

## Case study and activities



**“His future is bright, there is no going back. His life can only improve for the better.”**  
-#Sokly

Rattanak is a skilled and successful young barber, living an independent life in rural Cambodia. But a physical disability and discriminatory attitudes in his community meant he almost didn't get there. Like many people who are deaf or hard of hearing, Rattanak faced frustration and isolation at home, with a lack of opportunity to escape the poverty into which he was born.

A just future for Rattanak has begun...

Rattanak lives in Kandal Province, south-eastern Cambodia. As a child he contracted polio and also became deaf. He says he felt sad as he sat at home, watching other children going to school. He had no friends and only went out to herd the cows or cut grass on the farm with his father.

“Before I really complained a lot and was very frustrated. Before I felt rejected by others. I was poor, I didn't have any money. I had a disability, I was deaf,” Rattanak says.

His sister discovered the Deaf Development Programme (DDP) in Phnom Penh. Run by Caritas Australia partner, Maryknoll Cambodia, it provides sign language, job training and interpreting services to people aged 16 and over who are deaf or hard of hearing - and aims to raise awareness about deafness in the hearing community.

Sign language is relatively new to Cambodia. While most countries have had sign language for over one hundred years, such as Auslan in Australia,

Cambodia's formal sign language has only been taught since 2013.

“The first time I went and I saw all of these deaf people signing, but I only used gestures and I was very shy and very embarrassed,” Rattanak says.

“But the other deaf people who became my friends would call me and get me to start to sign. They taught me the alphabet and slowly I was able to develop my skills so that I could meet and communicate with other deaf people. I was very happy about that.”

Rattanak graduated from the program in 2010, where he studied Cambodian sign language, Khmer writing, social sciences and maths for two years. He returned the following year to train as a barber. DDP then helped him to set up his shop in his parent's house in the village.

Having emerged from his isolated world at home in his early twenties, Rattanak is now running a successful business, supporting himself and his wife, and now a baby.

Every year, DDP provides basic education training for about 90 youth who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as job training to over 30 more.

The program takes a pro-active approach to seeking out those with the greatest need, visiting Cambodia's poorest communities to identify people living with deafness and inviting them to take part in the program.

The work has made a world of difference. So far in total, the program has helped over 430 people who are deaf or hard of hearing with their education and more than 200 people to find jobs. It has also trained more than 300 people who are not deaf as sign language interpreters.

Cambodia remains one of the world's poorest countries and more than four percent of the population lives with a disability. A disproportionate number are deaf or hard of hearing, at around 51,000 people - and they often face discrimination in their communities.

“Deaf people before they come to the program, they do not have the identity of being a deaf person. They do not have their language, they do not have their culture,” says Sokly, the Deaf Development Programme's Co-Director.

“Rattanak is a good example. He's very independent and he can make his own money, he can save money, he can set up his family, he got married and started a family.”

“He was very committed and he has strong determination for doing his job and that's how he became very successful. We are very proud of him. It can show to other people in other countries that deaf people with a disability can do anything,” says Sokly.

**“Now I have a lot of friends. I'm no longer scared or afraid. Because of DDP, I've had the opportunity to develop and to learn and increase my knowledge, now I'm much more confident in everything that I do.”**  
-Rattanak

He has even taught his wife, Phirum, to use sign language - and plans to teach his child.

Rattanak would like to thank the people of Australia for their generous support for Caritas Australia through Project Compassion.

“As a barber, I can see him having more and more clients and his business getting bigger and more successful,” Sokly says. “His future is bright, there is no going back. His life can only improve for the better.”

Rattanak believes that with the help of Australian supporters, the Deaf Development Program will also continue to go from strength to strength - providing a just future for others like him.

Rattanak received education and skills training because of people like you.

His just future has started with community.

A just future starts with all of us.

# Classroom Activities



FIND THE **STUDENT INTERACTIVE WORKBOOK** AT:  
<https://www.thinglink.com/scene/1130002217424650241>  
(Click 'Refresh' if the hot spot icons don't display correctly.)

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION



### Prayer

God of all people,

We pray for the work of Caritas Australia and its partners in Cambodia, and for the courage and tenacity of people like Rattanak who are transforming their lives and helping us to see the potential and possibilities of a world where everyone is included.

Amen

OR write your own prayer for Rattanak.



### Reflect:

*"Hope is a path of solidarity ... Do not be afraid of solidarity, service and offering a helping hand, so that no one is excluded from the path."*  
- Pope Benedict XVI

How can you offer a helping hand to ensure no one is excluded?



### Catholic Social Teaching Principles: Participation and Subsidiarity

*Religious Education / HPE Y7 ACPPS079 / Geography Y10 Human Wellbeing, Economics and Business Y7 ACHEK020 Y10 ACHEK051*

We believe that all people have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by the people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community.

- How do you see these principles reflected in Rattanak's story?
- What other principles of Catholic Social Teaching can you see reflected in this story?
- How is the wellbeing of the community enhanced when everyone can participate?

## LEARNING TASKS

### INQUIRY TOPIC: A JUST FUTURE STARTS WITH INCLUSION



### Story Study

*Religious Education / English Y7- ACELY1723, Y8- ACELY1734, Y9- ACELY1744, Y10- ACELY1754.*



### Watch (or read) Rattanak's story and discuss:

- What made Rattanak's life challenging?
- How did Rattanak's life change for the better?
- How did Caritas Australia contribute?
- How did Caritas Australia's partner, Deaf Development Program (DDP) contribute?
- What have been the flow on effects for Rattanak's family and his community?
- What are two facts you learnt about poverty and injustice from Rattanak's story?



### Human Wellbeing

*Geography Y10- ACHGK081/ Religious Education*

Investigate differences in human wellbeing between places.

- Examine the different concepts and measures of human wellbeing, and the causes of global differences in these measures between other countries featured Caritas Australia case studies.
- Explore spatial differences in wellbeing within and between countries, and evaluate the differences from a variety of perspectives.
- Explore how Caritas Australia supported programs are designed to reduce the gap between differences in wellbeing.

Suggested websites:

<https://data.worldbank.org/>  
<http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>  
[www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion](http://www.caritas.org.au/projectcompassion)



### Civic Life

*Civics and Citizenship Y9- ACHCK079/ Religious Education*

Research the work of Caritas Australia.

- How does Caritas Australia contribute to the Australian community?
- Explore the concept of 'the common good'.
- How is Rattanak's story an example of how Caritas Australia, as the aid and development organisation of the Catholic Church in Australia, demonstrates inter faith understanding and social justice?
- Why does Caritas Australia advocate for an end to poverty and inequality around the world?
- How can you contribute to the work of Caritas Australia?



### Why we work!

*Economics and Business Y7- ACHEK020*

Explain four or more benefits, work has made to Rattanak's life. (Tip: think beyond just economic benefits)



### Learn how to sign! - Languages:

#### Auslan

Auslan is the name of the Australian sign language.

Learn how to finger spell your name:  
<http://www.auslan.org.au/spell/twohanded.html>

Use the Sign bank dictionary to create a sentence using Auslan:  
<http://www.auslan.org.au/dictionary/>

Watch a video of a teacher at DDP using Cambodian Sign Language:  
<https://youtu.be/-Fvu3eO9FBI>

Can you find and differences between Cambodian Sign Language (CSL) and Australian Sign Language (Auslan)?

For more information about the DDP visit: <http://www.ddp-cambodia.org/csl-project/>