

Finding Her Voice Through English: Malai Karuna's Journey of Growth and Confidence

At just 17 years old, Malai Karuna, a Grade 11A student at Don Bosco Battambang High School, has already experienced how education can transform a person's life. Originally from Tameun Commune, Thma Koul District, Battambang Province, Malai has been living at the Arrupe Center since 2019. Away from her family, the Arrupe Center has become more than just a place to stay—it has provided her with a safe and supportive environment where she can pursue her education and develop skills that will shape her future.

Although Karuna had been introduced to English before joining the Arrupe center, her knowledge was still very limited. She could recognize some words and phrases, but she lacked the confidence to communicate in English. When the project introduced an extracurricular English class after regular school hours, she immediately recognized it as an opportunity to strengthen her language skills.

Unlike formal classroom lessons, the extracurricular English program created a relaxed and interactive learning environment where students could practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing through enjoyable activities. For Karuna, attending the class after a full day of school was never a burden. Instead, it became one of the highlights of her daily routine.

"I wanted to learn more English because I knew it would help me in the future," she explained. "Even though I was already tired after school, I was excited to join the class because I believed it would open more opportunities for me."

Throughout the program, Karuna gradually developed skills that she had previously struggled with. Her listening comprehension improved significantly, allowing her to understand her teacher's explanations and answer questions more confidently. She also became more comfortable speaking English during classroom discussions and activities. Each lesson gave her another opportunity to practice, make mistakes, and learn without fear.

Among all the classroom activities, group work quickly became her favorite. Working together with classmates allowed everyone to exchange ideas, ask questions freely, and encourage one another. Rather than feeling embarrassed when she made mistakes, Karuna found herself learning from her friends while building stronger communication skills.

Beyond improving her language skills, the English class has had an even greater impact on Karuna's personal development. Before joining the program, she often felt shy and lacked the confidence to speak in front of others. Today, she is much more willing to express her opinions and communicate with both classmates and foreigners.

Like many English learners, Karuna has also faced challenges. She considers English writing to be the most difficult skill because it requires correct grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. However, instead of becoming discouraged, she continues to practice regularly and remains determined to improve.



Looking ahead, Karuna dreams of continuing her education at university after graduating from high school. She understands that English will play an essential role in achieving that goal. From reading textbooks and academic materials to completing assignments and conducting research, English proficiency will help her succeed in higher education and expand her future career opportunities.

Reflecting on her journey, Karuna expressed heartfelt appreciation to everyone who has made the extracurricular English program possible. She thanked the project staff, her English teachers, and the generous donors whose support has allowed students like her to access quality learning opportunities beyond the regular school curriculum.



Karuna's story demonstrates that quality extracurricular education does more than improve academic performance. It nurtures confidence, strengthens communication skills, broadens future opportunities, and empowers young people to pursue their dreams. Through the continued support of the project and its partners, students like her are not only learning a language—they are building the confidence and skills needed to create a brighter future for themselves and their communities.