothers and 36 pregnant women, providing food for children, medicines, personal hygiene items, medical and psychological care to mothers and children.

Over the past few years the number of children behind bars has considerably decrease, as Il Nodo staff helped find alternative solutions for them. During 2014, we helped to relocate 5 children: 4 children are now living outside with their extended families and one has been welcomed at the center of the sisters of Fountain of Life in Sihanoukville.

In Pailin prison the number of children has been considerably reduced during 2013 and 2014: the last 4 children were moved to live outside the prison with their relatives. In three other prisons Il Nodo is running a day care center, a healthy and stimulating environment where children can spend day time out of the cell with a playroom assistant taking care of them.

Conditions of the children who are still living in prisons have drastically changed since Il Nodo

started the project. They are healthy, well fed and lively as all children should be. Mothers and children live in a healthier environment, sleeping in a bed and not on the dirty floor, drink clean water, eat nutritious foods and, when necessary, have access to health care and medicines. In December we funded in Battambang prison the flooring for the building housing mothers with children and pregnant women.



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