



Past - Present - Future

Aogaah Foundation, Inc (AFI) - American Corporation
Aogaah Foundation Cambodia (AFC) - Cambodian NGO
www.KidsNeedEducation.org



Written in first person by Richard C. Meyer, AFI Founder (Google Search: Teacher+Rick+Aogaah)

The primary purpose of this document is to record the evolution of the two organizations and log the core structure of each. The hope is that in so doing, the future longevity of the organizations and of the School they serve is assured.

First: There is a very important distinction that needs to be emphasized - - AFI and AFC are two autonomous organizations. AFI is an American Corporation (Arizona) and AFC is a Cambodian NGO.

The stated purpose of AFI is to raise funds to provide educational opportunities for impoverished children. AFI is an all volunteer organization - - no salaries, no reimbursements and no benefits are paid. AFI's annual budget is approximately 500 USD (PO Box, web site, bank fees). The Foundation pays no rent, no utilities, no secretary, no janitor or gardener.

Visit: http://www.kidsneededucation.org/uploads/5/8/9/6/58968613/whos-who-in-af_2021.0415.pdf for a list of AFI all volunteer staff.

The stated purpose of AFC is to manage a free school for impoverished children and teach the School's classes. The AFC school's managers and teachers are all Khmer and are paid a salary.

Visit: http://www.kidsneededucation.org/uploads/5/8/9/6/58968613/2022.04_whos-who_v15-v16-school.pdf for a list of AFC School staff.

What sparked the creation of AFI and AFC?

I vacationed outside of North America for the first time in August of 2003. During that adventure I spent 5 days in Cambodia and felt an attraction. In December of 2003 I went back to Phnom Penh for 30 days.

After a week, I had visited all of the tourist attractions within 50 miles of Phnom Penh and was looking for other things to fill my daytime hours. I happened upon an organization, Cambodian Volunteers for Community Development (CVCD) and indicated that I would like to volunteer to tutor students in math (my vocation).

CVCD responded that their schools only taught English (no math), but they would be happy if I would spend some time at one of their schools and help the Khmer teacher correctly pronounce English words. I said, "I can do that."

That afternoon, I climbed on the back of a moto (motor bike taxi) and was taken to Railway B Community in the Toul Kork District of Phnom Penh. The Village had a Community School which conducted three classes of English each afternoon (M-F) in the home of the Village Chief, Thonak Phanna. There were a total of approximately 50 students. Classes were taught by Thonak's son in law, Chamroeun Kang, a former Buddhist monk.

The position of Community Chief is an elected office. Adult residents of each community elect their own Chief.



Thonak Phanna



2003
Railway B Community School
English class taught by Chamroeun Kang.
Class conducted in the home of Village Chief: Thonak Phanna.
Thonak lived here with her four daughters (the oldest daughter was married to Chamroeun) and her one son.

Now is as good a time as ever to list Thonak's children. Thonak has four daughters, ordered by age: NaRylen Pok (Chamroeun's wife), NaRyla Pok, NaRylie Pok and NaRina Pok. Thonak also has one son, Jon NaRone Pok.

Railway B Community was a squatter village of approximately 300 families. The villagers had used scraps of discarded materials to build shacks on the land but they did not own the property. The families had lived there for more than 30 years.

In one lesson, Chamroeun was teaching the class the English word 'book' and the English word 'box'. I could not discern a difference between Chamroeun's pronunciations of the two English words.

Soon, Chamroeun turned the classes over to me for the duration of my visit. The students started calling me *Teacher Rick*. The Khmer, like the English, do not pronounce the letter 'R'. So they actually called me *Teacha Ick*. I found this very endearing.

I quickly found out, the school's students were thieves - - they stole my heart.

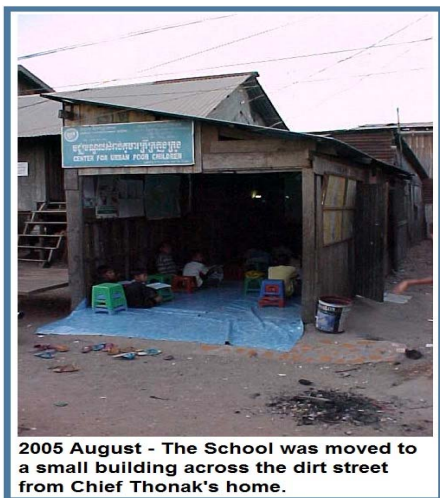
Just before I left Cambodia (2003 December), I purchased a book for each student. When I distributed the books to the students, the look on their faces was startling. They clutched their book to their chest and the look on their face is one I would have expected had I given them each a bicycle.

