10 Years of Peace Activism

Youth For Peace
10-year anniversary
2001–2011
Through the initiative of a group of four students pursuing a firm vision for peace, the team successfully developed a peace-building program for youth and founded the organization Youth for Peace (YFP). For the last 10 years, YFP has constantly adjusted its program according to new social developments in order to ensure a maximum impact and effectiveness.

The YFP overall goal is to “empower youth to become agents of peaceful social change”. We are strategically targeting key youth groups and other relevant stake-holders by addressing different levels of change such as personal, relational, cultural, and structural. YFP has pursued its program in peace-building, societal healing and reconciliation through innovative and participatory approaches. We focus on the inner change of the life of young people and community’s mindsets to bring about a culture of peace.

YFP places great emphasis on the creativeness, ownership, and self-initiative of the participants, thereby actively engaging young people and key stakeholders in actions for peace and social justice. Throughout the 10 years of experience, YFP has learned to improve its programmatic effectiveness and institutional capacity to serve a wider range of beneficiaries at the grass-root level. We have adopted new topics and target groups, so that today, we deal with a broad range of peace-related issues in society, in slum, rural areas and with urban youth.

YFP is currently establishing a new institution, the “Peace Institute of Cambodia” (PIC), which delivers important background and grassroots research and documentation work on issues of peace, reconciliation, truth-telling and memorialization. Another unique achievement of YFP is the establishment of several community memorial committees who take up the task to initiate a community-owned legacy of memory that tailors the community’s needs. YFP is one of the first organizations to deal with the topic of memorialization and does pioneer work in this regard. Our publications – including magazines, research papers, books, and documentary films – help to promote our cause and disseminate our vision to a broad public.

I would like to thank all YFP staff, the board of directors, advisors, supporters, interns, volunteers, donors as well as the students and stakeholders who have made a joint effort to work towards peace, justice, and social reconstruction. I hope that in the 10 years to come, YFP and the PIC will continue to make remarkable changes in the grass-root communities as well as in the society as a whole.

Phnom Penh, April 2011

Long Khet
Youth For Peace at a Glance

- An increasing number of beneficiaries (74,991 participants with around 50% of female participation)
- A total of 1,610 activities were carried out
- A continuous increase in the budget ($15,000 in 2001 to $350,000 in 2010)
- Around 70 international interns and volunteers have participated in our activities
- Growing popularity among the Cambodian society

YFP has built an increasing number of enduring partnerships with various stakeholders at the local, national and international level.

The Capital City and seven provinces are the target areas of Youth For Peace:

- Phnom Penh
- Battambang
- Pailin
- Kampong Chhnang
- Takeo
- Kampot
- Svay Rieng
- Prey Veng

Message from Board of Directors

On behalf of YFP Board of Directors, I would like to join hands with YFP management team and staff to celebrate YFP’s success as a long standing catalyst of changes for youth empowerment in Cambodia as well as in the region. While Cambodian youth comprised 22.31% of the total population and become a major force for social development, their potentials are still constrained by both social and cultural factors. Cambodian youth lack opportunities to participate actively in social development through employment, economic development and other civic engagement. Culturally, Cambodian youth are viewed as inferior and lack of experience in social and political arena. Both factors have limited youth from fulfilling their potentials. YFP has played key roles in bridging the gap and brought opportunities for youth to show their potentials and contributed to the society. They started to show that youth can do things and could contribute to social development constructively. YFP supports empowering youth to realise themselves that they are confident and can be a good leader in the future.

I would like to commend YFP’s leadership, especially Mr LONG Khet, and all staff, for their long commitment and endeavours to achieve set goals in order to support youth in Cambodia. I wish to extend my grateful thank to former members of Board of Directors especially Ms Thida C. Khus, for their ongoing and valuable support and guidance so far to lead to this success. Long journey is ahead for YFP and other youth. I invite all to work together to seek ways to advance youth’s involvement in social development in a constructive manner.

I wish you all the best,

Virorth DOUNG
Our Mission and Values

Youth For Peace is a local non-governmental peace organization which aims at enhancing active citizenship among the youth and empowering them to become agents of peaceful social change through capacity building, support, dialogue and advocacy.

