

Pagna's story , the Director of PCEF

My name is Pagna and I was born in 1984 in Lvea Village. The village is located in a remote area, 35 km from Siem Reap City. I was born as a farmer boy and my parent are farmers. I have six brothers, no sister and I am the second child in the family. I was told from my parents that after the Khmer Rouge regime, during 1980s to 1990s, the war was finished but we still had Vietnamese and Cambodian armies around the village and we were still scared. We were a very poor and hungry family. There was not much work for us, so we made our living by farming, fishing and hunting. During that time, my older brother and my parents worked very hard to support the family.

In 1988, I enrolled at Lvea Primary School in the village. I was excited to attend but I was not good at learning and just went to play with my classmates. The classroom did not have any decorations such as windows or doors and no chairs or tables, so we had to sit on the floor. The school also did not have any syllabus.

In 1996, my parents did not have enough money to support my study so I decided to leave the school then I became a monk which was our belief and tradition. After I had my monk robes, I felt comfortable and decided to live as a monk in the rural pagoda to continue my education in Buddhist studies and also English language. When I lived in the pagoda, I promised myself that I would achieve and change my life. I spent most of my time studying Buddhism, chanting, meditation and also learning to give sermons. I thought that if I knew English well, I would have tried to help the rural kids to have the opportunity to learn English and provide them every learning material.

In 2001, I decided to disrobe and left from a monk hood, but my thought and heart were still with Buddhism. After that I decided to work in Siem reap to continue my high school.

In 2004, I finished High school, and I spent my time to work one year before continuing my University Degree.

In 2010, I graduated from university and I got married with my wife who lived in Kampong Phluk village. As I could see the kids in that area being very poor with their hard work fishing on the floating village whose their parents could not afford to send them to school especially to English school, so I decided to open the school at Kampong Phluk village and many families enrolled their children and we taught them either Buddhist morality or English. There were from a hundred to two hundred kids attending the course. We could not keep up with the effort to provide classrooms, tables, chairs and education supplies. Soven and I were trying to promote our dream to foreigners by encouraging them to come to visit, volunteer and donate to the school. Many people came to visit and contributed to the school. They also continued to fundraise and promote more volunteering to support the school.

In 2012, I established a second PCEF (Lvea Village Free School), in the place where I was born and educated as a boy. The aim of Lvea Free School is to provide rural children with the same opportunities as the children in the city. Through the backing of generous donors worldwide, I achieved my vision of supporting rural education, offering quality lessons in the Cambodian language and English.

My life's work is to share the love and support that I have received from friends and family to support the world. I am very lucky and proud to have international friends and family who love and trust me. I am happy to live with an honest life and make a difference in the world.

Pagna - Director of PCEF, Siem Reap, Cambodia