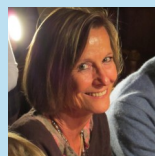




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... there are few areas of the world where one witnesses so brilliantly the transformation from little ragamuffins into schoolchildren ... for a better, more fruitful life ... (Mr James Morris, Executive Director of the UN World Food Programme, after his visit to PSE),



## Editorial

Ghislaine Dufour,  
President

Once again, Marie-France set out on the roads of France, and crossed borders, to update us on our "Little Gems" and meet new sponsors. 29 evenings with Seladavid, a former PSE student who talked about his life story and proclaimed that he wanted to carry on Papy's and Mamie's mission. Today, 10% of the Centre's staff is made up of former students. They are those most able to transmit to the 6,500 children currently in our programmes, the values of the association that aim to transform underprivileged children into citizens engaged in the development of their country.

Thank you to all the volunteers who mobilised to fill the halls. Thank you to the new sponsors who joined us. Christian liked to say: "We are lucky to belong to such a beautiful family!". PSE truly is a family, founded in Cambodia back in 1995 by a recently retired couple, an association that can cares for thousands of destitute children thanks to the extraordinary network that they achieved to mobilise around them over the years. And, as stipulated in the charter, "It is this atmosphere of friendship that is the strength of the Association and that allows everyone to give their best".

The annual tour is not enough, though, to generate sufficient funds to meet the many new challenges we are constantly confronted with. The urgency today remains the same as that of the first days. Still many dropouts from school children live in destitution and violence.

What if each of you who reads this newsletter decided to increase a little the amount of their sponsorship...?

Thank you for your loyalty!

## The new shelter at Veal Sbov

Our families of the Veal Sbov "community", in the far south-eastern suburb of Phnom Penh, have been displaced and no longer had a "paillote" (a community hut). It was necessary to rent another piece of land close to the families and rebuild. It's done and 80 children can play again and benefit from the nursery for the youngest, kindergarten for the 4- and 5-year olds, half-day tutoring and homework help for those who attend the morning or afternoon shift in the nearby school. Our youngsters from ECAP (Extra-Curricular Activities Programme) came to



paint murals and make this place a haven of joy and safety for our little ones who would, otherwise, be alone at home. Since PSE started, the 'paillotes' welcome the children so their mothers can work without worry. There are currently 6 of them around Phnom Penh, near the villages, for the enjoyment and education of the children.

## Snippets from the tour ...

Here it is, the 23<sup>rd</sup> tour is now behind us and, while thanking *all those* who made possible this extraordinary trip of friendship, reunions, new encounters, *and all those who have just joined our PSE family*, I want to tell you a few small stories from this assault course.



David amazed everyone with his command of French, his ability to adapt to all situations and his determination. He gives us his impressions. "I am very happy to have seen all those people who help PSE. I have been impressed by all those retired people, who work so much for the children, and who team up to organise many events and by all the people who volunteer for PSE during their free time. It really touched me a lot. All those people from PSE make a real and very nice family. I also liked the landscapes, the climate, the charcuterie, especially the smoked sausages and hams."

\* Between two sessions, time for a little Sunday break in the mountains where my brother was on holiday ... David dreamt of the snow ... But the weather was awful: no Mont Blanc, no snow-capped peaks, just a lot of wind and heavy snowflakes. Getting to the upper slopes was out of the question, nevertheless David managed to put on skis on a lower slope. In Switzerland, the same bad weather.

*We'll just stay on our hunger for beautiful alpine landscapes...*



### Emotions.

\* In Brussels, what a joy to meet Caroline again, one of our volunteers of the year ... 2000, who came with her husband and remembered having taught maths to the 10 students from our very 1<sup>st</sup> first vocational training in English and French secretarial education.

\* At one of our 29 sessions, there was a group with mental disabilities. I was touched that one young boy from the group ventured to stand up and ask a question at the end of the film, in front of a packed room where we had even had to turn people away. *People with disabilities are also sensitive to the problems the children face.*

\* On the way to Cherbourg, a little and moving detour in "la Manche" department, *at Papy's childhood place*, where an agricultural lycée has now replaced the château where he spent the 1<sup>st</sup> years of his life.