YFP envisions a peaceful, fair and democratic society where young people are equal, where they can exercise their rights and actively participate towards sustainable development. YFP aims at providing young people with a good understanding of social issues, critical thinking and space to participate and contribute to a sustainable development. As 70% of Cambodia’s population is under the age of 30, YFP’s scope of action targets a crucial part of the population. YFP aims at:

- Developing critical thinking and qualified leadership skills among youth;
- Encouraging and empowering youth to take an active role in dealing with community issues;
- Providing mental and technical support for youth groups;
- Working towards structural change for the communities, the society and the environment;
- Initiating and enhancing inter-ethnic and intergenerational dialogue in Cambodia.

Youth For Peace promotes democracy, freedom, gender equality, human rights, justice, participation, and solidarity.
Four university students, Mr. Outh Renne, Mr. Long Khet, Mr. Ream Rothamony and Ms. Bou Makara came together with a common concern for the youth in Cambodia. They decided to conduct a survey concerning the situation of youth in Phnom Penh in order to assess the needs. They contacted various stakeholders such as school directors, teachers, and others working with youth. The survey indicated that the youth lacks opportunities to receive spiritual education. In response to those needs, they designed a Peace Building Program with curricula for several workshops using their personal savings to organize them. They meet either under trees or in some private schools to initiate the first project called ‘Peace Education’ some public schools prohibit their meetings because many school directors were worried about a potential link between YFP and a political party.

2001
- On March 12th, Youth for Peace registered with the Ministry of Interior as an official organization and conducted an external assessment providing valuable information on future strategies.
- YFP started Leadership Project
- International conference “Southeast Asia Youth Conference for Peace Building”.

2006
- YFP started project design and implementing “Youth for Justice and Reconciliation”.
  Peace conference in Phnom Penh with the theme “The way to lose an enemy is to make him your friend”.
- YFP initiated the Peace Institute of Cambodia (PIC). Within the next five years, the PIC will become a well-equipped Learning Centre conducting research, lectures and conferences and providing documentation and publications on peace-related issues.

2007
- Peace conference in Siem Reap “Role of youth in peace building”.

2008
- International Peace conference Youth and Reconciliation “Together Searching for Justice and Acting for Peace”.
- YFP published three peace booklets.

2009
- YFP started the Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) with a special focus on a new target group: the poor youth living in slum areas, especially in and around Phnom Penh. Such focus represents a shift in YFP’s philosophy which recognizes the close relation between peace and livelihood.
- YFP started the Young Leaders for Peace Project (YLP) which combines two existing projects on peace education and youth leadership.
- YFP released the first issue of the Youth Today magazine and published three peace booklets.
- YFP produced the film “Your Chance” on child soldiers from different countries.
- The Healing Through Buddhism (HTB) project was implemented from June to December.
- International Peace Conference in Siem Reap “Khmer Rouge Legacy: Youth Together in Action for Memory Culture”.

2010
- YFP published the book “Eyes on Darkness”.
- YFP published the book “Behind the Darkness: Taking Responsibility or Acting under Orders”.
- YFP built a 185-meter-long concrete road at Andong Thmey Community, Sangkat Kok Rokar, Khan Dangkor, Phnom Penh.
Bringing about a Society of Peace and Social Justice in Cambodia

Youth For Peace aims at bringing about a society of peace and social justice in Cambodia by developing active citizenship among youth, improving their understanding of Cambodian history, and involving them in establishing a culture of peace. Throughout the last ten years, YFP has encouraged increasing numbers of young people to take action and work for peace, justice and reconciliation in Cambodia.

So far, the YFP program has shown great impact on the participants’ attitudes and behaviors. YFP has provided the youth with opportunities and motivation to exercise their skills and knowledge and get connected with young people from other places.

Since the start of the proceeding at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), YFP has been actively involved in breaking the silence of the Khmer Rouge regime and moving towards a reconciled society.

