



Secrétariat - France : 49 rue Lamartine, 78000 Versailles, + 33 (0) 1 30 24 20 20, secretariat@pse.org - Site : www.pse.org

... 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

During its Board meeting last June, PSE Board members concluded PSE's **5-year strategic planning exercise**. Cambodia has maintained steady economic growth, however an increasing exodus from the countryside is taking the poorest away from their traditional support networks. PSE has now taken on the challenge of optimising its resources - that is to say the funds supports you provide us - while improving the quality of its activities together with welcoming an increasing number of children.

On 15<sup>th</sup> August, in the presence of the Minister of Tourism, PSE's School of Hospitality became the **National Accreditation Centre for acquired skills of Hospitality and Tourism Professionals in Cambodia**. This Centre will also provide accreditation in the future for all PSE's vocational training courses. A wonderful recognition! The first beneficiaries of this measure will be our alumni who graduated from PSE before 2012, which is when the PSE Institute first received approval to serve as an official training centre in Cambodia.

And on 15<sup>th</sup> September **our Film School** had **the honour** of participating in the "Cambodia Film Festival" in Long Beach, California: a short film, *Palm Tree*, produced by last year's 3<sup>rd</sup>-year students, was selected and shown!

In this 23<sup>rd</sup> school year since we created PSE in Phnom Penh, we are pushing boundaries and renovating our training restaurant, the legendary Lotus Blanc, in response to the new requirements and training guidelines and building new class buildings to **welcome, for supplementary classes, more of our children from State schools**.

Nothing of all that would be possible without your support because more children saved, means more sponsors. Pass it on!

Thank you for your loyalty!!!

## Summer camps

Here we go again! Marisa arrived first, along with her coordinators. While waiting for the others, they worked non-stop to organise everything. Next the European monitors landed, arriving every day and at all hours. And, little by little, the quiet and empty Centre, occupied, since 28<sup>th</sup> July, only by boarding students and a few other students from the Vocational Training programmes doing practical training on site, came back to life. Emotional, and noisy, reunions between the boarding students and returning monitors. Then the camps started. The children arrive at 6:00 am and it is a joyful and noisy whirlwind uninterrupted right up to 4:30 pm. No, a peaceful moment, however, the time of the siesta. There aren't just one but actually 14 camps in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, the *paillotes*, plus the special camps: for the boarding students, for the children with disabilities, for the teenagers, for the babies... Not to mention a team of doctors, one of dentists and a group of "builders" who, this year, helped rehouse a community evicted from their place of living. 204 young Europeans alongside with 200 young Khmers. For 15 years, these camps have developed into a well-oiled and efficient institution that looks after 3,400 children every day! Congratula-

tions to our friend Marisa, the great conductor of this incredible organisation that saves children from hanging out in the streets, or working, during these holidays but, also, assists the families who can keep receiving rice like during the school year, in exchange for their children participating in our programmes. By the way, these summer camps have been given a new name: School Continuity Programme. Indeed, another form of care for the children, another type of education, more playful, more festive, but equally important. Thank you to all those who contributed to these marvellous moments of joy!



*We wished to come back after the so rewarding last year experience ... The bonds so simple but so strong tied with the PSE children as well as seeing them so happy in a so poor context, makes us aware of the impact that our personal commitment may have. These camps are like a protected environment in our daily life and allow us to go back to France more light and freed from the superficiality of the European way of living.*

Helena and Solene, students



## Know your children



A family of 10 people. The father cleans houses and the mother washes dishes. The 86-year-old grandmother stays at home. **Sk.**, the eldest boy dropped out of school 3 years ago in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and takes drugs. **Sy.**, **Sa.**, and **Sn.**, 3 girls aged 16, 16 and 15 years old, who attend respectively 10<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade, must work part-time in addition to going to school. There is still a younger 12-year-old girl, **St.**, in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, a 6-year-old boy, **Th.**, in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and another 2-year-old little girl, **Ks.**, who is at home.

Despite the difficulties, the family strives to send their children to school, but the parents, who have not had the chance to study, can't provide for the family with only their odd jobs. So, the 3 older girls are forced to work in addition to attending school, which places them at risk for failing in their studies or even having to stop. None of the children were being supported by PSE. Our Social Team only just recently became aware of them. Offering them support has begun with providing meals and funding school fees for the 5 children. "From destitution to a vocation" starts with school...

*Many think that the Khmer Rouge period is ancient history. This is only half true because what still remains are the consequences of this disastrous period. Cambodia is developing, and at a fast pace, everyone can see that. But families who have nothing and, most importantly, who lack professional training because of damage resulting from these terrible years, cannot make up for lost time. And these are the families we are working with.*

## What has become of them?

**Sun Sovannara.** She is 31 years old. Life had not spoiled her, at the beginning... Her two sisters, her brother, and two cousins were raised by their grandmother because their parents died. They were scavengers at the old dumpsite. But as if that was not enough, Sovannara was a victim of polio. Today, she still has a pronounced limp, with an impressive lopsided gait. But in the middle of, or despite all that, she's always cheerful, with a disarming smile.

All the children went through PSE schools starting since 2000 and all make a good living since receiving Vocational Training and graduating. After studying and then working for a while in our School of Media, Sovannara went outside because some audio-visual skills are somewhat tough given her disability. In 2012, she married Sem Sarom, also a PSE alumnus, who completed waitressing training at our School of Hospitality. And, as an additional miracle, despite the significant distortions of her body, she could, what was not evident at first..., and closely monitored by Michel Sebban, our friend and an advisor to our Health Department, go to the end of a pregnancy and give birth to a cute little girl who is now two years old. Needless to say, her smile is even more radiant!

Currently, Sovannara works on projects as a contractor at Meta House, the German Cultural Centre, where she earns \$50 a day.



