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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

For this new school year, the 24<sup>th</sup> since PSE was founded in Cambodia, there is a new team at the helm in Phnom Penh. Christine Gaulier, arrived a year ago as deputy general director, has now become general director taking over from Elisabeth Bardon whom we warmly thank for having served as acting general director for the past year. Christine is seconded by Leakhéna, one of the first children welcomed by Christian and Marie-France in 1996. In addition to her qualities of resilience and perseverance, Leakhéna has early demonstrated great intelligence, a strong sense of leadership and intuitive management skills. It was quite natural that she has been granted more and more responsibilities over the years.

Currently, PSE alumni in Cambodia make up more than 12% of the staff. Aren't they particularly well adapted to understanding and guiding the hundreds of children and young people who enter our programmes each year? Other alumni come back to the Centre to join events we organise for them and participate in various ways, including helping youngsters make their way in their professional lives.

The benefits of the development the country has been experiencing since the recent years, delay reaching the poorest. In its wake, their lives sometimes switch from precariousness to extreme poverty. People lose their small piece of land in the countryside or a modest hovel in town, or become over-indebted, to survive.

The children enrolled in the Remedial Centre, and those who come to the Centre for supplementary courses, are now back studying in temporary classrooms, while the new buildings are being built.

Thank you to our sponsors and donors who allow PSE to continue its work with these thousands of families who, as a result, regain hope for a better future.

## A new management at Phnom-Penh

Yes, the mission of Betty Bardon as acting general director has been a huge success! You will remember she already took up the role for 15 months after Pich left and Papy passed away and came back again after Borithy resigned. Mission accomplished: today we have a strong new management team, a Franco-Khmer pair that works together harmoniously and has been validated by the Board of Directors and, most important, approved unanimously by the Directors of each Department here. Christine Gaulier has become General Director and Leakhéna des Pallières, Deputy General Director. A big thank you to Betty who put in place this dynamic duo! Who said that women are those who will save the world? ... Anyway, here, it works! Betty will stay until the end of 2019, standing back in counselling. Things are off to a good start, and the new office places will be effective in the coming days. Christine and Leakhéna share the responsibility of the departments: Leakhéna is responsible for the programmes and Christine for ... all the rest! We wish them much success in these new paths.



*Let's go to continue Papy's dream!*

## Goodbye, Anthony !



He was here for the last 5 years, as head of ECAP, extracurricular activities, where he achieved wonders. ECAP, it is the evenings from 5:00 pm., the weekends, the days off and a few afternoons for the youngest who, on some days have school only in the mornings. He organised a multitude of clubs of all kinds with carefully laid out schedules so that the maximum number of children can benefit from it, and responsables to supervise them.

Everyone can follow their passion: football, rugby, volleyball, frontball, hockey, several martial arts, classical, folk, modern, (hip-hop) dancing, music with PSE orchestra, scouts, board games playing, building blocks, watching movies, outings, dance evenings, sporting external competitions and I am sure I have forgotten some ... For example, the "Entre-Deux" programme - on which Pablo also worked. This programme aims to "retrieve" youngsters who have dropped out of school to try, thanks to an individualized program, to get them back on their feet so that they can resume their education.

Anthony is a specialised educator. He has married one of our former students whom he got to know through a partner programme for young adults with disabilities (ACH). With Chanry and their two children, Thida and Armel, they have just left for France where Anthony will join Apprentis d'Auteuil, another PSE partner.

Thank you, Anthony, for all you have developed and managed so masterfully!  
Good luck! We miss you already ...

# Know your children



At Siem Reap, T.Y. is a grandmother who doesn't have a job, and is responsible for 5 of her grandchildren. She is forced to borrow rice from neighbours to feed them because they only have \$0.33 per person per day, despite one of her daughters sending her \$55 a month! ... She looks after A.C. and S.S., 3 years old. PSE provides schooling and a meal a day for the 3 eldest children, S.C., S.L. and A.S. as well as rice for them to take back home.

*When there is no other alternative to go to work, it is common to leave the children with a grandmother, often without worrying whether she will be able to manage ...*

They are 2 brothers: B.Vn., 16 years old, and B.Vy., 12 years old. Their father left home and their mother works in a factory. She lives at the province with the youngest who is in Year 6. As the family does not have enough to live on, the eldest stopped studying after Year 9, to come and work as a waiter at Phnom Penh. But, without training, he only earns \$80 a month, half of which goes to his uncle who houses and feeds him. In order to gain access to a skilled trade and a better salary, he enrolled in a vocational training course for the start of the school year, with meals in the morning and at lunchtime.

*18 years ago, we started providing vocational training precisely because children could not find work if they were only educated up to the Brevet (GCSE). That has not changed, when the parents, as in this case, cannot afford to finance studies beyond college ...*



The mother, sick, can no longer work. Her 3 children, a 22-year-old girl, K.Sr., with her 2 brothers K.Sn., 17 years old, and 25-year-old K.St., who have been taken care of by PSE since 2017, live in a rental room. The 2 eldest are studying at Vocational Training and the youngest at Secondary school. They already benefit from lunch, as well as from a rice allowance, and the 2 eldest, from a weekend job in the Centre. But it was not quite enough, and they asked for help with the rent for their room. The solution was to provide a weekend job for the youngest as well, which allows them to pay for the room.