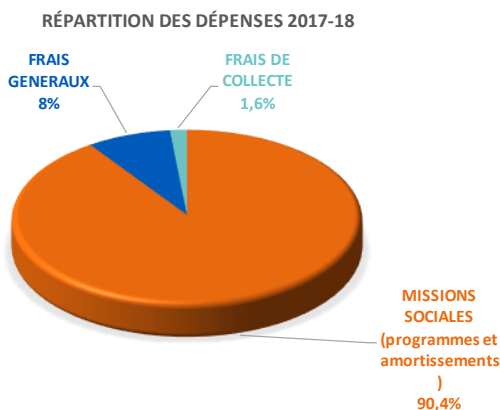
\* After one of the screenings, a father comes to see me. "I have 4 children," he tells me, "so I think I have to sign up for 4 sponsorships!" *What a wonderful idea! ...*

\* During a Franck Dubosc's show, one of our volunteers, had asked to set up a PSE stand in the entrance hall. Her initiative brought us at least 10 people, at one evening. Well done Angélique.

*Publicise and talk about PSE, it is the first thing to do!*

*Again, THANK YOU EVERYONE* for those beautiful moments, so comforting, and for your constant welcome!

## Accounts for fiscal year 2017-18



average 6,556 children cared for in our programmes during the year, i.e. 732 more than in the previous year (which had experienced a one-off decline of the headcount). In addition, there is a wage pressure. Though Cambodia's economic growth does not benefit everyone, it does create demands for wage increases. Moreover, a social security system is gradually being established - which we welcome as it is necessary and advantageous for Cambodians - but it does have an impact on our costs.

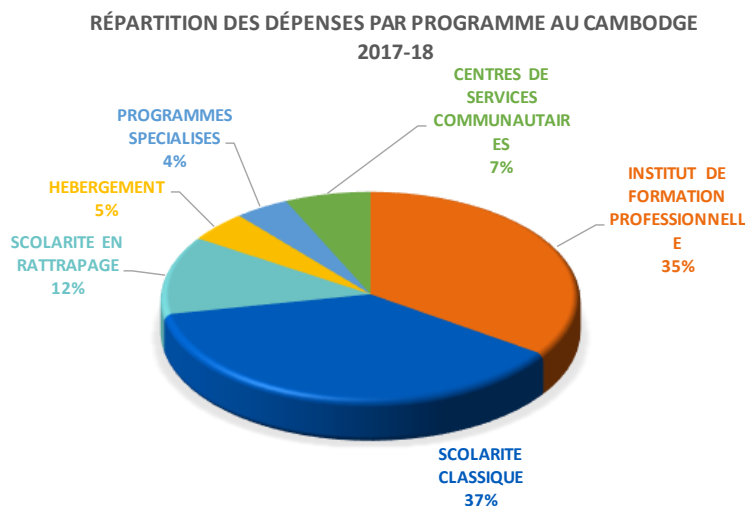
Overheads (€501K) and fundraising costs (€101K) come to a total of €602K, i.e. 9.6% of operating expenses, down 4% compared to the previous year.

The accounts as well as our annual activity report are available on our website: [www.pse.ngo](http://www.pse.ngo)

The accounts for the fiscal year 2017-18, up to 31/8/2018, were approved by the AGM held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

After the exceptional increase in donations, following the release of the film "Little Gems", during the prior year, we saw, for 2017-18, a decrease (-3%) in funds, reinforced by a general decline in donations in France. This fall was more strongly felt in one-time donations (-21%). Luckily, sponsorships - which ensure the security of the care of the children for the long term - increased 3%. That, due to the annual tour, and to the commitment of numerous new sponsors over the prior year, and more generally, to the loyalty of all our sponsors! Thank you for being by our side!

The cost of our social missions in Euros (€5,656) increased 5% over the year. The increase is due, essentially, to a strong rise in the number of children: on





## Know your children

A widowed mother with 3 children: two girls of 16 and 15 (NT and NS) and a boy of 14 (NN). The mother wants her children to go to school, so she is the only one working. She picks potatoes but does not get work every day.

