

Name: KIEN FORCEFIDELE

Sex: Male

Date of Birth: 28th December 1993

E-mail: forcefidele@gmail.com

Contact Number: 097 9706119

Topic: What are the grave challenges facing Cambodian youth at present and what can you do as an individual to contribute to addressing those challenges for yourself in particular and for Cambodian society as a whole?

Abstract

Cambodia is a developing country, so there is much to change and change cannot be done on time. What the country really needs right now is human resources, to be precise the Khmer youth. However, Khmer youth is now in a jeopardized state.

The three factors influencing on Khmer youth nowadays are Family, School and Society. Family facing breakdown and poverty is the key hindering most of Khmer youth to advance in their study, but some rich people's children may become spoiled as well. Besides, there are even more problems at School, such as corruption, unemployment, quality and quantity, etc. Teachers think more about money than they do about educating students, and students think much more about passing and get good grades than their true knowledge inside their very mind.

As if there is not enough burden, Society problems come into play as well, adding another big load to block Cambodia's development driveway. Most of these issues are on materialism, entertainment and gambling sectors which spread out across the country. Now that we've reached this point, is there any way to tackle and bring out one best solution to solve all of these headaches?

The answer is yes, but it needs every single person in the society to take part so that we can do it together. This agenda is just like a chain; if one part of the chain is broken, the entire chain won't be able to hold. Family, government and individual Khmer youth altogether create a bright light to the future of this country. The future is in our hands!

Essay:

After suffering from centuries of relentless wars, Cambodia encountered almost as much destruction as some European countries after World War II, or even worse. Practically everything was lost. Even now that the country has been recovering, most people thought that it was damaged so much that it would never find a new day anymore. They were partly right. Cambodia is, currently, just a developing country, so it has many problems that are still needed to be fixed. Among those problems, Cambodian youth is the top priority because it is them who are the backbones of the country, the ones who can push our country to development once again. Nowadays, these backbones are being unconsciously rotten by many reasons. What are these reasons? And what can we do to better them?

There are, as said above, many possible factors which decay the strength of the country, in particular the youth of Cambodia. These known factors are divided into three main parts: **Family Factor, School Factor and Society Factor.**

1. Family Factor

Literally, family is the cell of the society; in other words, society is made up of a combination of families. Therefore, family plays a major role in the society and can easily influence the society. If this cell is broken, then there is no way that the society can withstand, let alone progress. As for the present, some of Cambodian families are falling apart. These crises are mostly the results of violence in the family and poverty.

First of all, violence in the family can damage as much as possible to mental and physical health of all family members, including growing youth. For instance, if one family has a lot of violence, the youngsters will likely have difficulties in learning and they can even be mentally sick because of those violent pictures. What's more, their study won't go well at school because their mind is not fully concentrated since their house is not in peace.

Secondly, poverty can also become a challenge for Khmer youth as well. Children need money in order to go to school such as for buying clothes, food, books and all other study materials. If their family is poor, they won't be able to afford all these. What's more, sometimes they even have to work outside so as to earn money to support their family, including being bootblacks or beggars and etcetera. How can those children help develop our country Cambodia when they are in a state like this? According to the record, it is estimated that about 40 percent of Cambodian students do not finish primary school. An old man in his late thirties said, *'If my parents had enough money for me to study when I was young, I wouldn't be a motor-taxi driver nowadays.'*

Not only poverty provoked many problems for Khmer youth, but being wealthy can also do as much. Some teenagers who are born in rich and/or powerful families become disobedient and disrespectful to the elderly and the society as a whole. Some children of high generals in the government can do everything and anything they want without concerning about whether or not their action is against the law. Depending on their parents' power, they are free of all charges, in other words they have impunity. This kind of people provokes many problems to the society, involving drugs, crimes, robberies, illegal shooting, fights and so forth. This is a very bad influence to other normal Khmer teenagers.

2. School Factor

A person being able to become a bad citizen or a good citizen is depending on one of the most essential sectors – school. School is the site where all types of education, both morality and knowledge, are taught by skillful teachers so that those students can learn these skills and practice them in the society to earn their living. Because Cambodia is not a fully developed country, the education is under progress, so many flaws can be found and changes cannot be done soon enough. For one thing, students are not fully under controlled, and this is why there are many students who disobey the school principles and make up groups of gangsters in school and commit several immoral problems, including doing drugs, fighting each other and so forth. For example, there are many students who do not listen to what the principles have said and continue wearing unsuitable school uniforms. This causes difficulties not only for those wrong doers but also to all other students as well, for they can influence the others to do the same thing and can possibly scar not only their own reputation but the whole school as well. If only some simple rules they are not able to obey, how can these young generations be a hope to develop Cambodia?