*I never get tired of hearing all this good news. We used to be asked - and I still get asked - what keeps us going ... Well, it's all that: what has become and what is becoming of all these children who had no future. How would it be possible to think of stopping?*

## Congratulations!!!

\* In Phnom-Penh, we achieved a **97% pass rate at the Brevet** (exactly 96.93%: 100% for the CRPSE and 93.86% for those in State schools)!!! And **91%** for the provinces (Sihanoukville and Siem Reap). Congratulations to our children, teachers and the General Education team. We are very proud!

\* As citizens of an ASEAN country (Cambodia is 1 of the 10 members of this union of Southeast Asian countries), our young people are required to learn English as a priority and French is taught only as a 2<sup>nd</sup> foreign language. However, aside from the courses given at the Centre, some students are also enrolled in the French Institute of Cambodia. We have the satisfaction of having **15 new graduates of the DELF** (Diploma of French Language Studies) with an 83.3% pass rate!

## Result of National Grade 9 Exam 2018



## Meeting with our families

In June, our traditional family celebration took place. 1,500 people tightly packed into the yard known as "Queen's." These meetings, in addition to the regular visits by the social workers, are key to us staying in touch and, especially, listening to the families of our children. These families also know that, who come in such droves. The meeting started with some information on the importance of joining together to combat dropping out of school and encouraging the children to come to school as the only solution for a bright future. Then there was a presentation of our different vocational training courses as well as the FLIP program (Family Livelihood Improvement Program) which was originally intended for parents to give them some job training and help them find work but will now also be offered to young students in academic failure, so they are not left without a solution. The meeting then continued on with participants breaking into smaller groups, so families could discuss their problems and concerns. It ended, as usual, with the distribution of snacks and the payment of a small allowance, which is necessary as coming to the meeting deprives participants of a half-day's earnings. These meetings, always very warm and friendly, allow us to exchange information and maintain crucial bonds of trust with the families of our children. And these bonds are the means that allow us to work together in the same direction.



## The scout promises

The second to last Sunday of July was the end of year party for our Scouts. And as it should, the day ended with a vigil. Pauline and Julien had taken over the group after Clara and Thibaut, with the same enthusiasm, and I am happy to see that our young people are still so motivated.

That evening, in their yellow, green, red, and blue shirts, they sat in a large square around the essential campfire on one of the few evenings without rain. What a marvel that on this occasion, 7 young people and leaders made their promise: Mony, Sreynich, Thavy, Sreyleak, Vicheaka, Sphanuth and Chetra.



Yes, our Chetra, in his wheelchair, is one of those who officially made their commitments. This young boy, locked up in his body, is today in 8<sup>th</sup> academic year and, from now on, also a Scout, with all that this involves as openness to others, cheerfulness, willpower and, of course, the help of his team-mates, leaders and scoutmasters.

A PSE miracle among many others.



## Dinner at the "Source de Vie" home

The "Source de Vie" home welcomes about 20 children from our families, with severe disabilities. My daughter Caroline and I were invited there to dinner. The atmosphere is cheerful, and the "mothers" are both very attentive and professional. Some children are able to eat unaided, but others need to be fed, sometimes with pureed meals and "solid" water. One of the oldest, R., who was always sad, has improved... I found him more communicative, more open, trying to sing along with the others. Sophea, the manager, tells me that he is beginning to learn how to count. And I was particularly touched to see R. going spontaneously to feed a friend who could not do so alone and then coming to give C. his creamed dessert brought by Caroline. Even if C. now manages to eat by himself, the problem with his hands doesn't allow him to hold both a little jar and a spoon. The little 9-year-old M-L, who would not have survived without a major surgery, also went - without anybody asking her - to feed M. who at 13, is no bigger than she is, and can't use her limbs nor talk. It was a pleasure to see their laughter - both of them, even if M. can't talk.



## PSE's path

We were often asked whether we knew what we were going to do when we started, if we had any idea of what our action would become. Honestly, no. We had absolutely no idea. We just knew we couldn't leave children to live in the situation we had just discovered. Without knowing at all where we were heading. We simply put one foot in front of the other, addressing needs as they arose.

And a few days ago, friends sent us a "thought of the day" that seemed to me to sum up our route. It is from Saint-Exupéry: "I will plough my furrow without first understanding, I will simply go ... It is during the march that the purpose appears in all its splendour." I have nothing to add... Except that PSE's path, it's also all those numerous friends who, over the years, have taken the road by our side.



## The 5-year vision



Every 5 years, with PSE managers at headquarters and in Phnom-Penh, we reflect on the direction for the coming years. This time, it was decided to continue to improve the programmes, particularly with regard to pedagogy and language learning, and to strengthen the support for the most disadvantaged families.

We also want to increase scholastic support for those of our children who are in public schools in order to bring them to the same level as those who study at the Centre. Continuing to professionalise our operations is equally on the agenda.

And, in the immediate future, we do not plan to expand our area of action because we have not finished addressing all the needs in our current areas of operation.



**And the 2019 tour ...** Don't be afraid to get started organising an evening with some friends with the support from Thierry, head of the network ([thierry.gros@pse.org](mailto:thierry.gros@pse.org)), and your regional manager (on our website: [www.pse.org](http://www.pse.org)). We are waiting for your ideas and proposals as soon as possible, so we can be ready in time. [cmfdespallieres@wanadoo.fr](mailto:cmfdespallieres@wanadoo.fr)



**We are looking for:** In France,

1 volunteer advisor in auditing.

1 volunteer engineer / construction

In Cambodia,

1 volunteer teacher experienced in painting

 [www.pse.org](http://www.pse.org)

 [psefrance](https://www.facebook.com/psefrance)  
[psecambodia](https://www.facebook.com/psecambodia)