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EDUCATION - The Jesuits have started a school in a poor areas of Cambodia, with a clear idea that Jesuits should serve poor children, an official has said.

The Jesuit education project will be in Sisophon, Banteay Meanchey Province. "it was very clear that we Jesuits should serve poor children first," said Jesuit Father Francisco Oh In-don, delegate of the Korean provincial to the Cambodia Mission.

Father Oh explained in a letter to members of the Cambodia mission and collaborators that he chose Sisophon over Battambang because it has many fewer educational opportunities.

"The city itself is poorer. Battambang is already the location of two reputable schools, Salesian School and Borey School. In Sisophon there is nothing. This is the most important reason for my decision."

The school will be named "Xavier Jesuit School," named after St Francis Xavier the Patron Saint of Sisophon Parish. Also, "Xavier" is the name of many Jesuit schools and institutions across the world and, as Fr Oh said, "Anyone who hears this name recognizes that it is affiliated with the international Society of Jesus."

In November 2013, Jesuits met with Provincial Director of Education, Mr Chheuy Vanna, who welcomed the proposal to develop a primary school, secondary school and teacher resource centre.

On January 21, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport expressed its support for the project and on February 6, the Governor of Banteay Meanchey province, also approved and signed a letter of support for the project.

The land is already being bought at the cost of half a million US dollars and was paid for entirely by the Korean Jesuit Province. The whole project is estimated to cost US\$8 million dollars.

The first educational activities will begin in June 2014 using borrowed facilities. The team will run an enrichment course for 160 disadvantaged primary school students from four local primary schools.

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