

SALTFIELD OVAL AND PLAYGROUND

The saltfields of Chumkriel are a stark wasteland where families live in rudimentary shelters set amidst a patchwork of brine lagoons and salt pans. On these salt pans parents eke out a living for their families, raking the salt, collecting it in baskets, then lugging the heavy baskets to storage sheds. For this hot and back-breaking work they earn between US\$3 and US\$5 per day. In the wet season there is no salt to harvest, so many remain unemployed for up to 5 months

Nowhere in this wasteland was there a place for children to meet and play in a safe and sheltered environment. Then in 2015 a supporter of Chumkkriel Language School, the United World College of South-East Asia, agreed to build an oval and playground on a parcel of vacant land in the centre of the salt fields. The site adjoined a small school room where CLS provides lessons for salt field students.



A total of US\$4,552 was raised by UWCSEA and Australian supporters. This money was used to purchase materials and to pay for contract labour.



Construction started in April 2015 with filling of the site to raise it above wet season flood levels. Containing walls were built and sand was imported to provide a soft playing surface. A high fence was erected to enclose the oval.

A shelter was constructed over the playground to shade it from the relentless sun. Students and staff of UWCSEA then finished it off, building climbing frames, swings and see-saws, and putting a coat of colourful paint on play equipment.



The playground and oval are located beside the small salt field school. During school time they are used by the children in class breaks and for sports activities. Outside school hours they are a magnet for children of all ages to meet and play.



The oval and playground are now the one place in the extensive spread of salt fields where facilities are available for children to get together and have fun.