

YOUR QUESTIONS AND ACODO ANSWERS

1) Presentation

Can you tell me about your name and responsibility in ACODO?

Hello, I am Mr. Hengchhea Chheav, a native Cambodian. I have always taken a great interest in helping vulnerable individuals. I am the Founder & President of ACODO. I am ultimately responsible for the welfare and education of all the children at the orphanage.

For how many years have you been working for ACODO?

As the Founder I have been working at ACODO since the NGO was established at the start of 2008. I started ACODO after working for 10 years in local and international organizations, including 5 years as a Director of an English Language School.

2) About ACODO

What are the missions of ACODO?

The Mission Statement of ACODO is to combat the dilemmas of illiteracy and poverty among the orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), children with HIV/AIDS, children abusing drugs, children undertaking illegal activities, children suffering sexual harassment and exploitation, child labourers and disabled children.

ACODO aims to improve the livelihoods of impoverished families by undertaking four activities: an orphanage, a Life Skills Programme, a Vocational Skills Programme and an Indigent Family Support Programme. These

- promote self sufficiency
- empower self-development
- build self-confidence
- reduce poverty
- encourage long term economic independence among Cambodians poorest and most vulnerable groups.

ACODO strives to release suffering children from a life of danger, deprivation and exploitation by providing them with a safe and loving home. We want to create an environment where they can gain social values, learn and prepare themselves for a responsible adult life.

Every life has equal value and every child has the right to an enjoyable childhood. Those who have nothing and no one must be treated with respect.

ACODO believes that education is the bedrock for sustainable change, it is a basic right that no person should be denied. Education fosters self confidence, self sufficiency and tolerance towards others. ACODO teaches life and vocational skills to the most underprivileged children in The Kingdom of Cambodia.

For how many years does ACODO exist?

ACODO was established on the 1st of January 2008 and became a registered charity with The Royal Cambodian Government on the 14th July 2008. For three years now! Actually, ACODO started operating on the 1st of January 2008 in Siem Reap.

For over three years ACODO has also been operating an orphanage in Siem Reap since providing nutritious food, shelter, high quality education and a loving home to some of Cambodia's most vulnerable children.

We are now in the process of expanding so that we can help many destitute children who live in the rural communities in Siem Reap Province, which the World Bank estimates is one of the poorest parts of SE Asia and the wider world.

Who created ACODO? How did it start?

I founded ACODO at the start of 2008. However, I was working on the project throughout 2007 in order to raise the initial funding and arrange all the paperwork so that we were able to open in 2008 and start giving many vulnerable people a life changing opportunity.

I resigned from my teaching job at Siem Reap University. My wife and I sold virtually all of our personal assets, our car, our house etc, in order to provide the initial finance for the charity.

In 1967 I was born into a rural community in Battam Bang Province, Cambodia. My family was extremely poor. I had nine siblings. A childhood dominated by war and extreme poverty had a profound effect on my future. It inspired me to create ACODO so that I can work towards giving some of the most destitute members of society, such as orphans and other vulnerable children, the same opportunities that I eventually benefited from. I want to provide them with a loving home so that they can flourish into their adulthood.

I am forever grateful to the other co-founders, all the staff, volunteers and supporters from the world. Without their invaluable help ACODO would not be able to transform the lives of so many orphans and vulnerable children.

The reason why you decided to create ACODO?

I founded ACODO as I believed that there were many impoverished children in The Kingdom of Cambodia that were in desperate need of help. I was aware that there were many rural communities in Siem Reap Province that did not have enough basic food stuffs or access to schools that could provide a high quality education. I, Hengchhea Chheav knew that The Royal Cambodian Government would like to be able to support these communities but did not have the financial resources to do so.

3) About the children

How many children are you working with?

Today ACODO operates an orphanage which has capacity for 65 children. The orphanage really is a place of hope, aspiration and kindness. The 12 ACODO Community Training Centers have a capacity to teach and support a further 1,500 vulnerable children directly and 9,905 number of family members indirectly.

At the both the orphanage and the community training centers the ACODO kids learn to become tomorrow's adults. They learn to be independent, skilful and able to contribute towards society. They live together as a family and learn to support one another.

ACODO employs 25 members of staff and 55 Cambodian volunteers. We are working very hard every day all day. In addition, volunteer teachers from around the world are recruited to teach the English language classes.