*The Social Team has to continually adapt its work to changes in family situations. For this family, the request for a grant was turned into a weekend job offer, thus avoiding assistantship, replaced by a personal participation.*

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*This has always been our policy: we do not give, we exchange. A question of dignity.*

K.M. is 19 years old. He had stopped studying to work as a scavenger because no one at home was earning money. His sister, a scavenger at night, became ill. To enable him to resume his Vocational Training, we give K.M. an exceptional financial support, which he will repay gradually, and 5 kg. of rice a week. His sister will benefit from a job at the Centre because her health only allows her to do sheltered work and she does not have any training. And her 16-month-old daughter is entrusted to a day care assistant.

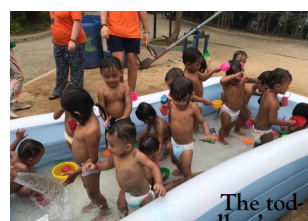
*How to get by when no one in the family is able to work? ... It is our task to find solutions, whilst always maintaining the maximum participation of the beneficiaries. And Vocational Training becomes all the more important.*



## Summer camps

It's back to a month of games, singing, dancing, meditation before lunch, and also training activities. This year's themes are environment, reading, dental care and emotional intelligence. 220 Western monitors, 230 Khmer monitors, 3,400 children per week, 15 different camps ... There are the "normal" camps, the one for children with disabilities, the one for teens, the one for toddlers, those for the provinces, those of each pailote, the one for builders who help to rebuild the dilapidated houses and, leading all that, the indefatigable Marisa who is everywhere at once and keeps an eye on everything with incredible energy.

*Thank you, Marisa!*



Rice for the family



Race to the sea



Brushing teeth



Joys of painting...



Reading

# The 1<sup>st</sup> French Film festival, organised by our School of Media

Our School of Media, recently officially accredited by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training as well as by the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, just organised the very first French Film Festival in Phnom Penh. Albert Oriol had discussed a lot with Papy as he was passionate about cinema like Papy was, and through his desire to pursue what they had initiated together, has become, quite naturally, the school's reference person. He is very present at the school, knows many people in the world of cinema ... including at Cannes, sets up partnerships and sends us many top-quality trainers. He was the one who, along with our students and our Communication team, envisioned and organised this event, selected the films, stressed out to get them in time... He also accompanied the filmmaker Claire Denis, his guest of honour, as well as Vincent Lowy, the new director of the Louis Lumiere film school with whom he recently renewed our partnership. The whole school worked hard to make this festival happen, to which our Ambassador has honoured us to participate. Nearly 700 people came to the event. A first that will not be the last! It was also an opportunity to welcome Nicolas Sacré, the new director of our School of Media.

*A magnificent experience for our students as well as their teachers, all alumni of the school, thanks to the many workshops and encounters with movie directors. An excellent teamwork. And a great way to spread the word about PSE.*



## We need to "re"build

Our 1<sup>st</sup> buildings were made in wood, which, at the time, was the cheapest. The oldest may remember our battle with a termite hill at the place of our 1<sup>st</sup> building, and the epic discussions to find a way to destroy it... The termite hill was finally eliminated. However, nearly 25 years later, the wood has aged and termites, present everywhere here, are dangerously weakening the structures that are still standing. By the way, several months ago, already, we had to close the 2 first buildings, 1A and 1B, which were no longer safe.

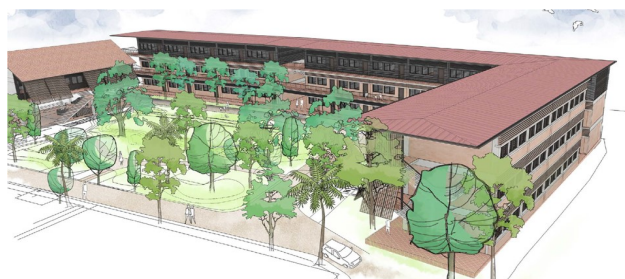
And now, we have to rebuild ... on 3 sides around the first playground.

Buildings on 3 levels (ground floor and 2 floors) .... But don't cry, the architects have decided to keep, as far as possible, the original spirit, with on the facades towards the playground, shuttering that will remind the original wooden buildings. And the ground floor of the building 1A, the very 1<sup>st</sup> one, will stay open with stilts, to respect the early PSE. Nice!

The playground will not be paved but will instead become a garden, with the aim of absorbing water which usually floods it with every large downpour. 45 classrooms will come into being. A big building site! First, we need to replace the classrooms that we had to close, then all the temporary classrooms that have been set up all over to accommodate the supplementary courses, and, at the same time, manage the increase in the number of students compared with the beginning of PSE. A real puzzle!

