



Pour un Sourire d'Enfant

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 Association de Bienfaisance
 Prix des Droits de l'Homme 2000

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... there are few areas in the world where one witnesses so brilliantly the transformation of little ragamuffins into school children ... for a better and fruitful life ...
 (Mr James Morris, Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme).

The New Dumpsite

The boarding school ... off it goes!



That's it; the construction site for the boarding school has at last kicked off. The works started during the second fortnight in March. Delivery is scheduled in a year's time. The boarders should be able to move in by June 2012.

You can, moreover, follow the progress of the work live on our website: click on the "News" tab, then "Follow up the Construction of Boarding School". A webcam shows the work site. But, beware the time zone difference: in summer time, compared with the UK, there are six hours difference (seven in winter). If you try too late, it will be night in Phnom Penh and the screen will be black. It is less descriptive!

We are all impatient to see this opening ... but, as always and whilst waiting, we have to cope with what we have and develop solutions. It is the price to be paid so that our young from Siem Reap and Sihanoukville, and the children, whose families have been obliged to go "far away", can continue their schooling or professional training.

We have, in all, more than 400 children who live in the Centre (figures from February 2011 - it changes every day!):

♦ A little over half are housed in rooms provided for this purpose, even if there is still a little overcrowding, with 112 girls in the boarding school (we were at 70

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Sophiep, Social Officer, investigating

The dumpsite at Stung Meanchey, which is where PSE's work started, has moved a dozen kilometres away. This is a good thing because this dumpsite ended up being almost in the town centre, polluting the entire environment.

But it is a problem for our families who lived around, from the recyclable waste that they collected. Some of them, because they are unable to do anything else, have chosen to go and scavenge in town, but they are chased away by the inhabitants. Others continue to search on the new dumpsite, but they have to pay for transport in motorised carts, which severely eats into their meagre earnings. There, it is harder than on the old dumpsite. In this enormous basin, there is dreadful heat with neither water nor any shade.

Therefore Leakhéna and her Social Team had to set up a local site to help the families resolve their problems and take into account the new, very poor families who have moved nearby. Here (photo above), Sophiep, one of our social officers and former student, who knows well this misery having experienced it, tries with a family to evaluate their situation and to see what solutions could be proposed.

Oh, it is never pure and simple assistance, but it is to help the families stand on their own two feet, by giving them the necessary helping hand so that they are able to help themselves. In fact, we never give, we exchange. Compensation for the former work of a child against his or her presence at school, temporary work at the Centre against ad hoc financial assistance in particularly serious cases, caring for a young one in the nursery or with a child minder in exchange for the mother working, etc...

It is fabulous to be able to help tired and discouraged mothers to find hope again!

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last year) and 128 young in the student homes.

♦ About fifty girls are camping in C building.

♦ Fifty or so boys sleep in building L in the class rooms.

Just over 50 boys are housed at night in the "Bokator" room (Cambodian fight sport), in the Construction Skills school building.

♦ And we have the 16 or so young who spend their nights in the DAY centre (Drug Addicted Youth centre - the centre which looks after young with behavioural and/or drug problems).

... expecting to have to cram ourselves in even more between now and next year.

If you are walking around the centre in the evening or during the weekend, now, you will note, after classes and at meal times, definitely more activity, comings and goings ... and smiles!

Thanks to all of you on their behalf.

J.M. Bouchard, President

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Most important

I return from Phnom-Penh with batteries recharged.

The meetings in which I participated showed me a solid, united local team, focussed on the same, single objective: the child and his complete success, physical, moral and intellectual. The child is a whole and everything converges towards him, towards his formation as a responsible, happy adult.

Since my last visit, numerous buildings have emerged from the ground; others will soon be keeping them company, such as the boarding school which had become so crucially indispensable. The gardens are superb, created and maintained by our youngsters from Professional Training.

There are no shouts, unless those of joy, notably those of the children watching the football matches between the teams of teachers after school.

The children are smiling. They are beautiful. The sliding steps (due to flip-flops) of young girls dressed in their long blue skirts, accompanying their male friends, appears to punctuate

the happy life of this Centre where evil seems to be stopped at the gate.

Here, even handicapped children have smiles, this smile which banishes any of our silly complexes and allows us to look them in the eye with us smiling as well.

One morning, I suddenly have the impression that I am not in Phnom Penh, but in Bordeaux and that I am welcoming the students arriving at a private school. Something is not right. I feel uneasy and tell myself that I am missing something. But what?

