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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

In the last issue of the newsletter that came out in February, we had made an appointment with Marie-France for her annual tour. Events have now overtaken us, her meetings, as well as all the fundraising events planned for spring have had to be cancelled. First off, our thoughts go out to those who have been personally affected by the health crisis and its many consequences, be it your family or friends.

Among these are our families in Cambodia for whom the impact of the Covid-19 crisis is primarily economic, with dramatic consequences. The border closures, the drop in tourism and the collapse of the textile industry in particular, have brought with them job losses in the informal economy, where the parents of the children we welcome make their living. PSE finds itself facing the emergency of the beginning!

Schools have closed in Cambodia, as they have in our communities, but the staff at the PSE Centre have remained at the ready, with beautiful displays of solidarity, even more pronounced than before. Our foster families have opened their doors wider, making room for our little boarders. A beautiful display of solidarity has also formed amongst our alumni, some of them having lost their jobs. Our social team remains at the ready, 24x7, as does the healthcare team to respond to emergencies and they distribute food packages - as you read these lines - to more than 1,600 families. For it is not dying from the virus that these communities are afraid of, it is dying of hunger.

Our small team based at our headquarters is now working remotely, and hundreds of volunteers who work in France and elsewhere have been securing more support, making an effort to organise actions that do not require large face-to-face gatherings. What energy! Thank you everyone for your loyal support. Make sur you take care of yourself as well.

United in solidarity

We hope you and your families are doing well, and that you have not been too severely impacted by this pandemic and its consequences.

In this period of crisis that we are living through together, to all of you, sponsors, donors, friends... members of the PSE family, I'd like to express, on behalf of our entire team in Cambodia, our heartfelt thanks to you. Everyone here has been so touched that you have been concerned about our children, that you have been checking up on how they are and that you continue to do all you can for them, in the midst of these challenging times. We are also thinking of you. Thank you for your loyalty and support. It is in times like this that it is important to support each other.

The situation in Cambodia

Here in Cambodia, up to now, the virus has not been that virulent. ... We can rejoice in that. However, some are saying that we are not safe from a delayed spread. That is why protective measures are in place like everywhere throughout the world. Three dedicated hospitals have been set up to care for those who fall ill, and a large hotel has been requisitioned in case there is a severe rise in the spread of the virus.

Cambodians in general are rather disciplined when it comes to wearing masks and hand washing with sanitizer. However, not all necessarily have access to these and for many of our families, between a meal and a mask, the choice is easy made ... That is why, as so much has slowed down, our sewing workshop having fewer orders, is making masks to give to our children and their families for free.

On the other hand, a strict confinement is difficult to achieve in overpopulated areas, where dwellings are close to each other and where people live mainly outdoors ...

But the catastrophe, for the time being, comes mainly from the employment problems, and most families are hit hard.

Many "workers" (day labourers) used to work in neighbouring countries, and the borders have closed ...

Our scavengers usually sell their loads to resellers who themselves supply them to neighbouring countries that have recycling plants and buy them for a higher price than locals can. But as the borders closed, our scavengers, must accept to sell what they have collected, for 2- to 3-times less, given that they don't have storage



space and are therefore forced to sell each day for lower prices...

All our families who have "small jobs", tuk-tuk or motorcycle taxis drivers, construction workers, small street vendors, etc, ... are day labourers. They are not coping well because the entire society has slowed down, and when one lives day-to-day, without any savings, one day without work or with not enough work can be a disaster!

As for their children, many of our alumni who left PSE with jobs, whose families now rely on them, are now for some of them, without work and for some others, on unpaid "holiday"

with no guarantee they will be rehired, it means without income in both cases – and without a social system for unemployment! Many restaurants and hotels, tourism in general, are undergoing an unprecedented crisis. More than 90% of economic activity is at a standstill! Therefore, large numbers of our alumni from the past 2 or 3 years, employed in the world of tourism in the broadest sense, find themselves suddenly with nothing.

Some of them, who were fortunate enough to be employed for several years or who hold positions with more responsibility, are having to adapt to these new work conditions: 50% of work for 50% of pay, on a temporary basis, but for how long? ... In the hope it will hold until things resume their normal course!

That said, this situation comes with big risks:

* Instead of rehiring staff who have already worked for 1, 2, or 3 years at a workplace... why not hire recent graduates at a lower salary, in order to absorb the losses incurred during the crisis?

* How long will the businesses be able to guarantee the half-time solution for all employees, without going out of business?

* How long will employees be able to hang on with 50% of pay, knowing that, quite likely, most of them have borrowed money to buy a phone, a motorbike, a plot of land or a house, or more often to settle their family's debts?

In construction, only big companies can keep working, but not the smaller outfits, those who hire unskilled labour, like the parents of our children. Etc...

And, in the end, will there be internships for our students?

PSE day-to-day

PSE also lives to the rhythm of the pandemic.