ACODO only employs Khmer citizens. In order to minimize the wage bill ACODO does not employ any foreign nationals.

How old are they?

At the ACODO orphanage the children vary from 3-19 years of age. At the ACODO Community Training Centers the age of the children varies from 6 to 23.

Why are they here?

The ACODO orphanage accepts orphans, children from extremely poor single parent families and disabled children. Many have experienced powerlessness in the ultimate form. Their lives have been governed by fear. Fear of violence, fear of not having enough food, fear of having no opportunity to improve their lives.

Many are former homeless street children who were vulnerable to exploitation from others. ACODO saved them from becoming beggars, prostitutes or criminals. They no longer have to scavenge in the local garbage bin for their next meal.

Prior to accepting the children the ACODO staff visit their home or community to assess their individual needs and situation. The staffs also visit local communities to raise awareness about ACODO.

Many of the children have progressed from street kids with no long term goals to children with challenging career desires. Their ambitions vary from being a tour guide, an engineer, a language teacher, an art teacher or a doctor. The children have a real thirst for knowledge and are working very hard to achieve their aspirations.

4) About the financial resource

Where does the financial resource come?

Current Financial Situation,

Since inception all of ACODO's infrastructure and annual running costs have been solely financed by donations from compassionate individuals living around the world.

ACODO has operated without any financial or practical help from governments and national or international aid organizations. ACODO has not received any corporate sponsorship.

The majority of ACODO's income is spent directly on the welfare of the children. Only 9.82 % of the total income is spent on the administration of the charity.

How much money are you spending on ACODO projects every month?

- The operating costs for the ACODO Headquarters are **\$22,339** per month.
- The operating costs for the ACODO orphanage are **\$21,709** per month.
- The operating costs for the ACODO HIV/AIDs OVC shelter are **\$10,182** per month.
- The operating costs for the 12 ACODO Community Training Centers are **\$40,327** per month.

In September 2010 we opened an ACODO farm so that we could work towards operating on a self-sufficient basis and not reliant on irregular donations. Currently, the farm costs around **\$12,747** per month to run.

So the financial requirements of the ACODO projects to cover its activities each month is **\$107,304 USD** (One hundred and seven thousand, three hundred and four USD) and **\$1,287,648 USD** (One million, two hundred eighty seven thousand, six hundred and forty eight USD), in total for a year to operate its main activities within 12 communities and the **11,405** vulnerable children being supported by ACODO programmes.

Could you tell me about the sustainability of a financial resource in the future?

Hopefully, the ACODO farm will be our principle source of income in the future.

Once completed, the farm will be able to support ACODO in two ways. Firstly, we will be able to grow all our own food in order to support the children at both the ACODO Orphanage and the ACODO Community Training Centers. Secondly, we will be able to sell the extra food at local markets which will provide another source of urgently needed revenue.

However, in order to get the farm fully operational we need to buy some essential equipment. We need to invest in order to become self-sufficient in the future. This is a crucial point in our development.

Unlike other charities and NGOs throughout the world we do not want to keep asking for further donations. We really want to be self sufficient.

By the start of February, we will require a tractor to plough the rice fields [which costs \$25,000], and a backhoe [which costs \$32,253], to build an access road, circle dyke and irrigation channels, protection against flooding, and fish ponds. The tractor and backhoe will also be used as part of our Indigent Family Support Programme (IFSP), targeting remote families and the extended families of children in the ACODO orphanage and communities by offering practical help, for example building fish ponds or irrigation channels on their land.

5) About Cambodia

You think that there are enough NGOs/associations for the children, don't you?

Well, I would say there are enough the NGOs and Associations for Cambodian children. Many operate well without corruption; however, some do not exist to support the many vulnerable children in Cambodia.

There is no corruption at ACODO. We are fully audited by the regional and national Governments. The United Nations Children's Fund ranked ACODO as the best orphanage within Siem Reap Province, best for welfare of our children and best for financial prudence. We operate in an open and transparent format.

What are the main difficulties that you meet in your work?

Hmm, the main difficulties for operating the ACODO projects that I faced so far:

- there's no sponsorships or donors
- no land to build our own orphanage
- not enough financial support
- and not enough volunteers

Thank you very much indeed for listening to our story.

Please help to make the dream of our destitute children a reality by sponsoring the ACODO farm.