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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 FCS)



Exchange Rates:  
a strong headwind  
for PSE ...

and probably long lasting!

J-M. Bouchard, President

As you are no doubt aware, the majority of our funds are sourced from the Euro zone while our expenditure is predominately in US Dollars.

Over the past few years the \$/€ exchange rate has fluctuated between 1.20 and 1.35; when we needed \$1,000 in Phnom Penh we had to convert between €750 and €850 depending on the year.

The exchange rate that was 1.33 in August 2014 was fluctuating between 1.08 and 1.16 in early 2015; experts are predicting a rate of between 1.1 and 1 over the medium term.

To cover the costs of each child (food, healthcare, schooling, training), sponsorship of €47 was being converted to \$60; today we are getting closer to \$50; there is considerable risk that it will reduce further towards \$47. We have had to absorb a reduction of 25-30% in resources ... a huge and unexpected "shock" to our finances!

Faced with this shift we have been working hard, since the beginning of the year, with our team in Phnom Penh to identify savings and increase fundraising ... easier said than done!

With regard to our expenses, we have been analysing all our activities and their cost: dividing them into those that are "mission critical" i.e. those that are indispensable

## We are right!

We have a slogan we use on all our communications and our documents "From destitution to a vocation". It might seem trivial, but it sums up our activity, it is a commitment from us all.

It means that we finance and control all aspects of lifting our children out of destitution: education, analysing the needs of the country, designing training courses to meet local conditions and even helping them find work.

It means that when we take on a child, we are often committing to 15 years of support, like we would for our own children.

It is lengthy, expensive and demanding and it requires perseverance, but it is the only solution because the result is definitive.

I am sure you have heard remarks such as "Ah, are you still working in Cambodia? Hasn't it finished yet? ..."

No, it has not finished because our goal is to ensure that all children taken in become adults who don't

need our help any more. And we are right to do so, the results prove it...

Do you think we would be faced with waves of young immigrants coming from Africa, often risking their lives to try and beg for a job if the many millions of Euros sent there over the years (both in the form of State Aid and by NGOs) had resulted in programs adapted to meet local needs and develop local economies?

Surely not; but on too many occasions the money donated to these countries has been siphoned off by unscrupulous and corrupt people.

However, at PSE our alumni are totally autonomous. Have we asked you to find a job for any of our children?

No, because together we have ensured that they are no longer dependent on us and that they can participate in the development of their country and the creation of new jobs.

We must be proud of this



and be assured that our action is right and has a definitive effect.

Of course we are all solicited to help in many other heart breaking tragedies but we must not abandon our work which only makes sense if it is undertaken right to the end.

A huge thank you to our sponsors and to our teams who have understood this and have remained so faithful for so many years.

Christian-Papy

**Volunteering Opportunities:** We are looking for **Legal and Tax experts** for occasional voluntary consultations (experience of associations and charities is a benefit). We are also looking for **translators** (English, German, Spanish and Flemish) to translate the quarterly newsletter, the annual report and other marketing documents. If you are interested, please contact: Elizabeth de l'Épervier ([elizabeth.deleprevier@pse.org](mailto:elizabeth.deleprevier@pse.org), +33 (0)1 39 67 17 25).

ble vs. those that are "nice-to-have", with discretionary spending being reduced or even put on hold (temporarily) if we don't have sufficient resources.

We have also looked for ways to save money in our operations and organisation and have made decisions accordingly.

Our budget for 2015/16 is based on the prudent assumption of an exchange rate of \$1 = €1. With a stable number of children taken care of we have already achieved a 6% cost reduction this accounting year and we are planning a further 9% reduction which will get us to 15% below that spent in 2014/2015. A major effort which implies many sacrifices.

We have, in parallel, reflected on ways to increase our resources; we are sure you can help us with new sponsors, increases in sponsorship...

We must not slacken in our efforts; the children need us. Everything you can do to help us face this crisis is welcome. Let's imagine that, for example, each one of you adds a few pounds/dollars to your sponsorship or manages to convince someone to become a donor or a sponsor! ... Together we can overcome this challenge!

## A message from Pich, our Director



As always, the school year ended in the cries of joy of the summer camps. The sound of the children who want to enjoy every second, to have fun, just to be a child leaving behind the problems of the adults at home.

## The story of PSE: a beautiful film!



In February we told you about the film our friend Xavier de Lauzanne is making. Xavier is a very sensitive and subtle director who has already made a number of very valuable films.