But that's not all. You surely remember that, during the construction of the boarding facilities, we had designed rooms that could serve both as classrooms and as dormitories. For a time, the boarding facilities were not full, and therefore housed several classrooms. But today, we have more and more students from the countryside, who have studied up to a certain level and stay on for vocational training, without family in Phnom Penh. We therefore have to lodge them, and free up the classrooms so that they can be converted back to dormitories...

*But construction works like that are not financed by the regular sponsorships, which are reserved, as you all know and as I repeat during each fundraising tour, for the care of the children. And you can imagine that, even in Cambodia, works of that size are expensive. That's why we allow ourselves to call on all the good will to get started, to invent all possible actions to find funds. And there are a wealth of ideas! I know this when I see all the marvellous ideas you come up with for our/your children. They are counting on you to be able to study in better conditions than are currently available...*



## What has become of them?

**Sokha**, 37 years old. Her family, from Prey Veng province, was very poor. An only child, Sokha was unhappy, stuck between her parents who argued all the time. One day, they decided to come to Phnom Penh, and work in a brick factory and Sokha, barely educated in her home village, decided to go and work with them. A very difficult job and, above all, a dangerous one. So dangerous that, one day, Sokha's arm was ripped off by the machine! The family then decides to go back to their village and the parents divorced. Sokha works in the rice paddies with her mother because the shame of having a disability prevents her from going back to school.

Poverty, however, brings them back to Phnom Penh, right next to the dumpsite where they become scavengers. With other children, in the 90s, they hear about PSE and decide to come and knock at our door. Sokha remembers, with emotion, having been greeted by Papy. After listening to them, he entrusted them to a teacher who took them to the classroom. Sokha was 15 years old. She learned to read and write and soon enough, the time came for her to choose what she wanted to do later. At that time, we still had few vocational training courses and Sokha chose the Nanny training. Later on, she took care of the small children in the nursery. Now, she is a Library Assistant, responsible for book preparation, and overseeing children in the library..., which allows her to read and improve her knowledge.

She, who never received affection from her mother, found a family that allowed her to study and gave her a job: "Papy and Mamie have become my family, and I am very grateful they gave me a chance to believe in my future."

*At PSE, not all our children pass the Baccalaureate. Our goal is to give them a future, according to their abilities. This was the case with Sokha, ashamed of having only one arm because she was deeply wounded from being teased. What would have become of her if Papy, moved by her disability, had not put her through school?*



## How long does it take to "make" an alumni?



*From early childhood to an hotel diploma*

How long does it take for your children to become independent? ...

Sarom and Saran, our twins, whom our early supporters know well, arrived when they were 3 months old. Of course, it is an exception. But after their schooling and their vocational training, they are now both in their final studies internship, one in Housekeeping and the other in Service. They turn 18 in October.

**P.B.**, who started as a baby, at the PMI (mother & child protection), is today in Preparatory Class. **R.P.**, abandoned as a baby, plagued with skin boils, never succeeded in learning anything. He is currently in Manual Training.

Not everyone comes to PSE as a baby. There are those who start at nursery school. By continuing their education and a training, they can spend 15 years at PSE with a training following the Brevet, and as long as 18 or 19 years if they pursue training after taking the Bac.

That said, the vast majority starts off in CP (1<sup>st</sup> grade), which means a total of 12 years to complete training following the Brevet and 15 to 16 years for training after the Bac.

And now there is a relatively new category, that of children who have studied in the countryside up to the Brevet or Bac level, but whose parents, mostly farmers, have absolutely no way of funding further studies. They are the ones who fill our boarding house, and this is their only chance to obtain a higher level of education. Of course, those stay for a shorter period, 3 to 4 years.

We also have intermediate level students in bridging classes, who are catching up to the 3<sup>ème</sup> (9<sup>th</sup> grade level), to have a chance to benefit, too, from Vocational Training.

To "develop" an alumnus who has a place in society and can take care of his family, takes on average 10 to 12 years. And this is normal, since our goal is to lead these students towards a skilled profession according to their capabilities. That's why we chose the **regular sponsorship** system because the children we take on, need to complete their education. As you have seen, not everyone starts with Nursery school, but the average is globally **around 10 to 12 years**.

*What is magic in this adventure is that we have already "developed" 4,500 alumni since the vocational training programme started in 2000! Thanks to all of you who have understood the challenge, who support them faithfully and whom I thank from the bottom of my heart. Of course, we must keep going, since it works! ... I know I can count on you and all those you can convince to join in this fabulous adventure. Thank you!*

## Les Pépites (Little Gems)

3 years ago, Xavier de Lauzanne's film *Little Gems* was released. Why not share it with your friends? Lend the DVD to your friends, or organise a film viewing (your local branch can help you set it up).

## The Brevet: 93,01 % pass rate

Your children have done wonderfully: across the Remedial Schooling, the external State Schools, Sihanoukville and Siem Reap, 213 passed, out of 229 candidates, including Chetra, with his disability and his wheelchair! Congratulations to all who helped achieve this success: the children, teachers, social, medical and education teams. You can be happy and proud of your children!

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