Who We Are

Peace Bridges Organization is a Cambodian nonprofit organization dedicated to long-term, strategic partnerships with committed individuals and organizations to develop knowledge, attitudes, skills, and habits for effective conflict resolution and transformation.

Peace Bridges envisions humanity living in justpeace—a condition in which people actively work to end destructive cycles of violence and increase justice in human relationships.

Since 2003, Peace Bridges has trained over 4,000 people and supports an active network of 433 peacebuilders who are building peace in their homes, workplaces, religious groups, and communities across Cambodia.

Long-term Training Courses*:

Part A: Training for Peace
♦ Training introduces key concepts in peace theory and communication.

Part B: Conflict Resolution and Transformation Skills
♦ Focuses on third party interventions using mediation and conciliation skills.

Part C: Peaceful Families & Family Reconciliation
♦ Focuses on reducing family violence and building family reconciliation skills and processes.

*Courses available with faith-based and values-based curriculum
Peace Bridges collects Stories of Change to track the personal changes and impact of peacebuilders who participate in the long-term training program. From July 2016 to June 2017, staff interviewed 160 community peacebuilders to study their personal changes and impact in their communities. The names have been changed to protect the peacebuilders’ identities.

100% of the community peacebuilders changed their behaviors and attitudes away from violence and developed skills to build peace. They said they became better listeners, developed patience and self-control, and learned to analyze and address conflict through nonviolent means.

Sopheary (right) works at a community learning center in Kampong Chhnang. She studied with Peace Bridges and applies what she learned to resolve conflicts between staff and her family members.

“I’ve learned to be humble and listen to other people instead of protecting myself and winning.”
Most Significant Impact of Peacebuilders

- Healthy Families & Communities: 95%
- Effective Conflict Resolution and Transformation Practice: 62%
- Equality & Respect: 50%
- Nonviolent Solutions to Natural Resource Conflicts: 26%
- Personal Healing: 49%
- Livelihood Improvement: 47%
- People Around Them Develop Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills & Habits for Peace: 69%
- Social Cohesion & Interdependence: 79%

N=66 people
Data source: Story of Change Report July-Dec 2016/Jan-June 2017 and IDI Reports
Mrs. Chan’s neighbor owed money to the bank but was unable to repay it. Her siblings took advantage of her by paying the bank and claiming the land title. When she found out about this, the woman was furious. Then she reached out to Mrs. Chan for help.

Mrs. Chan met with each person in order to listen to their side of the story. “You should respect and trust one another. Help your sibling when they have a problem,” she counseled them. She then brought everyone together and helped them share and listen to one another.

Eventually, the siblings gave the land title back to their sister. They apologized for their actions and tried to improve the relationship. “I was very pleased to see the outcome,” Mrs. Chan said.
Piseth is an engineer in Phnom Penh and also volunteers at his church. He was once confronted with a major conflict when a family friend spread hurtful gossip about his family.

“I wanted to hurt that person, but then I remembered to find a quiet place to calm down and develop a plan,” he recounted.

“I decided to set an example by being kind to them instead of seeking revenge, and I told my family to do this too.” Piseth talked directly to the person who gossiped about his family and was able to repair the relationship.

“Peace Bridges’ lessons helped me to see the goodness in people and stop judging them based on stereotypes.”

Piseth shared to 30 prisoners, 10 church members, and 6 family members about nonviolent communication, listening skills, and conflict resolution.
Peacebuilders come away from the trainings with soft skills and practical tools to address a variety of community issues, including land conflicts, illegal logging, domestic violence, alcoholism, neighbor disputes, and other conflicts. The stories of change show that community peacebuilders have been key local actors in facilitating dialogue between conflict parties and de-escalating violence.

Mr. Sout, a village leader in Kampong Chhnang, studied with Peace Bridges and applied the lessons on conflict analysis and nonviolent communication to address a land dispute. Some community members had claimed ownership of land in a floodplain. The local authority did not agree and soon there was a conflict. “I met with them to mediate and listen to everyone’s needs. I helped them discuss and find a solution,” said Mr. Sout.

They eventually reached an agreement about property borders and wrote up a contract.
Peacebuilding and Livelihood Improvement

Decreases in conflict and violent behavior corresponded with:

- Families opening businesses
- Stronger neighborly ties and mutual helping
- People reducing alcohol consumption
- Healthier family communication
- Money saved from resolving conflicts outside of the court
- Children attending school more regularly

Mr. Doth (left) is the deputy leader of a village in Kampong Chhnang. He recently helped several of his neighbors who had a serious conflict about the boundaries of their land.