In Cambodia (2003), parents must pay a fee of approximately \$0.35 a day (USD), directly to the teacher in order to send their children to Government School (Public School). In 2003, the average salary for a Phnom Penh worker was \$2 a day. Khmer have large families - - it is Cambodia's social security system. Children provide for their parents in their parents' old age. Due to the low wages, most families can not afford to send their children to School.

I returned to the Phnom Penh for two, 30 day visits in 2004 - - August and December. When I returned in December of 2004, I found that the School had just closed. CVCD and Thonak had a disagreement. CVCD wanted the school to be available only to students who were not attending Government School, but Thonak wanted the Railway B Community School open to all Village children who wanted to attend. Thonak would not budge and so CVCD discontinued funding.

Upon my 2004 December arrival in Phnom Penh, and finding the School closed, I immediately reached into my pocket and re-opened the School. When I arrived back in Arizona (USA) in January 2005, I hired an attorney and started the process of incorporating Aogaah Foundation (I had looked in my Khmer/English dictionary and found the Khmer word for 'opportunity' is Aogaah). Aogaah Foundation Incorporated (AFI) became a non-profit USA Corporation in December of 2005. AFI's founding Board of Directors consisted of these five individuals: Richard C. Meyer, Jenny M. Griffin, Kerry P. Vesper, Diana Clark and Melody Payne.

I visited Phnom Penh for two 30 day visits in 2005 - - again August and December. In August, I rented a small building across the dirt street from Thonak's home and we moved the School. In 2006, Toul Kork's office of the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport donated desks to the School and the name of the School changed from *Center for Urban Poor Children* to *Railway B Community School*.



2005 August - The School was moved to a small building across the dirt street from Chief Thonak's home.



2006 The name of the School changed and student desks were donated. In the background of this picture, Chamroeun and Teacher Rick are hanging the white board.

When the donated desks were placed into the School, the aisle down the center of the classroom was at best six inches wide. Chamroeun said, "For \$20 I can get the building made wider." I handed him a \$20 bill. When I arrived at the School the next afternoon, one wall of the building had been moved. The aisle down the center of the classroom was now 24 inches. The roof and walls were all rebuilt, secure and rain proof. In one day, a group of Railway B residents had re-constructed the building. The residents of Railway B Community considered this their school and they were proud to live in a community that had its own school.

In 2006, I retired after being employed 43 years in the education sector. My children were married adults. My plan was to move to Cambodia but it took a year to get my life in order so I could be away from Arizona for 11 months out of each year.

For the record, on January 29 of 2007, AFI was certified a 501(c)3 non-profit by America's Internal Revenue Service.

In June of 2007, I returned to Phnom Penh - - not only had the School disappeared - - Railway B Community had disappeared. As I mentioned earlier, the village was a squatter community. An offer for the land had been made to the government of Phnom Penh, they accepted and sent in bull dozers. Actually, I was not totally caught off guard - - I had opened email accounts for Chamroeun, Thonak and NaRyla. We had kept in touch.

Upon my arrival, my Cambodian family met me at the airport. It was a bit horrifying seeing vacant land where Railway B Community once sat.

Our students had been scattered far and wide. The Community had not transplanted as a group. Thonak and family had rented a home in a neighboring community to the south of where Railway B Community had been located.

This time I was not visiting - - I was looking for a permanent apartment. Thonak and family wanted to know my plans. Thonak knew the chief of Village 15 and the chief of Village 16. These two villages were immediately west of where Railway B Community had been located. She had already checked with them - - YES, THEY WANTED A SCHOOL IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

Thonak located a building in Village 15 and we opened The New Village 15 - Village 16 School in September of 2007. The paperwork was completed and the new school was certificated.

AFC also opened a Teacher Training Center in the same building as the School. AFC, to this day, trains its own teachers. The Teacher Training Center is also certified.

**Village 15 - Village 16 School - Toul Kork District - Phnom Penh
Aogaah Foundation Cambodia Organization**


**The Marcy Vayden Teacher Training Center
Aogaah Foundation Cambodia Organization**

- Name of classroom: Villages 15 and 16 School.
 - Category of building: Leased premise
 - Venue: #38, Street Techno, Sangkat Teok Laak I, Khan Toul Kork, Phnom Penh
 - 02 rooms, 21 classes one hour 6 days a week available for 440 students.


With regard to the above subject, I would like to inform Chief of office of Education, Youth and Sport, Toul Kork District that **Aogaah Foundation Cambodia**, whose purpose is to provide educational opportunities for children to attend school, will help with the budget to operate sixteen Khmer classes and 5 English classes in Village 15 for both Village 15 and Village 16 Children. **Aogaah Foundation Cambodia** plans to extend this program in other communities in Toul Kork district. Therefore please Chief of office of Education, Youth and Sport, Toul Kork district kindly to facilitate with you high consideration.


Your sincerely,

Phnom Penh, Date: 12.1.2007


 Director
 KANG CHAMROEUN

Seen and submitter to
 Chief of Sangkat Teok Laak I,
 Phnom Penh, Date: 12.1.2007


 MEN KIMGORN


 PECH SOKHOEUN

- Name of classroom: Marcy Vayden Education Center
 - Category of building: Leased premise
 - Venue: #38, Street Techno, Sangkat Teok Laak I, Khan Toul Kork, Phnom Penh
 - 01 room, 2 classes available for 20 adult students

With regard to the above subject, I would like to inform Chief of office of Education, Youth and Sport, Toul Kork District that **Aogaah Foundation Cambodia**, whose purpose is to provide educational opportunities for children to attend school, will help with the budget to operate two classes of Khmer adults. **Aogaah Foundation Cambodia** plans to train teachers to teach Khmer Literacy, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies and English Language in Non-Formal Education programs in Cambodia. Therefore please Chief of office of Education, Youth and Sport, Toul Kork District kindly to facilitate with you high consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Phnom Penh, Date: 12.1.2007


 Director
 KANG CHAMROEUN

Seen and submitter to
 Chief of Sangkat Teok Laak I,
 Phnom Penh, Date: 12.1.2007

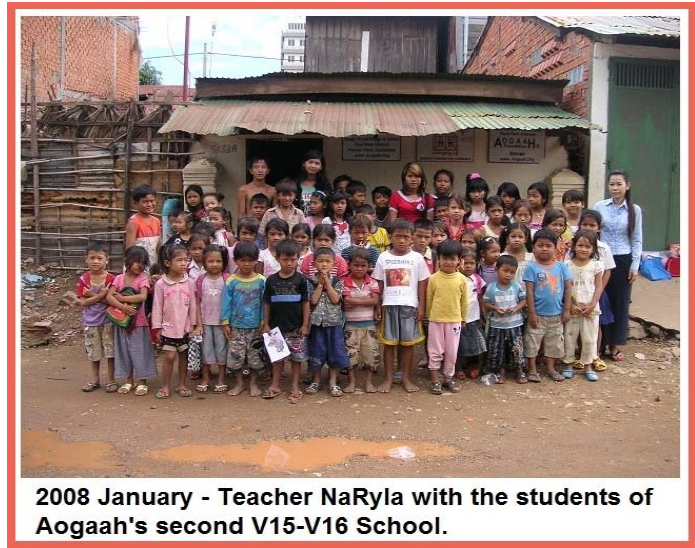

 MEN KIMGORN


 PECH SOKHOEUN

We had a great turn out when school opened, and soon it was obvious that our new one room school house was too small. In January 2008, we moved into a two room building with its own bathroom. The new building is also in Village 15, but the School serves both Villages 15 and 16.



September 2007 Aogaah's first V15-V16 School

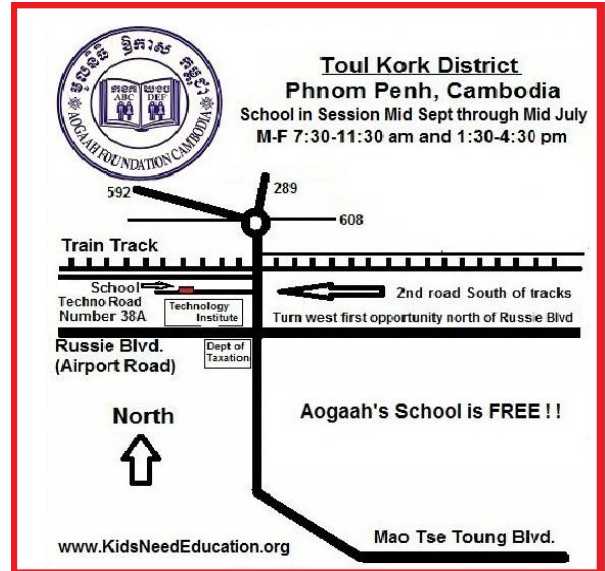


2008 January - Teacher NaRyla with the students of Aogaah's second V15-V16 School.

This time the School did not teach English. The School taught the 3-R's plus Science and Social Studies in Khmer, by Khmers, for Khmers.



Can you find Teacher Rick?



Thonak did the paper work to start a new Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) called Aogaah Foundation Cambodia Organization (AFC). She also did the work to get the new School certified under the non-formal Education System of the Ministry of Youth, Education and Sport. Chamroeun was the NGO's Executive Director.

The V15-V16 School started with just grades 1 and 2. AFC required students to be 6 years old or older to register for first grade. After the first year, we realized the achievement rate in first grade was deplorable.

