



MAY 2024



# THE RABBIT'S GAZETTE

## The Rabbit School quarterly Newsletter

*A new board of directors, our students preparing the olympic games, surprise boxes for 200 children: The Rabbit School team and their students have no time to get bored !*



## TO PREPARE FOR THE OLYMPICS, OUR STUDENTS ARE TRAINING HARD!

Last february, the French embassy invited our students to a competition between different local organizations in Cambodia. The goal is to cover the distance from Phnom Penh to Bangkok in 45 minutes by adding up the strides of each young participant. 23 of our students participated to the event, and managed to reach the ambitious objective, despite the heat.

For the French ambassador, Jacques Pellet, "We are very pleased to have organized this race in the Olympic Stadium of Phnom Penh [...]. This event is here to celebrate the values of sports: solidarity, effort, in the vision of the Olympic and Paralympic Games 2024, which will take place in Paris next August."

We thank the embassy for its invitation, as it allows us to demonstrate that young people with intellectual disabilities have every right to participate in sporting events, as demonstrated by the Paralympic Games.

### RSO 2024 KEY FIGURES



682

children with ID received special education and support in 2024

1739

CWIDs helped since 2013

3057

children helped in the Out of School Children Program

61

teachers in 16 different schools and 4 provinces

1

year of waiting time before integrating the school.

For our most adventurous young ones, there's still the challenge of learning to channel their energy: some needed a little pick-me-up after the exertion. Fortunately, French pastries were waiting for us at the finish line.

# A NEW BOARD FOR THE RABBIT SCHOOL ! INTERVIEW OF KHOUTH SOCHAMPAWATD, THE NEW CHAIR

*On February 29th of last year, the first meeting of the board of directors took place, comprised entirely of new members. Among them were experts from the nonprofit sector, business leaders and managers from the private sector, as well as parents of children with disabilities. With this new board, Rabbit School aims to surround itself with experts capable of guiding the association towards success and opening doors to new funding opportunities. Khouth Sochampawatd, elected President on this day, has graciously agreed to answer our questions.*



**Interviewer:** *Could you tell us a bit about yourself and your involvement in the field of education and youth?*

**Khouth Sochampawatd :** I'm a mother of two kids, with my first child diagnosed with autism in 2011 when he was just over a year old. At that time, there was very little awareness or support available for autism in Cambodia. Determined to help my son, I delved into researching and seeking out resources. Despite facing numerous challenges, including a lack of qualified teachers willing to work with him, my son has made remarkable progress over the years and now attends school full-time. Personally, I've been involved in various ventures, including consulting for businesses and NGOs on soft skills and working with Cambodian Living Arts.

Additionally, I've been engaged with NGOs like YRDP, Youth Star Cambodia, and PEPY, where I've learned a lot about personal development and leadership.

***“The team’s dedication to teamwork, their focus on serving individuals with disabilities, and the heartfelt stories they shared resonated deeply with me”.***

**I:** *How did you hear about The Rabbit School, and why did you agree to get involved?*

**KS:** I first heard about The Rabbit School through Sothearom, the Finance Manager, who is a friend of mine, and although I initially turned down the opportunity, I was eventually convinced to join by the inspiring stories of Mariken (member of the board) and Touch (Executive Manager). Their dedication to teamwork, their focus on serving individuals with disabilities, and the heartfelt stories they shared resonated deeply with me.





### ***What is your main role as chairman?***

KS: As chairman, my main responsibilities include ensuring compliance with legal obligations, defining the organization's precise needs, and providing support to the team in terms of leadership and fundraising efforts. I'm currently focused on hiring a new Managing Director and facilitating regular meetings to discuss organizational matters and represent The Rabbit School within the community. I truly want to help The Rabbit School as much as I can: I also plan to spend more time with the team to identify how my experience in management and leadership can be valuable to them.

***“One of our primary goals is to enhance our support for parents”. it is essential to provide them with specialized education and equip them with the knowledge of their children's rights and means to advocate for them.***

### ***I: According to you, what are the main challenges the RSO faces in its current work?***

KS: With the board members and the Management team, we identified 4 challenges. The first one is to answer the needs of as many children with special needs as we can. Indeed, the waiting list to join the RSO is huge (around one year), it is gradually increasing every year. Our objective is to welcome 150 more students by the end of 2028. Our second challenge is to find a solid economic model. In this perspective, we plan to develop more relationships with the private sectors, but also to create social businesses that will both allow us to train our young adults with hard skills, and provide us some additional resources. In the upcoming years, our primary goal is to enhance our support for parents. Recognizing that parents spend the most time with their children, it is essential to provide them with specialized education and equip them with the knowledge of their children's rights and means to advocate for them.

## **Welcome to the new board !**



ROTHA  
CHAN



VUTHY  
MONYRATH



KHOUTH  
SOCHAMP  
AWATD



VICHEKA  
CHOURP



PHORN  
PAUL



MARIKEN  
KRUIJFF



MARIELLE  
SAS

# BOX OF HOPE: WHEN CHILDREN FROM HONG-KONG SEND GIFTS TO OUR STUDENTS



One January morning, our students received a delightful surprise in the school's mailbox: a box for each student, containing numerous gifts including jump ropes, board games, stuffed animals, markers, notebooks, soap, etc. carefully prepared by children in Hong Kong.

The 200 young people from Phnom Penh, Kandal, Kampong Speu, and Siem Reap were incredibly happy to receive so much kindness. For some of them, it was the first time they had ever received a gift package!

This gesture, beyond the joy it brought to our students, also provides many of them with the opportunity to have a fun activity at home. Indeed, many of them go home after school and feel bored. These gifts give them the chance to have fun alone or with their siblings.

