



Connecting the World:

by Fr Albeiro Rodas, sdb

In November 2010, Laura Villadiego, a reporter from EFE (Spanish language News Agency, equivalent to Reuters, or API in English), visited the Social Communication and Journalism Section of Don Bosco Technical School in Si-hanoukville. The resulting article, *Periodismo joven en el corazón de Camboya* (Youthful journalism in the heart of Cambodia) was reproduced by newspapers such as *El Mundo* and *El Tiempo* in Spain, and Latin America. The Spanish media were amazed at how Don Bosco Tech had managed to open a school of journalism and communication in a country with not a few difficulties in freedom of expression and at how young people from vulnerable communities were able to access technologies and information.

The attention of the press attracted the attention of the radio and I received some calls from Colombian radio stations wanting to know about the project. Before returning on holidays to Medellín (a journey that took some 50 hours from Phnom Penh, through Bangkok, Frankfurt and Bogotá), I was contacted by Medellín City Mayor. "Could you offer some workshops in communication to our *Fuerza Joven* programme?" My answer, as a Salesian, was of course "yes".

'Fuerza Joven' (Youth

Force) is a program set up by Medellín's Mayor for young people from the poorest quarters of the city, victims of urban violence or vulnerable youth who might otherwise end up in gangs.

Don Bosco Parce

I called my experience with *Fuerza Joven*, *Don Bosco Parce*. 'Parce' is Colombian Spanish slang for 'friend' in Medellín. Every morning a car from the municipality with some program leaders picked me up from the family home in Barrio Castilla and brought me to another barrio in the city to meet a group of youths involved in a re-socialisation program. I asked however that the groups be small, between 15 and 20 each, so the youngsters could better profit from the experience.

I began with a cultural exposition about Cambodia and our communication training program for young people like them. These Medellín youth from the poorest barrios - portrayed very often by the media as violent and the inspiration of several movies on urban violence - were obviously quite curious about this 'newcomer'. Then there were the stories of young people like