They have just finished shooting the film. There is still the post production work to complete; we will keep you up to date on progress. A producer and distributor have been found; the release of the film is scheduled for autumn 2016.

With a few other people, we have had the privilege to see an early preview of the film and we were all moved by its beauty.

Our friend, the director Patrice Leconte, wrote to us: "I find it magnificent. Every aspect works: it is moving, strong, engaging, masterful. This is a great movie. . ."

It is going to be a great event for all the friends of PSE: a unique opportunity to raise the profile of our NGO.

We have one year to get organized and ensure the release of this film is a huge success!

A child came to me, took my hand and put it on his head for a moment of affection as if to say that he needs me to protect him.

We live these emotions throughout the year. We just need to go to the playground to get reenergized seeing these children full of joy knowing that they are loved and who have been able to reconnect with their childhood.

I would love to be able to share these moments with all of you who help us from afar, to all of you who are so involved with us but do not have the chance to hear the sound of laughter and games every day.

The 2014-2015 year has been full of rewards and challenges for PSE; our deep restructuring should ensure our activities are sustainable for all these children who so desperately need them.

For the last 2 years we have improved the governance of

our operations, we have improved our cost control and so optimized the use of funds you contribute.

This year we have had to face new challenges like the fall of the euro and we are all working to overcome them.

Our staff is contributing hugely: they have provided over 2,000 man days of voluntary work on various projects, that is to say 2,000 days of savings for PSE. This highlights the determination of everyone to rise to the challenges of this difficult period.

How about the school year 2015-2016?

During a workshop in early October we agreed on three management objectives:

- Carry on with the volunteering spirit
- Efficiency/cost management
- Quality of the programs

We also agreed on 3 objectives for the care of the children:

- Improve our pedagogy by adopting more interactive methods, starting with increased experimentation and letting children express themselves and find their own solutions.
- Provide moral guidance, which they did not get from their families: so that everyone knows how to behave in a responsible, helpful and respectful way.
- Establish special programs for 'marginal' children, despite a reduced budget, so that no one is left behind.

I strongly believe that we have created a unique model, which provides a sustainable solution to allow each child to escape destitution and to lead them into a meaningful occupation to be fully integrated into society.

Together, we can do it...

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## What has happened to them?

*The success and joy of PSE is above all the result of the help that you provide to the children but it is also what they make of it themselves. Here there is no "so what" attitude. They all love to study, respect their teachers and realise how lucky they are. The results can be extraordinary. Yes, these children really deserve to be helped!*

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**Chhit Vannet**, 27 years old, is the 5th of 6 children in a very poor family from the province of Prey Veng. Paralysed in both legs, she cannot walk. But Vannet is a fighter (maybe because of her handicap? ...). She decided to leave the countryside and come to Phnom Penh to continue her education. And not to just any level of education, since passing her baccalaureate and completing a preparation year, she has enrolled in our Business School.



She boards with us, she gets around in a wheelchair, and she is such a cheerful young girl, so lively, joyful and friendly that you almost forget about her handicap; especially when, at parties, she dances (with her arms) in her chair.

She is so kind that there is always someone ready to help her when she needs it.

This year she even was a monitor at the summer camps, it was touching to see the children in her group lining up to push her wheelchair around!

Even before completing her schooling, and despite her handicap, she has already been employed by the Ministry of Tourism!

We lent her some money to buy a converted motorcycle fitted with two wheels at the rear so she can get around town; she will repay it gradually out of her salary.

For the moment, she still boards with us. It is a beautiful lesson in courage and optimism for us all who often forget how lucky we are to be able to walk!

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**Bopha** is the eldest of 3 children. They lived in great difficulty alone with their mother who, as she suffers from heart disease, was a dressmaker at home to feed her family.

A very poor family where they did not eat every day, they had a budget of \$17 per person per month. Since 2010, they have come on to our schooling and rice programs. Bopha began to learn French and passed the baccalaureate, after which she chose French Literature Studies in the French Studies Department of the Royal University of Phnom Penh. After an internship in the hotel industry, she won a 2 year Accor-Esthua scholarship to continue studying for a Masters in France! (A big thank you to Accor for offering the opportunity to discover the world to our young people!) She is beautiful, and speaks fluent French, her head is full of projects, and later on she would like to work in event management. On 16<sup>th</sup> August, she flew to Angers, happy and proud. She has enrolled on courses in Tourism and Management, and has just written to us: *"I have a lot of work to do at school but I am coping well with my studies. I am going to do an internship at one of the Accor hotels in March. I am very happy to have chosen this Master!"*

She has been a monitor at the summer camps for several years where she made a lot of friends and she is very happy to have the opportunity to meet them again and make the most of her experience. *"I love Angers it is a very nice student town."*

When we remember where she comes from ... congratulations to Bopha for her achievements!