Thanks to the support of donors, partners and committed staff, YFP has become one of the leading NGOs working on youth participation and reconciliation. It is one of the first organizations working on the establishment of a sustainable community-owned legacy of memory at local mass killing places in Cambodia.

Such projects aim at both, remembering the Khmer Rouge history and bridging the gap between the generations. YFP gives priority to the use of innovative and creative methods and insists on the importance of consultative, participatory and progressive approaches. Peace values are conveyed through and integrated in each YFP activity.

Collaborating and Networking

Building Peace Together

YFP aims at initiating and strengthening appropriate and enduring partnerships with civil society organizations (CSOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs) which share the values and objectives of YFP at all levels. Such collaborations allow to join all strengths and resources in order to fulfill the priorities for the benefit of the target groups.

- At the international level, YFP receives financial support from AFSC-American Friends Service Committee, Caritas Australia, GIZ-Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, DPA-Development and Partnership in Action (former CIDSE), ZFD-Ziviler Friedensdienst (Germany), IFA-Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (Germany), MISEREOR (Germany), ICCO-Inter-Church Organization for Development Cooperation (Netherlands), the May 18 Foundation (South Korea), AJWS-American Jewish World Service (United States), World Bank, CPBI-Center for Peace Building International, DVV international (Germany), MCC-Mennonite Central Committee (United States), CRS-Catholic Relief Services (United States), USAID, OSI-Open Society Institute (United States) as well as charities and supports from expatriate volunteers, interns and advisors.

- At the national level, YFP in collaboration with several other youth NGOs contributed to the development of the National Youth Policy which recently adopted by the government.

- At the local level, YFP has built good and long-lasting contacts with schools, authorities and communities and has formed a number of youth groups.
"After attending YFP training Seng Neang became more respectful and acted as good child. I am happy to see my daughter learning new skills at Youth For Peace and I strongly support her participation in the YEP program."

**Voices of the Beneficiaries and Staff**

"I felt very interested and excited to join this special workshop about history and reconciliation because I’ve gained a lot of new knowledge about the concepts of reconciliation. When I heard the word Khmer Rouge before I felt hate and I was still afraid of former Khmer Rouge because they had destroyed my family and my country.

Throughout the workshop, I found out that with persisting hate and anger nothing will change. I realized that we cannot change what happened in the past but we can deal with it and build relationships without anger or fear. We can reconcile our people through a wide range of methods such as justice, healing, traditional ways, education and art."

Srey Meo, high school student and participant in the Justice and Reconciliation Workshop in Kampot Province.

"After attending Youth for Peace activities I have changed my attitude. I have gained self-confidence and am now able to think critically and speak English as well. In the future, I would like to become a painter and provide the youth from the villages with some painting courses."

Siv Mean, 18, active participant in the Youth Empowerment Project in Andong community.
Youth For Peace promotes democracy, freedom, gender equality, human rights, justice, participation, and solidarity.
Our Projects

Outreach Program: Youth for Justice and Reconciliation (YJR)

The Youth for Justice and Reconciliation (YJR) project started in 2006 together with the opening of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) and began to implement its activities in 2007 to complement the judicial transitional justice process.

Cambodia’s young people – the children of Khmer Rouge survivors – do not receive any formal education on the history of the Khmer Rouge period and therefore largely depend on family narratives for information.

Therefore, the YJR project aims at involving the youth in raising awareness, initiating dialogue and conducting educational events to promote justice and reconciliation in Cambodia.

The implemented activities, include the ‘Understand, Remember and Change’ workshops, inter-generational dialogues, study tours to Phnom Penh, trips to local mass killing and memorial places as well as Buddhist ceremonies, peace conferences, art workshops and public exhibitions.

As an outreach project, YJR also provides capacity building such as facilitation skills, proposal and report writing, team work and communication skills. After the training, the youth use their knowledge to implement their own projects in the communities. YFP provides small grants to support the implementation of these projects. The activities include youth performances, community dialogues, peace gardens, libraries and museums.

