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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 the past six months, the families whose children PSE educates and trains for jobs, have to face the terrible consequences of the pandemic. Thanks to the vast solidarity movement within the network of friends, of which you are a part, our families in greatest difficulty have been able to receive food baskets for four months. Some have also had assistance in paying the rent. As you read this newsletter, few schools in Cambodia have been able to reopen. At the PSE Centre, skilful efforts to rearrange the premises to comply with current health measures should make it possible to resume some classes and workshops.

The school continuity programme, implemented by our teams since the first days of the crisis, continues and is constantly improving. It is, in fact, critical to keep our youngsters engaged, and it works! With the resources available and a lot of investment from all, teachers, social workers, children, parents. The teams at our Centre have benefited from all kinds of training to master new educational tools as well as new management software.

The annual General Assembly has been scheduled for 26<sup>th</sup> September, as it could not be held in the spring. The accounts for last year show that your loyal support helped offset a significant increase in our costs in Cambodia. Thank you so much. However, at the start of 2020, our search for new sponsors has been greatly impacted by the crisis, and we could not bring ourselves to reduce the number of children cared for, or the quality of the programmes that allow these children to definitively escape destitution

Since the 2020 tour could not take place, we have chosen to reach out to you via social media, with Frédéric Lopez. See you on 11<sup>th</sup> October or listen to the recorded version of the broadcast.

Be our ambassadors, pass on the message!

## Rendez-vous with Frédéric Lopez on 11<sup>th</sup> October!



As you know, my tour last spring was cancelled, due to the current health crisis. For the coming autumn and winter months, there is still great uncertainty about our ability to organise public events. They are, however, key to enable us to find new sponsors and donors, given that the needs in Cambodia are still huge, and even more pressing today for the poorest families with the disastrous consequences of Covid-19.

That is why we are setting up an event, transmitted via the Internet, which will have the advantage of not being subject to public health measures: a programme hosted by television anchor Frédéric Lopez, who is volunteering his time to serve as host to participants in both France as well as Cambodia!

The show will present interviews with alumni rescued from the hell of the dumpsite, reports on our programmes and our actions in the face of new emergencies and the Covid-19 crisis, and a few other surprises. Of course, I will have the pleasure of participating in this programme myself, from our Centre in Phnom-Penh! The show will be live on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> October 2020, at 5:00 p.m. (French time) via the Internet

\*Facebook: [www.facebook.com/psefrance](http://www.facebook.com/psefrance) \*YouTube: [www.youtube.com/psecambodia](http://www.youtube.com/psecambodia)

*I hope to see you there, and I am counting on you to share this information.*

*Why not bring together a few relatives who are new to PSE to your home to watch the show together?*

*And for those of you who are not so "connected" on social media, why not ask your children, young adults, in their 30s, 40s or older, to relay the information!*

*This year, more than ever, we need you and your support!*

## What is the state of play?

The "major" schools, for example, the international schools, are going to start term in September. But at PSE, we will never have the means nor the space to apply the same measures.

Everyone here, teachers, trainers, guards, Canteen teams, Health department, Extracurricular Activities, Social Team, Boarding School ..., are working tirelessly to offer the Ministry solutions that could allow us, we hope, to also consider a return to school in September.

Since we do not have the space to maintain required social distancing, the options revolve a lot around alternating. But in what form and at what pace? Morning or afternoon? Every other day? Every two weeks? ... Which children do we prioritise? What solutions do we offer those whose turn it will be to stay at home? ...

And then, how do we organise travel, tours, recreation, canteen meals, bus transport, etc...? And how many boarders will we be able to welcome again, depending on the space available? ... Without forgetting the distribution and washing of masks which, of course, we will have to wash here. So many questions which are giving headaches to all those who are working to find solutions acceptable to the authorities.

So, those who are making plans, making projections, imagining scenarios, often have to start all over again because a parameter has been forgotten or a fact does not tie in with the requirements or the needs of the other Services ...

In fact, everyone is dependent on all because the passages from one place to

Suite de p. 1 another, disinfections between the different groups, etc., involve all the departments without exception.

And, to remain positive, can we not consider that this joint planning replaces all the so-called "team-building" meetings?

So far we heard that the first to return in September will be those classes with exams, 3<sup>èmes</sup> and Terminales, to take the exams that have been postponed until December. But for the others? ...

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## Food aid



At the beginning of August, as at the beginning of each month since the start of the pandemic, emergency aid was distributed to 1,665 of our families: 45 tons of rice, soy sauce, instant noodles, canned fish... The Social Team had, once again, organised operations remarkably with masks and respect for social distancing thanks to markings on the ground.

H.M. the Queen, who supports us regularly, this time had Mrs. Kim Sê, from the Royal Palace, provide us with particularly important help, for which we especially thank her.

