



2023-2024 ICGS Moulton Student Global Citizenship Grant
Recipients: Ursuline Academy Wilmington (USA) and St. Ursula's College Kingsgrove (AUS)

PROJECT: COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The Ursuline Sisters established Mother of Peace School (MOP) in 2018 in response to a critical need in Chrab Viel, Battambang, Cambodia. In a country with significant divide in equity of access between rural and urban environments, MOP seeks to address this by providing a quality education to the village's children. What started as 31 first graders now serves almost 500 students from Kindergarten through 5th grade. This amazing, exponential growth has laid the framework for new possibilities of holistic growth in the community that will not only lead to sustainable development locally, but a brighter future for women and girls in a region and nation plagued by setbacks.

As a rural village, Chrab Viel is dependent on agriculture. However, due to environmental conditions yielding multiple poor harvests in recent years, a large percentage of residents have fallen into debt. This has triggered societal and family issues such as alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and divorce. Women are placed in particularly disadvantaged situations, as many assume traditional domestic roles and lack financial independence. These women belong to a generation still reeling from the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge regime, during which Cambodia's education system was completely eradicated. Having never been to school, high rates of illiteracy further inhibits their ability to formally participate in the economy. Financial desperation has caused many to turn to gambling with the ensuing addiction inflicting familial harm. Simultaneously, women and adolescent girls are leaving Chrab Viel for urban or tourist regions domestically and abroad to search for work. Small children are left in the care of family members, and young women needing to support their families stop studying. Enrollment in senior high school and beyond thus proves rare for girls from this area.

To help combat these issues and forge an alternative path for women and girls, we propose developing a community kitchen at MOP. Expanding the infrastructure already in place, we seek to use the school as a foundation for a larger educational model. By utilizing the kitchen and sharing resources, local women and girls can prepare food and food products to sell at the market. Through assistance and guidance, they could create and manage their own small businesses. By helping women generate economic opportunities, we hope to help reduce migration, increase adolescent female enrollment in school, and foster an important skillset beneficial to all participants both personally and professionally.

Once the community kitchen is active, we aim to expand our project to include extracurricular offerings for MOP students. Through partnership, we hope to offer a cooking elective for MOP students to learn about food preparation and entrepreneurship through iconography and alongside the women and girls using the space. This facilitates the opportunity for mentorship between the older and younger students and the possibility for further program expansion in the future. The final component of our project will involve creating a formal written record of the community kitchen recipes and their cultural significance for distribution across our Ursuline global network.

[Learn more](#) about the Moulton Student Global Citizenship Grant and other ICGS Grants & Prizes.