Moreover, adolescence is during the most vulnerable age of all. When reaching the age of around fourteen or fifteen, teenagers start to experience changes in their feelings. They want to try everything new, have love, are easily annoyed, and usually do as their feelings go without comprehending whether it's right or wrong, suitable or not. This is the nature of the teenagers worldwide, and some people who can control their feelings are okay. Otherwise, those who cannot will risk study failure, skipping classes or, worse than that, dropping out of school. Another grave risk is that those inconsiderate teenagers can do other foolish deeds such as having sex and mostly end up destroying their own future by, as examples, getting HIV or other deadly diseases. From what we have observed in our society, Khmer youth doesn't understand very much about how to deal with their unexpected feelings in their age, and with their not-so-good friends encouraging them, they might no longer listen to adults' advices. As a result, most of them end up regretting later when they are

old enough to realize how wrong they were and how they would want to go back, but it's already too late.

In addition, corruption is also supposed to hinder Khmer students from intelligence growth. As we can see in these times, corruption in school happens almost every day, and this action happens even more during exam periods. Obviously, students give money to examiners to get good grades on each subject. Students give money to the teacher responsible for their class to erase all of their previous absences. Teachers take bribe from students. These are what spoil Khmer youth, the ones who are supposed to be the candlelight that help Khmer nation get out of the darkness caused by ruthless wars, to help Khmer nation stand up again.

In any case, cheating during tests is still at wide and is a large concern for the human resource as well. 95% of all students throughout the country cheat during exams. In fact, cheating is so popular that it becomes a routine for every Khmer student. This affects not only the students who cheat but also the ones who don't as well. Suppose all students in a class cheat during an exam except for one student. That student will somehow have the idea that if he/she don't cheat, he/she won't be able to keep up good grades with the other students who answer every question word by word from books. What's more, if he/she decides not to cheat, he/she will probably take blames from the other students for being the odd one out. Cheating is like a virus, I shall say, which continues to spread to everyone and so the whole country as a whole. Even good students were changed into bad ones. After the 12th grade national exam, there are big quantities of students who pass, but not of all those who pass are knowledgeable – quality of the students who come out from high school as well as universities are now being doubted, like a statement saying, '*Quantity no quality.*' According to the report issued by Geneva-based International telecommunication Union, Cambodia is being listed among the worst-performing countries regarding literacy, ranking 121st. What is the problem coming out of this? Some of those unqualified graduates may become teachers, and since their knowledge is skeptical, they might follow their previous teachers' step – CORRUPTION. Soon, most of our country, if not all, will be full of illiterate people, both educators and learners. Imagine what will happen when that time comes.

As for those qualified students who graduated from university, there is another problem they have to face – job finding. Many of students studying at university don't know very well about the job market nowadays, and they all depend on public aspects other than real job opportunities. Right now, most of Cambodian students focus on studying business and economic while other also important vocations, including civil engineering, electricians, architects and technicians, are being left out. It is reported as saying that business and economic sector is oversupplied whereas others are undersupplied. This may possibly be the factor which increases unemployment in Cambodia due to the

lack of information flow between the demand side and the job seekers, resulting in Cambodia students who leave universities with no jobs.

3. Society Factor

Comparing to the two factors depicted above, society factor is probably the most important of all, for it is where youth is able to demonstrate all of what they have learned from their school and family; in other words, it is the place where Khmer youth can prove themselves to be true citizens. Yet, this most important factor can also lead youngsters to doom if not monitoring well. As in our country Cambodia, we Cambodian youth is currently on the scale between good and bad, and the distance between these two are approximately next to each other.

One of the most essential factors which spoil our Khmer youth these days is gambling. In Phnom Penh, gambling sectors locates almost everywhere, including lotteries, football gambles and games. People waste a lot of their money on lotteries, believing they can win based on their dreams or other supernatural beliefs. Most of their money, which can be spent to make business or support their living, is all but in the hands of those clever businessmen/women. Nevertheless, football gambling is probably the most popular among Khmer youth. This gamble does nothing but destroy them! Students waste both their time and money that should be spent on their study to gamble in the football game. The most popular company owning the football gamble in Cambodia is **Cambosix**. When this kind of game gets into their mind, there certainly is no way that they can concentrate on their study anymore. They will spend most of their valuable time checking on those football papers instead of picking up books to read. Besides, they can even skip school in order to go to the football gamble sectors which can be found many along the streets. Worse than that, sometimes they don't have enough money to make a bet, so they can unwisely sell their motorbikes or steal their parents' money so as to meet their needs. If none of these are possible, they might even end up becoming criminals or anything just to get what they need – MONEY. *Addicting to gamble is just like addicting to drugs; once you put your head in it, it will be almost impossible to get out.*

Games, even though not as destructive as football gambling, can still trigger critical problems for Khmer youth, especially while they are in primary school or high school. Generally speaking, there are quite a lot of game sectors around educational areas, and this is very bad for students, for it can lure them and drag their mind away from studying. Students who are supposed to come to school turn out to be in game sectors instead because they think this place make them happier than they are at school. Learning is not an easy process, so that's why many students, when encouraged by some bad environment, tend to be dragged into it very easily.