We were planning to reduce this food aid a little, so as not to risk creating dependency, but can we? Because the closure of many garment factories, the increase in the indebtedness of families to microfinance organisations, the fall in exports due to the reduction, by the European Union, in privileged tax conditions, as well as the collapse of tourism, are catastrophic for the country. Cambodia, which was experiencing steady development, is suffering greatly

from the pandemic. Extreme poverty, although it had not yet been completely eradicated (otherwise we would not be here), had nevertheless diminished. And now millions of people are about to fall back into it. A sad step backwards from the progress made.

*So, it is not the time to give up!*

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## All-round training



The absence of children, even if it is simultaneously a problem and a sadness, has given way to various training opportunities.

\* Practical workshops for the staff of the Foyer Source de Vie and the Adapted Teaching Section, to learn, or review the handling of wheelchairs, safety measures for carrying children, how to set up an individualised project for each child according to their problems ...

\* The walls of the Foyer, the PMI, the paillotes, are being covered with colourful decorations and drawings, which will surely delight our children.

\* For our educational managers, body language workshops by a trainer from Lycée Descartes, using games and theatre to teach children how to interact with their teachers.

\* Early morning meditation and Qigong (Chinese gymnastics, based on breath control and concentration), by Yannick Auer, French programme manager.

\* Also training in "Soft Skills", in Pedagogy, in English, in new software, etc ... etc ...



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## Sad Thoughts

We are mourning the loss of Pierre Chetcuti, who suddenly died recently. He was the founder of ACH, an organisation that cares, on the model of the Arche, for handicapped young adults, some of whom come from PSE. We spoke already of this organisation, in a previous newsletter whose director is a PSE alumnus. No doubt that she will be needing some support going forward...

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## Moving!

Eight-year-old Adrien's grandmother read him "Chenda's Newsletter", the new supplement aimed at your young children and grandchildren. After listening carefully, Adrien disappeared to his room and returned with fistfuls of coins and notes: "Here, Mam, this is all the money I have, it's for the children of PSE, I don't need it!". There was 1 euro in cents, a one-dollar bill, two notes of 5 Egyptian pounds and two notes of 5 Turkish lira, a total of €3.50. *It is beautiful to see the absoluteness of children, even if, of course, it will not save PSE. But don't we have a lot to learn from this way of rushing in?*

*There is no age to start caring about the poorest. The most important thing is to raise awareness.*

## School Continuity



Even if the living conditions are difficult for our children, our teachers are preparing lessons and homework for them in order to keep them engaged. In addition to online classes, which not all can access easily, the students come to the school once a week, in small groups, while strictly respecting safety measures, to receive paper copies of lessons and to hand in their homework. More than 70% of students in General Education benefit from this system. And the teachers are paying particular attention to those who are preparing the Brevet and the Bac.

**Pang Vandet** is one of our maths teachers. He teaches 3<sup>ème</sup> class: *"When there are no children, I do research to find new documents and new ideas for how best to present classes. I make PowerPoint presentations for my students. I prepare summaries of classes and exercises. Every Friday, they come to PSE to correct their homework and to pick up the lessons for the following week. If they have questions, I provide them additional explanations. It's not easy to teach in these conditions but the most important thing is to keep following up with the children."*

\***Sophalmean**, 15, is in 3<sup>ème</sup> at PSE. In the morning, she helps her mother with the housework. In the afternoon and evening, she spends time on homework. *"I spend a lot of time because even if I don't understand everything, I try to finish it all anyway"*.

With their modest savings, her parents have finally decided to sacrifice 20% of their budget to buy her a second-hand smartphone, for \$30, that will allow her to follow her classes online, because of her upcoming Brevet. *"When I don't understand, I try to find information on Google or on YouTube, but it's difficult not to have the teacher's explanations."*

Later, Sophalmean would like to work in a bank. To achieve that, she needs to pass her Brevet, and then the Bac, and finally study at the PSE "School of Business". *"When I go to PSE, on Fridays, the teacher explains the lessons, quickly because there are other students waiting, but he always takes the time to explain everything. I work hard because if I get a good job, it's the only way out of destitution. This will allow us to go live elsewhere, because around our house, we are not safe: there are plenty of drunk people, junkies, thieves..."*



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## And our Students in Vocational Training

Preparatory classes and 1<sup>st</sup> Year students are following distance learning classes, like the children in General Education. 2<sup>nd</sup> Year students are currently doing internships, except those who returned to the countryside. Some of them are lodging with friends or family, others are lodging with their employers and we also rent rooms to those who have no solution.

Following a recent and very fruitful visit by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, we will be authorised to re-open initially in September, only with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year practical classes: for the schools of Sales and Management, Audio-visual, Hospitality and Tourism, Construction and Mechanics.

We will probably be able to welcome back some 2<sup>nd</sup>-Year students into the boarding school too, but only 6 per room instead of 12. Roughly, about 60% of students will be able to resume practical training at that time.