They have only \$0.50 per person per day to live on, or rather to survive! How can they live on that, even in the countryside? ...

PSE's help is obvious: rice for the family, in exchange for the 3 children going to school, one meal a day and funding for schooling with all that it entails.

*Without PSE's intervention, how long would they have been able to carry on before the children leave school to earn money, losing hope of having a decent job and a better life one day?*



A family from the countryside near Siem

Reap. The father, sick, is unable to work. The mother is a farmer. The eldest son, SS, 17 years old, works as a cook but, without any training, earns only \$50 a month. 3 others go to school: SN, a 14-year-old boy and 2 girls of 12 and 9, DSN and DSY. The cumulative income of the mother and the eldest son, \$1 per person per day, does not enable them to live, even in the countryside, and they are often forced to borrow rice from neighbours. PSE's solution is a rice allocation per child at school, one meal per day and the financing of everything related to schooling.

*That is the problem of our families. When the parents do not have a proper job, either the children are obliged to work but, without training, as it is the case of SS, the salary is not sufficient and the family is unable to manage, or the children drop out of school and there is no chance of stopping the infernal cycle.*

## What has become of them?

Chenda is the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 9 children from an extremely poor family. His father was a

pedicab, then a motorcycle taxi driver and a scavenger at the same time.

Before coming to PSE, Chenda went to State school for 3 years. At the same time, he had to work to support his family and, as a result, redoubled all the time. "When I went to school in the morning, I went to work on the dumpsite in the afternoon. Sometimes I stayed until 2 in the morning ... I have also slept on the dumpsite. If I went to school in the afternoon, I went to the dumpsite at night and in the morning. The hardest were the nights on the dumpsite".

In 1996, at the age of 10, Chenda is taken in by PSE. "When I arrived, I told myself that it was time to change my life. I became an outstanding student, and every term I received an award because I was always one of the top three".

He worked hard and also helped his friends. "Before the exams, I gave classes: we met in small groups and went to my house to work and assess ourselves. We called these our clubs".

The atmosphere at PSE was strict but joyful. "It was like a very big family; there were good relations between the staff and the students. Regarding food there were very strict rules - waste was forbidden. However, there was a vegetable that I did not like. One day, I threw it discreetly on the ground ... except that the supervisor saw me, and immediately came to tell me off. I knew it was forbidden, so I promised not to do it again and I have never thrown anything away since."

Chenda is very mindful of equality and respect for the rules. "At breakfast, some arrived late and came to see me, 'Hey my friend, can I join the queue with you?' I told them to first ask those behind me if they agreed."

He did not go to school regularly because his family needed money. "I was going to town to pick up trash: one day in class, one day in town. One time I met my classmates who were going to a taekwondo competition. They asked me why I was not coming, but it was too difficult to answer them: I ran away, as far as possible, and then I cried ..."

"I also cried, with emotion and gratitude, the day a friend realised that I was hungry because my father had thrown away our entire stock of rice in a fit of anger. Not only did he give me his tea-time bread from PSE, but he also asked others to do the same."

After his baccalaureate and a bachelor's degree from our Business School, Chenda chose to work to help his family, whilst continuing his studies in the evening. He came back to PSE with a Master's degree in Human Resources. Today, he works in our Business School. After having been a teacher there, he is now operations supervisor, responsible for all the school's administration, maintenance and human resources.

Married and a father of 2 children, he is proud to have studied at PSE and talks to everyone about it, even to his students who say to him: "so you are not only our teacher, you are also our family!" He would very much like his own children to study at PSE, but he thinks the money should be spent on others who need it more. On the contrary, he tells them how lucky he was to come to PSE and his wish to see them help PSE later.

*Having said, at PSE we do not take care of a child, but of all the siblings as well.*

Chenda and his 8 brothers and sisters were all educated here. The other 2 boys unfortunately have mental disabilities. The 1<sup>st</sup>, after having been at school here and having had a protected work at the Centre, left to live in the countryside with his wife and his child. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, after some time in the specialised class and then at "Action Cambodge Handicap", a partner association that supports our children with mental disabilities once they become adults, has now returned home. Among the 6 girls, 1 studied in our "Business School" after her baccalaureate; 1 failed her baccalaureate and went to work; 1 completed Administration/Accounting training after the Brevet; another trained as a Nanny and one did Weaving Training after Year 5 class. The last one undertook Room Service Training in our Hotel School. Today all of them have jobs that support their families.