Additionally, materialism society has a very strong impact on Khmer society and culture. In fact, this has influenced all of the countries around the world, but due to our current state, this is not supposed to be very good. Unlike adults, teenagers are easily affected because they are still at a young age and haven't got as much experience as the elderly do, so they always want to try out new things, especially the foreign culture. Our Khmer traditional culture is an old-preserved one, and nowadays it is being despised and thought as old-fashioned by later generations. Therefore, youth bring in new cultures, mostly unsuitable, and these new things are overriding our Khmer culture gradually. Most girls wear body-exposing clothes and spend most of their money on beauty rather than study. As for boys, they're always eager to buy everything new so as to show them off to their friends. All of these do not waste only their money, but also their precious time which can be taken to study. Likewise, their very mind, which is supposed to grow up with good fortunes for the country, is being spoiled. If this is still continuing and nothing is to be done about it, our Khmer culture will be sunken by no other than Khmer ourselves.

Overall, what can we do in order to solve these urgent problems?

✓ **Strategies For Solving These Problems**

In my opinion, there are some possible tactics in order to eradicate these troublesome problems mentioned above. First of all, the Royal Government of Cambodia has to strengthen the anti-violence law as well as other important laws like anti-corruption law so that people, including Khmer youth, can depend on these laws to protect their rights and simultaneously increase their advance in studying without any problems. Moreover, the government must find a way in order to reduce poverty in our country as low as possible such as increasing productivity in agriculture field and developing employment rate, etc. Just giving gifts to the poor cannot solve this poverty problem; the government should, instead, find the source of poverty and solve that particular problem; a Chinese proverb also stated, '*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.*' Also, the government should try to find as many aids as possible from Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) as well as donations from citizens in the country and overseas so as to support the poor children's study, for currently our government is not capable of helping all the poor kids. As a result, these days there are already quite an amount of NGOs who help poor kids, including Khmer Bright Future Kids, American Association for Cambodia, Japan Relief for Cambodia, etc. However, these are still not enough, and that's why we need to increase more.

Meanwhile, entertainment sectors that may affect Khmer youth and their study should be prohibited or decreased. Game and Karaoke sites around public schools shouldn't be permitted to open, for this will only distract students from attending classes. Moreover, during adolescence, teenagers shouldn't have any

sex at all. In order to make sure of this, a strict law of banning underage sex should be approved and practiced, and parents as well as teachers at school also have a duty to educate students about sex and morality. In any case that this might happen, the government should arrange some agents in order to announce publicly about safe sex intercourse using condoms so that the percentage of people having AIDS/HIV doesn't increase, and such program should be included into the education system as well.

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) should try to contact with local factories and industries in order to find out about the job markets these days in order to help students in university aim to right goals in their future occupations. If this can be done, employment will somehow be decreased and with the human resource developing, the economics of the country will be without doubt enhancing as much.

It is worth realizing that not only the government is responsible for the growth of Khmer youth but their parents as well. Consequently, it seems to me that parents should pay more attention to their children both in their study and their morality. Some parents would reply something like they don't have enough free time to be with their children. That is a mistake, and might be a big one as well. If parents do think so, then I'd like to ask them one question, 'Why do they need to do business? Isn't the money they earn for the family, in particular their children whom they love most?' Then, if their children turn out to be bad people, what is the use of all those money they earn? So, I'd like all parents to reconsider thoroughly. Moreover, whenever they have time, parents should try as much as possible to talk with their children about life and society because they have been through all those things before they do, so they are more experienced than them. What's more, this little free time talk can strengthen the relation between parents and children, too. Via that, children don't have to feel isolated in the family and try to find pleasure outside, which could lead to making bad friends and so on.

If you want God to help you, you must help yourself first. In order to solve Khmer youth problems, Khmer youth should participate and take actions by themselves, for nothing will ever be changed if each person doesn't willing to solve the problems they are facing. Khmer youth should determine and commit themselves to do the right things, to be precise, what is good for them, their family and the society as a whole. For instance, they should listen to adults' good advices, control their change of feelings during adolescence, work hard at school, avoid bad friends and gambling and always remember that it is never too late to become who you're meant to be – a true Khmer citizen!

Accordingly, since our country is under-developed, there are many problems unsolved, yet Khmer youth problems are even a majority. We, as Khmer generations, must face these problems courageously, for only by that can our country be glorious as when we were at the Angkor Era. This is no longer

the time to mourn over the past agony; this is the time that we all must get up and be true Khmer people, the people of the Kingdom of Wonder!