



KHM-CHO-SOM-P02 Cambodia  
Reporting Period: January – June 2018

## School on the Mat - Cambodia

**Budget:** 2018 - Year 2 (of 3) \$42,190 – fully funded.

**Update:**

This is the 2018 half-year report for Year 2 of a three-year project which supports five teachers to run ten informal schools in five villages along the Cambodian/Thai border. There are morning and an afternoon schools in each village from Monday – Friday teaching reading and writing in Khmer, basic maths, together with creative activities such as arts and crafts, drama and music. The informal school provides a means of helping children into the formal school system and enables an avenue to teach about trafficking. A major barrier to children not attending school is parents crossing the border with their parents or because they need to look after siblings whilst their parents cross the border.



There are currently 196 students enrolled in School on the Mat. 94 are in first grade, 71 are in second grade and 31 are in grade three. In addition to the subjects mentioned above, they are learning about health and hygiene at least twice a month and they are encouraged to share this information with their friends and family.

The parents and community-at-large are more aware of the dangers of trafficking as a result of School on the Mat and they also receive education on domestic violence, substance abuse, child labour and children's rights through the camps run by our partners which 139 attended. An International Child Right's Day involved 220 children. It is a holistic approach to education, catering for the whole family. Our partners have increased home visits due to political unrest during election time and to allow for the wet season where it is often difficult for parents to travel around. Our partners also see home visits as an opportunity to emphasise the importance of education. Ongoing training of teachers is also a priority with regular sessions held for teachers.

Our partners are trying to work together with local authorities and local government schools to engage in dialogue around sustainability. They are also working in villages to support livelihood projects so that parents are able to contribute to their child's education – part of the holistic approach.

*Moon's story: "I am 9 years old and am in grade 2. My mother passed away and my dad would go to Thailand often leaving me and my two siblings for many days. Sometimes we have to go to the jungle or ponds to find food. I didn't go to school because of all this. But now I go to School on the Mat and I am very happy. I learn Khmer, maths and life skills. I never want to miss a class. I want to be a teacher so that I can help other kids like me."*

Issues affecting the program are the rainy season, transient families due to lack of work, poverty, political instability – things that do not affect us so much in Australia! Many parents cross the border into Thailand to look for work. Some take their children with them and others leave their children at home with grandparents or in the care of the eldest child. The risks of child trafficking are high and children are not educated, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Education of children is one of the cornerstones that Entrust projects support. It is life-changing for the child, the family and the community as a whole. **Thank you for sharing your resources to transform communities.**