It started with hand washing with sanitizer and temperature checking when entering the Centre and the classrooms. At the same time, more soap dispensers were installed. But, to prevent them from disappearing ... we had to find these old style soaps in the form of elongated olives, strung on stems and fixed to the walls - memory of my child's school. And our children loved it: they washed their hands, just for fun...

Then, on 14th March, we had to close the Centre. This weekend of March 14th and 15th, was devoted to warning the children that there would be no more school from Monday 16th, and to arrange for the boarders to return home - when possible - or to go to foster families if they had no family solution. A gigantic headache for the Social Team! We also had to urgently organize transport for those returning to the countryside, and discuss with our foster families so that they each agreed to welcome more children...

From 16th March, there are therefore no more children in the Centre. No more games or shouts no more dust raised by the comings and goings, classes and playgrounds are deserted.

At that time, the staff were still supposed to be working. But as many were very concerned about the illness, we were led to decide and let go on vacation those who wished it, ahead of the holidays in August. Almost exclusively the directors continued to work, as well as the social team, the medical team and the guards.

The Government had already announced the bans on gatherings, large and small, the closure of pagodas, karaoke bars, certain markets and stores, the obligation to wear a mask, etc... You know all that...

Then the Khmer New Year festivities drew near, one of the two biggest feasts in the year. On this occasion, everyone goes to the province, to meet up with family, in the village and pagoda of its childhood. In order to prevent the spread of the virus, roads have been closed, both to the provinces as well as from the provinces to Phnom-Penh. And the New Year's holidays have been cancelled - moved a later date - with a legal obligation for everyone to return to work on 13th April, taking the necessary precautions, masks, hand washing, non-touch gestures, distancing, etc... while the celebrations were due to take place on 13th, 14th, 15th and 16th April. Over these 4 days, in order to give everyone, the opportunity to celebrate at home, we decided to shorten the working day by one hour.

Solidarity to welcome our boarders

Our foster families are families we have known for a long time. Many of them have been helped by PSE from the start, their children being among the first children taken out from the dumpsite 24 years ago. Some families from our staff, too, have been foster families for many years. A long history of loyalty!

To host those of our children who were unable to return home for various reasons (absence of parents, abusive families, etc...) we did not even have to find new families. All have agreed to take in more children entrusted by PSE!

One example among others: the family where Karuna now lives, she who was supposed to come with me and was as sad as I was, about the cancellation of the tour. This family who has been welcoming PSE children for a long time already, now has increased the number of youngsters they host from 6 to 13! Like others, this family has been helped by PSE, and their children, except the youngest one, have finished their studies and can now help their parents. But agreeing to welcome 13 more children into the family! ... while, yes, they are no longer destitute, but they are by no means rich, it is really particularly remarkable!

Another family that was hosting 7 children, has now 9 because the house is not large enough to accommodate more. Etc...

I really admire our foster families who have been able to make room to welcome urgently new children.

What solidarity!



Emergency food aid



To avoid hunger and malnutrition we naturally are continuing to distribute the 7 tonnes per week of compensatory rice to our families benefiting from this programme. For some time now, always with the aim of limiting handouts and educating our families to take care of themselves as much as possible, these rice distributions were linked to a very small contribution based on family quotient. However, as work has either reduced or stopped, we have temporarily stopped requesting this contribution.

That said, rice, by itself, is no longer sufficient in this time of crisis. Our Social Team, on the breach as usual and constantly listening to needs and urgencies, also distributes other basic food-stuffs, and of course, we still provide access to health care. On the other hand, we had to review the mechanics of our distribution process, in order to avoid large gatherings at PSE. Distribution is now carried out in 3 different places: 2 at OBK land (location of the School of Management and Sales, that of the School of Media and the rice reserve) and 1 in front of the Social Team office, from 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., with the help of around 30 volunteers respecting safety measures.

This little table gives an idea of the logistics and the resources implemented:

Date	Rice	Nber. of families	Instant noodles	Tinned fish	Soy sauce
20 th March	8 tons	923			
		Of which 214	5,600 portions	3,300 tins	450 l.
3 rd and 4 th April	33 tons	1,137	120,000 portions	36,000 tins	7,200 l.
8 th May	45 tons	1,655	155,500 portions	49,600 tins	9,930 l.



But also eggs, dried fish, sausages...

And, in addition to these "food baskets", we are also starting to receive requests for help in paying rent - 450 so far.

School continuity and "major spring cleaning"

In the absence of the children, we have taken this opportunity to organize training for teachers, and for others as well.

But above all, we need to try and make sure that the children do not lose their school year, and try to keep them studying despite everything. Not easy, when our families do not have an internet connection! So, our teachers got down to work. They prepare home works on paper and the Social Team gives them to the students or their families, mostly at the same time as the distribution of rice and food baskets. In the same way, the home works are collected to be corrected by the teachers and then given back during the next



distribution. The children of the Remedial Centre are included as well as those receiving School Support. The students of the Vocational Training Institute, too, have their system.

