

# New Lutheran Mission Project School Building in Rural Cambodia

The most recent Asian project for the JELA Foundation (Tokyo) is the building of a primary school in a village community in the Kamreang District of Battambang Province in northwest Cambodia – an area currently using makeshift facilities.

Education is one of but many needs in Cambodia as the nation strives for development in the wake of a sad history, including the Pol Pot led genocide of the 1970's. One in five Cambodians – almost two million people – died at that time.

Now Cambodia enjoys peace and stability, but World Bank figures say 42.4% of the population still subsists on less than one dollar per day, well below the poverty line. Many rural communities suffer from disease, malnutrition, lack of drinking water and unemployment. Building and improving school facilities in such areas is considered a major step in helping the local population foster their own development as they address the many challenges of their surroundings.

The Kamreang District lies near the border with Thailand, approximately 400 kilometers northwest of Phnom Penh and 120 kilometers west of the famed temples at Ankor Wat. Unlike central Cambodia, the district is hilly, heavily forested and dry in climate. About 20% of the population are returnees from border camps in Thailand. The region continues to be laced with landmines and unexploded ordinance from the years of strife. In fact, the village in which the school will be constructed – Tang You – was a battle zone in the civil war until 1996.

Tang You villagers built a wooden-slat, thatch-roofed school that same year and later improved the roof with zinc sheeting. However, the building has aged rapidly

and is in poor repair. At the same time, the number of school-aged children has increased. Without a new facility, Tang You children may soon be forced to travel over 10 kilometers to the next closest school. Many children would thus drop out. These numbers would be especially high among girls, as Cambodian families are reluctant to let their daughters do such traveling.



The proposed new building will be made of concrete and consist of five rooms. The improved facility will provide education for upwards of 200 village children per year.

The construction is in cooperation with the LWF Department for World Service, with funding coming from both JELA and the Wakachiai Project in Japan. JELA's contribution will be \$17,000



of the \$27,000 necessary to build the school. The community itself will furnish the land and labor and provide building maintenance. The area government will supply the required teachers and educational materials.

Work is scheduled to begin later this year with the facility expected to be ready for use in late 2007 or perhaps early 2008.

Congregations or individuals wishing to contribute to this project may send donations to:

**ELCA**  
**Global Mission Helping Children in Need**  
**Level II Funding Program**  
**c/o Rev. David Lerseth**  
**8765 W. Higgins Road**  
**Chicago, Illinois 60631**

Upon completion, classes will begin at once, bestowing the district with additional hope in its battle with poverty and giving area children a better opportunity for a bright future.