

■ News

Okayama University Staff Join the Sports Day in Cambodia

On December 7, the Wat Chork Primary School in Siem Reap, Cambodia held their first ever physical education festival, under the auspices of the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, other government bodies. Sixteen volunteers from Japan also took part in the physical education festival, including Yuichi Hara, lecturer at the Graduate School of Education of Okayama University, members from the Okayama Prefecture and City Boards of Education, and students from Okayama University.

Approximately 1200 children from the elementary school were joined by their parents and guardians in participating in the events of the physical education festival. In addition to well known events, such as relay races and ball games, the festival was also an opportunity to highlight the results achieved by everyday physical education at the school. This led to events based on the Cambodian curriculum also being built into the program, such as soccer goal scoring and basketball point scoring competitions, and the resulting physical education festival was uniquely Cambodian. The children really enjoyed their first experience of participating in this kind of event, throwing themselves passionately into each competition and shouting loud encouragement to their teammates, and overall displaying levels of excitement far beyond those seen at comparable events in Japan.

Regarding the planning of the event, Okayama University collaborated with the NPO Hearts of Gold (Okayama City, Representative Director Yuko Arimori). When Hearts of Gold received teachers



Yuichi Hara at a meeting in Cambodia.



Yuichi Hara (left) reports on the results of the festival to the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.



Score boards made by the students under the motto "Japan Quality"

from Cambodia last year, members of the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport saw physical education lessons in affiliated schools and city physical education festivals for the first time, and requested support in holding the same kind of event in Cambodia. Yuichi Hara used means such as internet video conferencing to hold meetings and make preparations to hold the event this September. Students from Okayama University came into contact with the smiles and energy of the Cambodian children, and learnt a great deal through this interaction with people who have very different values from their own.

Taking the lessons learned from the Wat Chork Primary School physical education festival onboard, Yuichi Hara and his colleagues are now working with members of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to create a manual for holding Cambodia's own original physical education festivals. Word of their success has already been reported to the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Japanese Embassy, who offered strong encouragement for providing continued support in the future.



Tug of war between organizers and students