*What satisfaction, all these youngsters who have made the most of the opportunity offered by PSE! A constant joy, all those 4,500 graduated, who come back to visit me or that I meet everywhere as soon as I leave the Centre, doing well in their lives!*



## You still have needs?...

Is it not surprising, even after 20 years, that you have been working in Cambodia, that there are still families living in catastrophic situations?... Unfortunately, this is the case! There are several reasons for that ...

It should be known that, over the past 20 years the country has developed very rapidly. This development, of course, like everywhere, increases the cost of living: rent, rice, food, land... everything has become considerably more expensive.



However, the price of trash that our scavenger families sell, has stayed almost the same, so relatively, it has decreased considerably. Our families that pick-up water greens to sell, that wash other families' clothes, that sell periwinkles on the side of the road, all those poorest families, the families of our children, have not seen their earnings increase proportionally. None of these small jobs has a future, but they are those of our families, who are unskilled, without any training, but who try, courageously, to survive through those makeshift means.

When the situation becomes catastrophic, they borrow money to pay the rent or even just to eat. But interest rates are very high, sometimes reaching 20% a month!... A vicious cycle they cannot escape from.

Many, also, owned a small piece of land in the countryside, that allowed them to subsist. However, after two or three dry spells or

floods, as so often happens in the regions of Prey Veng or Svay Rieng, or because a grandmother or a father becomes sick, they start to mortgage their small rice paddy, and finally become forced to sell it... and migrate to the cities, with the hope of finding a better life. And then, it's the trap.

The country's growth, 7% a year, is excellent, and we can just rejoice. But it has side effects, probably inevitable, that exclude those who are outside the system.

For example, this development means that the construction sector is exploding. The logical consequence is the exponential rise in the prices of lands: the same small piece of land of 4 x 5 m, to build your small hut, that, 10 years ago, could be rented for \$2.50, costs today \$10... And if you were a landowner, in any case, you are pressured to sell because of the development of the district. So, you find yourselves forced to move away from the city centre.

And I'm not even talking about the easy money, that attracts the youth into drugs and prostitution ...

So, yes, there are still considerable needs. Our work educating and providing vocational training to the children, and training the parents too, remains vital. It is the only chance, for them, of getting through, integrating, via a worthwhile job, into the country's development circuit.

*It is urgent to continue helping these children and families, otherwise, it is one more generation that is at risk of being sacrificed.*

*We absolutely cannot give up, because it works!*

*We can save them, but we need everyone to join in.*

And that is why we tell our infinite thanks to all those who, following a crush, have decided to donate for these children. It is already so valuable. But supporting us in the long term by repeating donations from time to time is extremely important too, as that allows us to continue our work.

There is also sponsoring of a child, which ensures the security of children's caring until they have graduated with a qualified skill.

*So, we count on you?*



Sarak, a former scavenger, now a receptionist at the Sofitel, Siem Reap

*If you wish to come to the Centre to see with your own eyes what you are helping to accomplish, you will always be most welcome.*

*\* Please don't buy a flight ticket without having first checked the dates of closure of the Centre on our website. But pay attention:*

*\* Our Centre is closed from 5pm on Friday to 8am on Monday. The restaurant, reception and all services are also closed. The Lotus Blanc is a practical training place for our students, who rest at the weekend.*

*\* In the coming months, we are set to do some renovation work in the restaurant, the kitchen and the bedrooms of the Lotus Blanc. So, before planning a visit to the Centre, it would be prudent to first ask the Secretariat in Versailles what the welcoming conditions will be during that period.*

### CHILDREN'S CHOIRS and the 2020 TOUR: Advice to VOLUNTEERS!

- Our branches are looking for Children's Choirs for a concert in November 2019.
- Would you like to introduce PSE in your town in the spring of 2020?

Please contact our network facilitator: [thierry.gros@pse.org](mailto:thierry.gros@pse.org)



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