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### Than Bopha, 24 years old



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### In Sopheak, 21 years old.

**Sopheak**, too, comes from a very poor family, from the village of Prek Toal, next to the old rubbish dump. His father is an "achar" a lay assistant helping the monks at the pagoda and sometimes a scavenger. Suffice it to say that he earns hardly anything. The little he does earn does not go to the family. His mother sells rice soup in front of their home but does not earn enough to feed four children. All were taken in by PSE nine years ago, the three oldest have graduated.

Sopheak is the youngest. After successfully completing his baccalaureate, he studied Law at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, in the French section. A brilliant student, he has been selected for a 2 year Eiffel scholarship, which will allow him to obtain a Masters specialising in Intellectual Property.

He wrote to us: *"Your help since I was a child and your support for my studies in France gave me hope and encourages me to work even harder, to become an accomplished youngster. I did not have the chance to be born into a wealthy family, but I'm the luckiest person to have been supported by PSE, I will never forget ... thank you very much for believing in me. I very much hope I can help you, please let me know when you are coming to France for fundraising events".* Another miracle! ...

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## The Summer camps



Again this year, the Centre and 16 other camps echoed with the joy of children coming to pass a moment of relaxation, playing games, dancing, singing, laughing ... everybody had a wonderful time under the guidance of 190 European monitors and their Cambodian colleagues. For the last 14 years the camps have been prepared and organized by an exceptional woman, Marisa our friend, and now they are run on site by her son Pablo and Monica (newlyweds who originally met ... at the summer camps a few years ago). We must not forget her husband Fernando who despite his responsibilities at Airbus remains committed and comes to give a hand.

## For those that find it hard to keep up.

A number of our children have been so deeply wounded, have felt so abandoned and have been left too much to their own devices that they are unable to study properly or even to look after themselves in their daily lives.

They are at the bottom, endlessly retaking their classes, with low self-esteem. So they neglect themselves, sometimes failing to wash themselves. They often have aggressive behaviour... and they are unhappy. They therefore need more attention than others.

Pablo and Kia, with Leakhéna and Anthony, have launched a program designed to monitor their progress

and take special care of each and every one of them.

At the moment this program is offered to young boarders. Today, 12 of them are being looked after in this special way; 8 girls and 4 boys from 9-17 years old.

For the last six months they have benefitted from personalised support, a lighter curriculum with more sport and fun activities, with very concrete short term goals, complimented by a system of rewards and penalties for example cancellation of an outing, for the repeated loss of a notebook.

The aim is also to identify areas where they can feel valued by their peers and

regain their self-esteem.

And the results have been spectacular. In six months, problems with discipline and absenteeism have been resolved. They have become much more obedient, neat, sociable, helpful. They are also more open ... and happier.

So it really is the solution. But there are about fifty children with the same learning and behaviour difficulties in the Remedial Centre alone and probably a lot more amongst those who attend the State schools.

We should also support them. But this would require more staff and, in these stricken times, we are forced to postpone extending the program. And yet!...

## Connaissez vos enfants

V. is 3 years old. We found him and his father, in the street in front of a hospital. His mother died of a drug(s) overdose when he was 5 months old. Since then V. has lived on the street with his father who spends his time high on drugs. They slept where they could, ate what they could find, in a state of unbelievable filth.



Impossible to leave a child in these conditions! In addition, we fear that, without a better role model he would try to follow in his father's footsteps. We have just taken him to live with one of our foster families. A child of his age cannot be supported in our boarders' program: what he needs is a mum and dad. The real only solution is our fostering program.

**Sr.** (5 months) and **Sp.** (1.5 years).

These two young boys have a dad in prison and lived on the streets with their mum, a scavenger who transported them in her cart when she wandered around the streets. They did not eat every day...

When the Social Team discovered the destitution they were in, an emergency response was initiated:

exceptionally, it was decided to give the mother social work in the Centre, initially for 6 months, while the two small children are cared for by a childminder during the day, and they are given rice for dinner.