\***Vothey**, 20, has 5 siblings. Her father left with another woman. Poor and the daughter of a scavenger, Vothey suffered a lot from others' contempt. Today, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Year of our school of Hospitality and Tourism she is being trained since 3 months at the Terrazza restaurant, happy to alternating 2 weeks at the restaurant and 2 weeks at school, what allows her to have a foot in real life, while continuing her theoretical training. *"Without PSE, which brought me up since I was a small girl, I don't know what I would have become... PSE is my heart and my family."*



## Know your children



\* **3 person in this family.** They live at Siem Reap. The grand Mother, often sick, is blind and cannot work. They rent a tiny and miserable hut. A 15-year-old girl, schooled in level 5 (CM2) through PSE, works part-time (since school is only ½ time) as a waitress in a tearoom. And her 11 years old brother, also schooled by us in CM1, when he gets out of school, becomes a scavenger and looks everywhere for what he can sell. They can barely raise, per day, \$1.18, so \$0,39 per person ... Of course, this is not enough to make them live and, sometimes, neighbours feed them. So, we are hoping that an assistance of \$80 a month will help prevent them from dropping out of school completely.

*If PSE hadn't met them, what would happen to them? And how many others that we don't know? Yes, how to consider stopping? ...*

## What has become of them?



**Khantei Sok**, 30 years old. Her family, extremely poor, got by in Prek Toal, next to the old dumpsite: her mother, alone with 4 children, a very hard life, no living, no home, no food. So, from time to time, Khantei was absent from school, to go and work on the dumpsite. Her mother did not agree, but Khantei wanted to help her family.

In 2004, she starts school at PSE in CM1, passes her Brevet 3 years later, completes a one-year preparatory class and enrolls in our School of Hospitality in Food and Beverage Management training. A brilliant student, she becomes after, for 5 years, an instructor in our training restaurant and benefits from two internships in Toulouse, at Gym Traiteur. Taken on, for additional training, at Topaz, then Khema Pasteur, 2 well-known restaurants in Phnom Penh, she has just been promoted to General Manager of Khema La Poste! A wonderful journey for her whose goal, early on, was to succeed in her career.

"It is true that I am young to manage a big team", she confides us with emotion, "but there is a very good spirit between us, and it's going pretty well." Who could imagine, seeing her today so radiant, perfectly at ease in her job, the little miserable girl who started her life on the dumpsite? ... "I deeply thank PSE and Papy-Mamie, who created this school", she tells us with emotion in her voice. "I will never forget PSE and I will help them as much as I can. I would like to tell the youngsters who are studying that they should really make efforts and that, maybe, they can do better than me." Strict safety measures, in place since mid-May, have allowed clients to start coming back, even if the attendance has not yet returned to its normal level.

*Despite the countless problems linked to the crisis, fortunately we still have some good news to share. If Khantei made it so far, it is thanks to PSE that put her on the track, of course, but it is also thanks to her determination and unfailing will to achieve her goals. Yes, it is definitely worth!*

## Our accounts at a glance

The 2018/2019 accounts are only now being commented on in this newsletter more than a year after the fiscal year-end, because the school year was disrupted by the consequences of Covid-19. The accounts were approved by the Board on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2020. They are subject to approval by the General Assembly, which was postponed from the end of March to 26<sup>th</sup> September 2020. The fiscal year was positive and here are the key highlights:

- Moderate growth in the number of children in PSE's programmes;
- An increase in operating funds linked to an increase in sponsorships and project funding;
- Continued significant increase in costs and social missions, linked mainly to an increase in the wages of our Cambodian staff and improved social measures, such as the introduction of a seniority bonus, put in place by the Government

The increase in overheads, lower than the increase in costs of the social missions, keeps them significantly lower than 10% of total spending in 2018/2019.

Our detailed accounts and the annual activity report, subject to approval by the AGM, are available on our website [www.pse.ngo](http://www.pse.ngo).

## Our volunteers, always present

To continue helping our children while acclimatising to the health constraints, our volunteers know how to adapt, time and again. Near Marseille, Anne organised a "cocktail concert" broadcast on YouTube. In Carnac, Pascale put together a great double act: a dinner in white (with health and safety measures) and a sale of paintings. Golf tournaments took place in Pornic and Strasbourg, as every year, still successfully! In Paris, Aquitaine and PACA, seamstresses have set themselves the task of sewing masks to help support PSE. In Alsace, a sponsor had a cherry tree laden with fruit; he sold them for the benefit of PSE. As for Xavier's magnificent film, "Little Gems", Vincent organised a screening, with distancing, to a delighted audience in Normandy.

*As Papy used to say, "there are a thousand ways to help PSE"! A new school year will start soon. Why couldn't you also consider organising an activity to help PSE?*

Contact us via our website ([www.pse.ngo](http://www.pse.ngo) - click on Act with PSE / Help your local branch) or call +33 (0)1 30 24 20 20.