“I introduced the process of conflict resolution to them so that they could find the best solution to their conflict about the land and reconcile.”

After his neighbors resolved their dispute, they improved their personal well-being, said Mr. Doth. “They even reduced the domestic violence and drinking alcohol,” he said. “They are getting along and working to improve their standard of living.”
When Mrs. Maly (right) mediates conflicts for people in the community she is careful to collect information by listening to each side. “I don’t interrupt people like I used to do during mediation sessions,” she said. Mrs. Maly has taught other commune council members and local authorities about conflict resolution and listening so they can also improve.

Mr. Khouern works as a police officer in Kampong Chhnang province. After studying conflict resolution with Peace Bridges, he changed the way he interacts with people. “I used to be temperamental. When I saw someone breaking the law, I educated them forcefully,” he said. Mr. Khouern said he has stopped using force with people he interacts with at work.

He has also changed the way he treats his family. “I no longer use violence with my family and I’ve cut back on drinking. I’ve changed my personal strategy for addressing conflict in my own life too. I use nonviolence and try to solve problems by using soft words and listening to understand.”
“Now I follow the process of conflict resolution and use active listening while I guide them to make their own decisions. This is a more effective way to do my job.”

Mrs. Kimsak, district council member in Kampong Thom

55% of the community peacebuilders improved their conflict resolution and transformation practice by using peacebuilding tools such as:

◊ Active Listening ◊ Conflict Analysis ◊ Unbiased Mediation ◊ Facilitation ◊
As a member and employee of Mr. Somaly’s church, Mr. Lim (right) has been impacted by Mr. Somaly’s leadership and mentorship.

“I used to struggle with irritability and I yelled at my family. Mr. Somaly motivated me to control my anger and forgive others, so now I have more peace in my life.”

Mr. Somaly (right), a Christian pastor in Battambang province, participated in Peace Bridges’ training several years ago. Since then, his changed communication style has improved many of his relationships.

“I really try to listen to people about their personal problems and give them value and respect,” he said.

In his role as pastor, Mr. Somaly has taken more initiative to mediate conflicts and offer his knowledge of conflict resolution to his congregation. Some church members and couples had conflicts and Mr. Somaly was able to help them to find resolutions and reconcile.

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“I used to struggle with irritability and I yelled at my family. Mr. Somaly motivated me to control my anger and forgive others, so now I have more peace in my life.”
Several years ago, Mrs. Thea studied Part A and B with Peace Bridges. We touched base with her to see the lasting impact of the training on her life. Mrs. Thea said the greatest thing Peace Bridges did was enable her to help herself.

“It was like driving a moto but not knowing where to go—that’s how it felt to let my emotions control me.”

“Once we are in a good place and understand ourselves then we can reach out to help others. [The training] was an opportunity to look inside of myself and understand my own feelings.”

In the past, she used to hide her distress instead of talking to people about it. She let her emotions control her behavior, and the stress led her to lose sleep and feel exhausted.

“After studying with Peace Bridges, I experienced inner healing and can now share what is inside of me.” For Mrs. Thea, she has made practicing self-care, like exercising, eating food, and going to the sauna, a priority in her life. She has also intentionally raised her children to express their feelings. “My daughter tells me when I upset her; I’m pleased that she can express herself.”

As a leader in the workplace, Mrs. Thea said she has used conflict resolution methods to address conflict between other staff members.
Conclusion

The long-term training program transformed these community peacebuilders into mediators and agents of change in their communities. By far, the most dramatic changes were seen in the lives of the peacebuilders themselves, specifically in their behavioral and attitude changes that led to more peace rather than violence. The positive changes were even seen in the peacebuilders who studied many years ago.

Those who held leadership positions in their communities were able to immediately apply what they learned to improve their conflict resolution services and leadership style in the workplace. This led to more healthy work environments and people who settled their conflicts.

The peacebuilders shared peace lessons with people around them in formal settings, like workshops, and informally, with family and friends. Those people also changed to let go of violence and use nonviolence to communicate and solve problems.

They expressed their gratitude to Peace Bridges for helping them to change their own lives and encouraged Peace Bridges to train more people in order to build positive peace in Cambodia.
A special thanks to our supporters: