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Takeo librarians at forefront of school reading revolution

Written by Priyanka Bhonsale and Rom Kuthear
MONDAY, 01 SEPTEMBER 2008**A six-day library management course teaches provincial librarians to bring the love for books to rural students**

FIFTEEN librarians from high schools in Takeo province have distended upon Sok An Moy U Sopheo High School for a six-day library management training course.

In Mach, the assistant director at Kda Krohem High School who organised the course using funds from the New Zealand-based trust Books for Cambodia, was inspired to train librarians in his hometown after he attended a library-training course run by Societe d'Investissements en Participations last year.

"The main thing is to develop human resources. The librarians are interested - they concentrate, work hard and enjoy discussing what they learn."

One of the course attendees, Ngath Seroun, 26, said it was his first time studying about the workings of a library and how to become a better librarian. "I used to manage the library by following orders of my principal, and I didn't know how to persuade students to read books," he said.

Though he values the knowledge gained during the course, he said the training was just a first step. "I think that in order to improve students' knowledge we also need to improve the library."

In Mach agreed, saying systematic organisation and training was important for a successful library. "This is a district-level course, but in the future, we may run it at a provincial level because it's very useful for schools and communities."

Looking to the future

In Mach's wife, Meas Sopheo, an English teacher at Sok An Moy U, said not all schools in Tram Kak district have libraries. She said most are just storage rooms, but the training course is laying groundwork for the future, adding that a recent book fair held by Hutt News/Books for Cambodia in New Zealand raised close to US\$6,990 to buy more books and help with further training in Cambodia. "The Ministry of Education provides us with textbooks. Now we will be able to acquire more books that students are interested in reading."



PRIYANKA BHONSALE

Meas Sopheo with some of the books in Moy U Sopheo's library.

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The winners are the readers, and the delight of those rifling through books at Moy U Sopheo's library is obvious. "Whenever I have free time, I come here. I like any books that are connected to law because I want to become a lawyer," said Sreydech Kao, 17.

Her fellow student Kimlay Laey, 17, said the previous library was crammed, which made it difficult to read.

National Library chairwoman Klot Vibolla said that while she does not know how many libraries exist in Cambodia, most schools now have a library.

"In the future all Cambodian schools will have a library because the government is paying attention to the education sector."