Then I wake up and the revelation occurs. Everything I see is beautiful, very beautiful, I would even dare to say too beautiful because I finally realise that I am unwittingly leaving aside the most important thing.

The most important thing is that each child who comes past me is a unique and extraordinary event, which I must above all not forget. Each child who goes past has a story to tell, his own story: the dumpsite, rape, mis-

treatment, hunger and still more things, as indescribable so much dreadful they are. Each one is a unique victory over the horror and it is not hundreds of children I see coming past, but hundreds times ONE child, individual and unique.

It is the constantly repeated miracle of PSE. Each smile which goes past me is so beautiful that it seems impossible that it can hide something so horrible; and, nonetheless, it is true. And this horror takes a long time to be digested, a very long time, sometimes, sadly, too long.

One must, above all, not forget that, because they are still hundreds, thousands of children, to await their resurrection. Thus one must not get too used to these very beautiful images that we see, not transform them into an excuse to stop or slow down our actions.

We must absolutely keep in mind the past image of each child, well anchored in us, in order each day to still better measure the result obtained and the importance of continuing tirelessly to hold out our hands to these children.

M. de Roquefeuil, Aquitaine

After having been helped, they themselves help!



Prach Na and Yin Soern

Some metamorphoses are fabulous! Like this of these families who, with a hand given to them,, having touched rock bottom, misery without hope, alcohol, violence, pull themselves up, rediscover their dignity and even become able of helping others!

After having brought up their three children, Na and Soern, already grandparents, today look after three other children that we have entrusted to them, of whom two have a handicap.

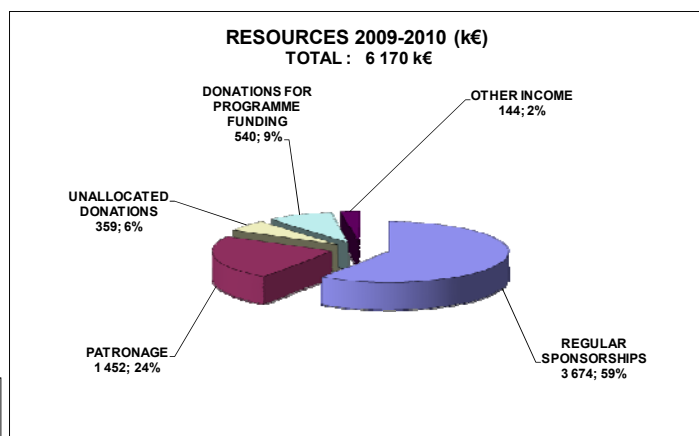
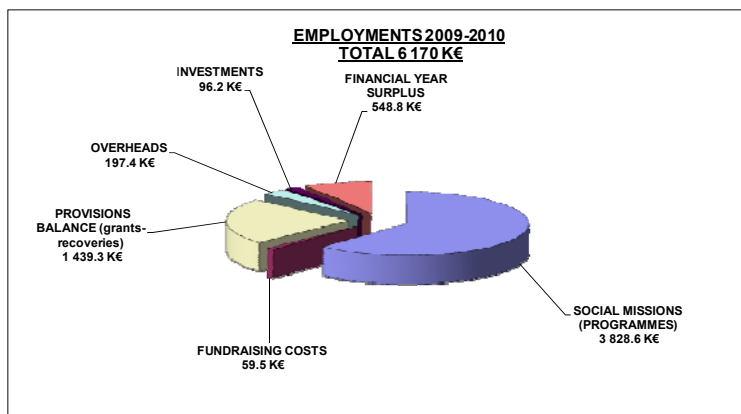
What a marvel that this very simple family accept, without hesitation, to take charge of, as if they were their own, little abandoned and even handicapped children, while telling us their joy in restarting a new family life with them!

About the accounts...

The General Assembly meeting on the 26th March 2011 accepted the accounts for the financial year 2009 - 2010, closed on 31st August 2010.

The year was marked by an increase in overall income of 20%, with a growth, in particular, of patronage (for the financing of large investment projects), of programmes funding and of sponsorships.

Running costs increased by 4%, despite a slight decrease (temporary) in numbers of children, linked to uncertainties



which weighed upon the families since the closure of the Stung Meanchey dumpsite in July 2009.

The financial profit or loss for the year amounted to K€548.8 which has been allocated, mostly, to our operating reserves and to the sponsorship fund.

The overheads remain held at 6% of the total charges, of which 1% for fund raising.

Raising awareness of energy saving and respect for the environment

In the last 15 years, the PSE Centre in Phnom-Penh has developed a lot, which has generated a large electrical energy consumption and high financial cost (the price per kWh is high in Cambodia).