From January 2007 until now, 1,579 students (including 868 female students) have been trained in the ‘Understanding, Remember and Change’ workshops. Throughout all activities, there were 1,4969 participants (7,771 female) in our projects. There are 12 youth groups actively working in their communities to contribute to peaceful conflict transformation.
There are about 388 former killing places containing over 19,000 mass graves in Cambodia; some of these memory places have stupas with skulls as evidences of the Khmer Rouge period but others are now used as farmland. YFP believes that without memorials, history is easily forgotten as nothing remains and reminds us of the atrocities.

The project has sparked the interest of the youth in getting involved in the processes of justice, peace, reconciliation, genocide prevention, and inter-generational dialogue and prevent future violent conflict.

To make sure that the Khmer Rouge history will not be forgotten, YFP has formed and worked with seven Community Memorial Committees in five provinces - Pailin, Battambang, Takeo, Kampot and Svay Rieng - to create a vivid legacy of memory.

The Community Memorial Committees include community people from all levels - villagers, elderly people, Achars (Buddhist Laymen), youth, students, teachers, monks, muslim leaders and local authorities (village chiefs, commune chiefs and commune council members). They are trained to write small proposals and to gain administrative skills. YFP only facilitates and assists them in their work. We hope that the trainings can build up local capacities and enable them to continue their work of preserving a legacy of memory in their communities. Peace Museums and Peace Libraries are currently being set up.

To preserve and develop the places effectively, victims’ and former Khmer Rouges’ stories are documented by Community Memorial Committees and youth groups as well as by YFP staff.

In the long run, the places will be turned into peace learning centers and places for traditional ceremonies.

Legacy of Memory

“I participated in this map making for six days. We asked people who knew the history here and we also asked people who were jailed during the KR regime. The map can tell people what happened during the KR regime and the places where it happened.”

Kim Kumpeak, 21, Student
Reconciliation involves the process of learning how to co-exist and work together with people one does not like or is not liked by and of coming to terms with personal negativity about one’s experiences, whether being a victim or a perpetrator.

YFP started the Voice of Former Khmer Rouge (VFKR) project in 2009 in order to move towards a comprehensive reconciliation process. While at the start of the project, most of the former Khmer Rouge did not dare to speak out as fear and shame were still dominating, YFP created the weekly radio program “You also have a chance” that allows former Khmer Rouge to talk anonymously about their past experience. The activity aims at preventing the passing on of hatred and violence to future generations. From 2009 to 2010, we have broadcasted 88 live shows and 58 rebroadcasts in total. According to the weekly caller note, around 2,000 listeners (35% are female) called our radio station.

The nation-wide radio show “You also have a chance” is broadcasted on National Radio of Kampuchea AM 918 every Saturday from 11:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Healing Through Buddhism (HTB)

The project was implemented from June to December 2009 and aimed at including monks in the peace building and reconciliation process. Around 90% of the Cambodian people believe in Buddhism. Therefore, the monks can play a key role as mediators between victims and perpetrators.

The main idea of this project was to involve young monks in capacity-building trainings so that they could organize their own workshops in the local communities and participate actively in the reconciliation process. More than 500 young monks were trained.

“I am a survivor of the Khmer Rouge period and I am 40 years old. However, I don’t remember clearly what was going on during the KR as I was a young boy. I am curious to know more about the regime. This is the reason why I am attending this course. I hope the topic of the KR history will be integrated in the Monk’s school curriculum, so that the monks who did not have the chance to be in the training will be able to learn about the causes and effects of the regime.”

Chhun Deoun, 40, Monk at Wat Preythom
Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)

The youth living in the informal settlement of Andong are unable to meet their basic needs and struggle with many problems as a result of poverty. They were forcibly evicted from their homes four years ago. The daily challenges they face include a lack of food and drinking water, appropriate access to healthcare, adequate shelter, unemployment, a lack of financial resources and transportation to attend school, exposure to gang activities, drug use, domestic violence, and feelings of overall hopelessness and despair.

The Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) started in 2009 and aims at building the youth’s capacity in the slum area in the Kok Rokar Commune, Dangkor District of Phnom Penh so that they can become role models and work for their community. It also aims at improving the living conditions of the youth in those areas.