So, the second year we added kindergarten to the curriculum. We also added grade 3. AFC required students to be 5 years old or older to register for kindergarten. Kindergarten is a 3 month program designed to teach the Khmer alphabet - - 33 consonants and 25 vowels.

Khmer Consonants 2010 Aogaah Foundation Cambodia (www.KidsNeedEducation.org)

1		2		3			19		20		21	
4		5		6			22		23		24	
7		8		9			25		26		27	
10		11		12			28		29		30	
13		14		15			31		32		33	
16		17		18								

Khmer Vowels 2010 Aogaah Foundation Cambodia (www.KidsNeedEducation.org)

1		2		3			19		20		21	
4		5		6			22		23		24	
7		8		9			25		Digits	0		
10		11		12			1		2		3	
13		14		15			4		5		6	
16		17		18			7		8		9	

Note: Vowels are 'attached' to consonants. The rectangles above represent consonants.

At the end of three months, the kindergarten students are given a 'final exam'. If they can read, at random, the letters of the alphabet with 80% accuracy, they are immediately transferred into grade one. If not, no worry, another session of kindergarten starts the next Monday. It usually takes a five year old student 3 times through before he/she can pass the final exam. Going on 20 years now, I still have not passed the Aogaah Kindergarten Final Exam - LOL.

Once kindergarten was added to the School's program of study, the success rate of our first graders jumped to where it is today - - in the upper 90% bracket.

For the next 3 years we added a grade each new school year. The School now teaches kindergarten through grade 6. Grade 6 is the upper limit allowed for schools certified in the non-formal system.

Circa 2010, Chamroeun became too busy to teach and he resigned. He also resigned being Aogaah Foundation Cambodia's Executive Director.

I asked NaRyla to be Aogaah Foundation Cambodia's Executive Director. She accepted and all paperwork was filed and certified by the Ministry of the Interior. She officially became AFC's Executive Director.

NaRylen, NaRyla and NaRina taught for the School. NaRyla and NaRina also worked together in the capacity of curriculum directors and staffed the Teacher Training Center.

NaRyla became engaged to be married.
I was asked to perform the duties of father of the bride and walk her down the aisle.
I was honored and proud to abide.



2013 March 8
NaRyla Pok's Wedding
NaRyla and Teacher Rick

Thonak and her family now call me NaRick.

NaRylen, NaRyla and NaRina do not currently teach for the School but NaRyla is the Executive Director of AFC. Thonak's family owns a restaurant close to the School in Phnom Penh. The entire family works at the restaurant.

The Village 15 - Village 16 School is still at the same location in Village 15 (2nd location). The street has been paved. Over time, the School building and the surrounding buildings have seen much improvement in structure and appearance.

The V15-V16 School is continuing in excellent form under the guidance of a three member **Management Team**:
Management Meeting

- Navy Leang, Lead Teacher and Manager of Finance and Operations.
- Chamroeun Sun, Teacher and Manager of Student Records and Sponsored Students.
- Sarath Som, Teacher and Manager of Documents and Supplies

All of these three individuals have been with the School for nine or more years.



L to R: Sarath, Chamroeun, Navy, Mol, Pisey

The School is very fortunate to have a volunteer, Mol Chhieng who has advised the school since it opened.

Chamroeun and Sarath conduct Aogaah's Teacher Training. Pisey Keo has recently completed the program and is now teaching two classes at the Village 15 - Village 16 School.

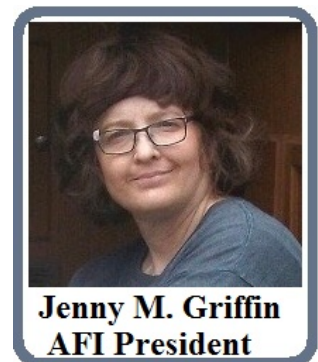
In 2015 I came down with Dengue Fever. I moved back to the USA in September of that year. I have continued to advise and coordinate with AFC.

All the while - -

Aogaah Foundation, Inc (AFI) has been functioning in the background.

At 78 years old, I felt having the transition of AFI leadership be accomplished by an election as opposed to secession would make the process more seamless. In that light, I asked Jenny Griffin, who worked with me in 2005 to found and incorporate Aogaah Foundation, if she was interested in a leadership position in the Corporation.

Jenny was elected AFI president 2 years ago and in March of this year she was re-elected president. Jenny has a background in education, a love for children and a nature to serve. Over these last two years, Jenny has learned all the ins and outs of Aogaah Foundation, Inc. She will assure the smooth continuation of the functions of the Foundation.



Jenny M. Griffin
AFI President

In the interest of transparency, I feel it appropriate to let it be know, Jenny Griffin is my daughter.