But the staff in the canteen, those at ECAP (extra-curricular activities), those in charge of boarders, interns, the Source of Life Home, etc... are really unemployed. So, we came up with an idea: offer them to work on many useful tasks - excluding very technical work, of course - to assist our maintenance team, which is overwhelmed with the quantity of things to sort out. So, a large programme of minor repairs and clean-up is being put in place. To the programme: stripping and painting of stairways and balcony railings, entrance grids, supporter stands at the edge of sports fields, canteen tables, maintenance and planting of trees and flowers, mowing lawns at OBK, cleaning the walls of buildings, repairing broken chairs and desks, etc... If there is time, before we come out of confinement, we will have a magnificent, renovated Centre. And woe to the children who will have fun writing on the walls or tables! ...

"My" guards

It is the usual here: you never leave a house empty, without a caretaker. And for us, it's more than a house ... So the guards have not stopped working either, in turns. One day, I had not opened my shutters and suddenly I see Leakhena arriving, concerned. Since the shutters were still closed at an "unusual" hour, the guards had called her and, unable to reach me - my phone was in silent mode - she had come to investigate. A number of our guards are parents of our children, and many have been here a long time. So, even if I am the only one permanently living in the heart of the Centre, I am perfectly safe, and in family, with this friendly team. Being less busy than usual, they organise petanque tournaments. Yes, petanque has become a PSE tradition amongst our guards, between patrols!



Part of the day-shift

Know your children

Tourism is one of the sectors that has been most impacted by the crisis; it is also a sector where we have many alumni, our School of Hospitality being the 1st one of our vocational training schools established.

Kim Chanthoeun is studying Catering in our School of Hospitality and Tourism. She has a younger sister and a younger brother. Since the school closed, she helps with housework, looks after the small ones, helps with their homework and helps her mother sell Khmer noodles. "Since the school is closed, she says, it is very difficult for me to carry on studying. At school, I have the explanations from my teachers, but now I have no one who can explain the lessons to me. It is very stressful... With the pandemics, my family has many problems: my parents have lost their income; they cannot pay for water, for the rent, or pay back their loan. The bank is asking us to reimburse but we have no money. PSE is helping us by giving us food".



Morm Sreymab is the eldest of 6 children. She is a student in Room Service and Laundry in our Hospitality School. She explains: "My mother is a scavenger but, at the moment, no one buys waste. My father is a construction worker but he has no more work because of the coronavirus. We don't have enough money to pay the rent, the electricity and we don't have enough to eat... PSE helps us by giving rice, tinned food, noodles and lots of other things".

What has become of them?

Soun Sakhana, a former Front Office student at our School of Hospitality and Tourism. Her father died. She chose the Front Office course because, she says, there were places and it offers many job opportunities. Describing herself as friendly and easy going, smiley and happy to communicate with people around her, she could see it was the right job for her. Sakhana joined our 1st apprenticeship programme, set up in January 2019, together with 16 other students from the same course, who were taken on by 16 companies. She says she learnt a lot from her superiors during the apprenticeship where she could put what she had learnt at school into practice, in a professional environment; in particular, she could practice communication and responsibility and raise her skills and her self-esteem. In the end, Rose Wood, a prestigious hotel, where she had worked as an apprentice, offered her a job with a salary well above average in this industry. She is still working there at the moment. Well done, Sakhana!



Hok Dany, who graduated from the Hospitality School last year, was working as a Receptionist in a luxury hotel in Phnom Penh. But they don't have any clients since 1st April. Employees continue to work there to maintain the site but for 50% of the time and with only 50% of their salary. Dany can no more pay for her room and had to go back to her parents' house, even if it is 2 hours far from Phnom-Penh. Because, in addition she has to pay back every month for her parents' loan, because both, as construction workers, have no more building sites and then no more income.

To help us support our families in need

The event "Sourires en chœurs", which has, for several years, been organising children's choirs to sing together for the benefit of their distant friends in Cambodia had also to be cancelled, like the annual tour and all the events organised by our volunteers throughout the years... The last event to be held, took place at Mouvaux, near Lille. A fantastic concert with several children's choirs organised thanks to our dynamic team in Les Hauts de France. It was a beautiful success.



You can imagine, I am sure, that the exceptional helps we have to provide to support our children and their families heavily impacted by the crisis, have a serious bearing on our budget that could not predict such a scenario on top of the cancellation of the annual tour and all other events... So, I am not hiding it from you, we need a hand!

If everyone gets started, it is achievable! *It is not necessarily big things.* If everybody finds a new sponsor, for example... If every sponsor adds a few Euros to their sponsorship... If every donor also adds a few more Euros... If everyone finds a friend who could help... But you probably have lots of ideas yourself...

The aim is that, as soon as it will be possible, all our children may come back to school without having to go and work for their families because of the damage caused by the crisis, this opportunity to go to school, that we have been fighting for, together, during the last 24 years (we welcomed our first 10 children on 20th May 1996...) and that works, since already 4,500 children who passed through PSE have left with a qualification.

I know we can count on you and I thank you deeply, once again!