Through life-skill training, English classes, field trips, and individual case management, YFP has been providing the youth with tools and skills that empower them to become agents of social change in their areas.

Youth are trained in silk production, crochet, and sewing in order to earn a living and be able to pay the school fee. YEP’s staff also trains them in vegetable gardening and fish feeding. Recently, YEP has set up a small business printing T-shirts, bags and invitations and selling crochet products (bags, toys, etc.).

“Before attending the YFP program, Srey Pov was stubborn. “Since I have attended the Youth For Peace Program, I have gained some skills and learned about self-development. I have received good ideas and advice from YFP trainers. I have now a clear goal in life. YFP has allowed me to participate in a tailor training course for four months with KO-Mi SO. I have a clear goal in life. In the future, I want to open a tailor shop.”

Srey Pov, 16, is a member of YFP team in Andong Thmey Village. She used to live in Dey Krahom near the river side in Phnom Penh but her family was evicted and moved to Andong in 2006. She stopped her studies in grade 4.
YFP started the Youth Participation Project (YPP) in 2009 in the Ek Phnom District of Battambang to broaden the youth's understanding of the Cambodian culture and provide them with leadership skills. YFP organized youth forums and meetings as well as human rights campaigns in order to raise young people's awareness on issues like domestic violence, environment and health. YPP has also been an opportunity to initiate a dialogue with the commune councils in order to set up a youth council in each village. Most of the youth who worked for the YPP project as volunteers found a job in international and local NGOs after they spent a year at YFP.

“Peace is possible if the younger generations understand each other and have a sense of solidarity within their community.”

Seiha, 18, participant in the Young Leaders for Peace

In order to continue the project, YFP started the Young Leaders for Peace Project (YLP) in 2010. YLP conducts a range of activities to encourage youth to adopt a peaceful behavior, to promote peace, social justice, morality, responsibility, solidarity, and development. The project also educates the youth on how to reduce stereotypes and discrimination, as well as on how to deal with conflicts in a peaceful way. YLP provides the youth with leadership and practical skills so that they become active and work towards a positive change in their communities and in society as a whole.

“[---] At the beginning of the Khmer Rouge regime, I did not know that the people who were called to be educated were actually killed. I only found out about it after several people had already been killed. The Khmer Rouge commune chief listed several names and told me to ask them to meet at the commune office. I got those names and went to the people’s houses to call them for education. When they arrived at the commune office, the Khmer Rouge drove them away in a truck. They were not tied or forced to go, they were just told to go to study. [---] It was my mistake that I did not know that these persons would be killed. [---]”

Sun Natt, 70, Former Commune Central Committee, Battambang

We have three main yearly publications: The Youth Today Magazine, The Annual Diary, and one book. Since 2009, we have issued six Youth Today Magazines, three annual diaries (Understand, Remember and Change, Stories from the Ground, We Made It) and two books (Eyes on Darkness and Behind the Darkness). We have also published peace books.

Recently, we have published our new book “Behind the Darkness: Taking Responsibility or Acting under Orders?” This book consists of former Khmer Rouge profiles from various levels such as Chhlop, soldiers, messengers, security guards, chiefs and district chiefs. It provides a space for former Khmer Rouge to reveal their hidden stories and it gives a voice to the other side of the ‘truth’ since we normally only hear the accounts of the victims. As a first step, 4,200 copies have been published in English and in the coming year, the Khmer version will be printed.
We would like to thank all our generous donors who contributed to the success of Youth for Peace during the last 10 years.

Vision for the Future

The past 10 years of our work paved the way for a bright future of Youth for Peace. The lessons from our successes, failures, and encountered challenges are significant steps in moving forward to a peaceful and promising future. In the next 10 years, YFP as well as the new initiative of the Peace Institute of Cambodia will continue its firm mission to make remarkable changes in the grass-root communities as well as in the Cambodian society as a whole. We hope that an increasing number of young people will continue to engage in peaceful solutions to social conflicts and participate in a sustainable social development which brings about a culture of peace and a culture of democracy.