

## ***Part 1 Interview with Mr. Viboth, head of school***

### ***KIDS OF KAKOT/FRIENDS OF KAKOT***

It's not easy being a kid in Kakot. In general, these youngsters from the North-Eastern Cambodian village have parents who are supportive of them going to school but have an 'in-born' philosophy against 'normal' education. For a start, the children live 4-5 kilometres away from the school and have no means of daily transportation. In addition, they have duties such as looking after sisters and brothers as well as helping their parents to farm what little land the family possesses. Being kids they also have their own – however small – expectations: use of a computer or mobile phone, or even a T-shirt that looks cool. The problem is - in their minds - the way to get anything like that is not by education but by doing the same work as their parents, regardless of the poor wages paid. Accordingly, these kids need someone from outside the family unit to teach them that the future can be different. Lev Viboth, pictured below, is such a man. From a similar background, he chose the path of education to gain professional status but decided against financial or personal gain as his reward. Instead, he decided his future was to go back as a teacher.

***Part one of this interview tells about the problems he faces. This is his story.***



**Mr. Viboth, can you describe what kind of people live in Kakot: can they read/write, are they interested in school, able/eager to learn new things?**

“Around 50-60 per cent of the villagers can basically read and write but finished grades between 4-5 and 6 to go back into the fields. As many as 90 per cent have an interest in sending their children to school but family economics make it difficult: the house is far away from school: the family need the children to help them work on the field or look after the animals - or their brothers and sisters - while their parents are working in the field.

“Lack of basic school materials is also a problem when kids naturally compare themselves with others on such as: clothing, a book, a pen, a bag, or the money to buy a snack at lunchtime. After being dropped off at school they see their older brother/sister go to work and earn money, so the idea of education is of less attraction in comparison. Study can take up to 12 years and provides no guarantees of making money. The parents know this and want to change from the way they themselves were educated but do not have resources – or the necessary belief – to support their children from primary school to the next level.

Their question: the money for study at primary school is already difficult, how it can continue to the next level?



“Because of such reasons the relationship between the school and parents is weak. When the school wants to meet the parent to talk about their child we often can’t contact them; either because they are back home only in the night time or they stay away in their accommodation in the field.

### **And if they do give up on school?**

“It’s affects not only the student themselves but the society as a whole because their choices are so limited:

- Migration: the children follow the family example and work on the field or in the forest to cut the wood to sell, which is very dangerous work (possibilities of disease or accidents). Sometimes they are cheated by a broker into working abroad in such as Thailand or Malaysia.
- Drug/ gambling/ alcohol: mostly the work is not every week so there is spare time for abusive habits, usually encouraged by loneliness.

- Early marriage (18-20 year olds): they start to seek some form of stability even though they are not yet ready to start their own family unit.

“The main criteria must be to educate not just the individual but the whole family and help them to understand the importance of education to make things better for themselves and the community. When they understand - and see the benefits they could get - they will be more willing to join in with us and learn how to build a better future together.

“But it will take more than effort or education. No matter how hard we work we need external input in terms of knowledge, experience and funding. The support from ‘Friends of Kakot’ represents a genuine opportunity to build for a better future.”

***part two: how support from such as Friends of Kakot, can help him to make a real difference.***