During a meeting with members of the charity "AIADD Solidarité", specialists in energy problems, the PSE administrators informed of their preoccupation with this subject. AIADD therefore proposed, as a first step, to replace electrical energy by solar

thermal energy for the production of hot water in the two industrial washing machines in the laundry, which is one of the training areas for the Hotel School.

Following a partnership convention between the two charities, and a feasibility and design study in February 2010, installation began in December 2010 for completion in March 2011.

It is made up of a solar panel of 6 modules with 22 vacuum tubes and a 1,000 ltr storage tank. Implementation has been undertaken by the company Comin Khmer, in Phnom-Penh.

PSE's apprentice plumbers have actively participated in equipment installation (*photograph*). With the support of Khmer teachers of Plumbing Training, they have completed the connection of the washing machines to the hot water distribution system. They have thus discovered an energy production technique that contributes to preserving the environment and realising energy savings.

Following this installation, PSE is studying the setting up of a

supplementary course about solar energy in the young apprentice plumbers' curriculum.

In order to measure the profitability of the installation, a weather station, an energy meter and temperature probes have been installed. A digital display permanently indicates the savings made, in dollars, which allows users to be made aware of the optimal management of the installation.

If the profitability of the system is confirmed (which is already being indicated by the first readings), the technique could be extended to the Centre's other buildings.

Already PSE has asked AIADD for help with new developments promoting energy saving: insulation of those buildings most exposed to the sun, lighting, waste recycling for the production of bio-gas...

All the savings made will allow us to welcome new children, because they are still many of them, waiting to be supported!

Gérard Desroches and Bruno Péchiné



What has become of them?



Kanhadavy, 24 years old.

She was 12 years old at the time. Very much behind, she was in the remedial school in our Centre. One day, she came to see us, crying: “my mother wants to sell me into prostitution ... I don’t want to, but I must do it, to help my family”...

That same evening, Kanhadavy became a boarder!

The next day, we called her mother, to ask her for an explanation! “We have no more money and can no longer feed the children”, she wailed. “But you are condemning her to death”... we answered, thinking about the fate of the thousands of prostituted children, whose terrible clandestine exploitation always ends with AIDS.

But we had never, in fact, thought about the depths of the misery, where immediate survival becomes the priority...

Faced with this situation, we gave her and her brother work at the straw hut, but as a precaution, Kanhadavy remained as a boarder. She worked very well, always first in her class.

Many of you know her, since in 2003 she came on an annual tour with us. You will certainly remember her, one of our best dancers.

Arriving in level 11 (equivalent to Year 12), she decided to stop the general education and to change to Professional Training “to quickly get a job in order to help my family”, she said. For a moment we were rather sad to see such a brilliant student stop there, but finally, after a year of Preparatory Class, she did two years of Secretarial Training, whilst also passing the Baccalaureate in parallel. So, when she wants to, she will be able to follow University courses in the evenings after work, as it is done a lot here.

After having worked in the offices of a factory, she was hired as an administrative assistant in “Comin Khmer”, a large Franco-Cambodian company. However, following staff cut-backs, she was at risk of losing her job. Jumping at the chance, since she speaks French and English, we suggested for her to come and work in our craft shop where a position was available. She has rejoined PSE just recently, after the Khmer New Year, and got married mid-May.

A wonderful record, amongst many others, that fill us with joy!

Know your children



Kunthie, 11 years old and **Chamroeun**, 13 years old.

The family is extremely poor. At Phnom Praseth, they live in a leaf covered hut, full of holes (*see photograph*) and all work, parents and children, under the boiling sun, breaking rocks in a quarry. No school, of course. But they earn so little, not even \$50 a month for six people, that even the mother, pregnant, must also go and break rocks. They season their little bit of rice with “prahok” (fermented fish paste) three or four times a week and sometimes they have only water with a few grains of rice. At 58 years old, the father cannot earn much, so he

drinks and, an unfortunately common consequence, becomes violent, hitting his wife and children with a stick, when not with a hatchet.

Our Social Services team discovered them recently, along with all the other families who break rocks there.

They now receive milk for the two little twins and a PSE health card for treatment.

Kunthie and Chamroeun, who, evidently, were very much behind, are both being schooled in our remedial Centre in the Boeung Salang School, in years 1 and 2 respectively.

And since Phnom Praseth is too far away for them to be able to travel each day, both have become boarders.

Today, with the support of PSE, he has stopped his

violence, the family has found their smiles again, the children go to school and the mother will be able to give birth in good conditions.