**Thank you to Box of Hope for your generosity, thank you to the children who prepared the boxes. Thank you for thinking of them!**



*Box of Hope was created in 2008 in Hong Kong, when two mothers, Nicole Woolhouse and Harriet Cleverly, had the desire to teach their children about the concept of child poverty. This has developed into the simple act of packing a box of gifts and essential items for a child who doesn't have what other children have. The project quickly grew up: in 15 years, they sent more than 350,000 gifts boxes to children. To learn more about them: [www.boxofhope.org/](http://www.boxofhope.org/)*





# EMPOWERING PARENTS: A VITAL COMPONENT OF STUDENTS SUCCESS AT RABBIT SCHOOL



On Thursday 29th of February, **Manulife in collaboration with The Rabbit School organized a special workshop on "Positive Child Education" with the participation of our some parents of our students, as well as Manulife customers and staff.** The program provided opportunities for parents of children with intellectual disabilities to gain access to a stronger and better way of educating their children, as well as better personal mental health care. This activity is also a reflection of the company's involvement in promoting and supporting diversity, equity and the environment for Cambodian families.

**Parents are key to the success of their children education:** indeed, our students spend only 4 hours a day at Rabbit School, and 20 with their parents. It is therefore essential to involve parents in our activities by offering them training in inclusive

education, as well as information to guide their children. Moreover, it is necessary to integrate parents into our structure itself, to encourage them to exchange with other parents and share best practices.

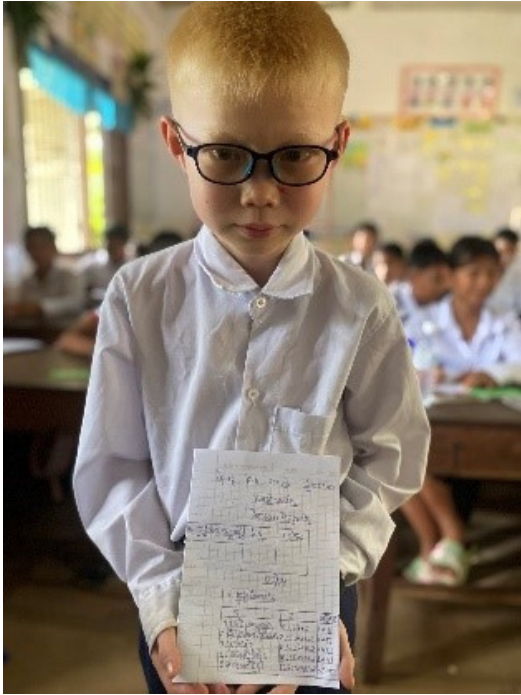
Furthermore, parents, **often mothers, are highly solicited by their children and sometimes have to manage a job alongside. Their mental health is a crucial issue.** Destigmatizing education, detecting signs of fatigue, finding individual solutions for each family in difficulty are challenges our team must address every day.

Rabbit School is currently working on a parent support program, with a pedagogical journey ranging from training in intellectual disability to teaching advocacy techniques for their child's rights.

**Thank you to Manulife for their dedication as well as for the professionalism and hospitality of its team !**



# NGOUN KEAV PANHAPONG, A BRILLIANT STUDENT WHO NEEDS AN ADAPTED ENVIRONMENT



**Ngoun Keav Panhapong, a 12-year-old boy, suffers from weak eyesight.** He was born in SamrongYea village, SamrongYea commune, Puok district, Siem Reap province, about 6,000 meters from Puok market. Nowadays, he lives with a wealthy family. His father's name is Ngoun Veasna and his mother's name is Keov Kanhana, both of whom are sellers. They have three children in their family, two sisters and Panhapong is the youngest child. Nguon Keov Panhapong's weak eyesight is caused by a type of hemorrhoid called eczema, which has had a serious effect on his eye system since he was 8 years old. **Nguon Keov Panhapong can see better only if all objects are of suitable size or large and will be at a close distance.** In the future, he would like to become a doctor specializing in heart diseases.

***“Of course, I have a disability, but it doesn’ mean I cannot study” Noun Keav Panhapong***

In 2018, Ngoun Keav Panhapong began his education at the primary level in Ampil Primary School, which is located near his home. Currently, he is in grade 6 at the school. Ngoun Keov Panhapong is a diligent student who studies very hard. He spends most of his time studying in the classroom and at home, especially in the early morning when he reviews and memorizes lessons. **Thanks to his hard work, his academic achievements have been excellent,** earning him the first prize of the year in the sixth grade for the 2022-2023 school year. He is happy to study and receives support and encouragement from his friends, teachers, siblings, and parents. He is determined to continue his education and achieve further success.



Since enrolling in primary school, Nguon Keo Panha Pongsa **has received considerable support, including from the government, which upholds the right to education. In 2023, Ade et Action provided teaching and learning materials tailored to his special educational needs.** Additionally, efforts have been made to enhance his educational experience by providing training to school principals and teachers





# HELP US TO ENSURE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT TO OUR STUDENTS !

The health and safety of our students are priorities at Rabbit School. Unfortunately, **our main school does not offer toilets adapted to the needs of our children**: firstly, they are not inclusive and do not provide access for people with reduced mobility. Secondly, they do not provide access to clean water or the opportunity to wash hands. They are also too small (only two toilets for 200 children). Lastly, they have no separation between boys and girls.



We plan to build new toilets to provide children with a clean, healthy environment, and answer the needs of 240 students and staff. If you would like to support us in this project, you can donate using this QR code. Your support is invaluable!

**Bank: ACLEDA**

**Account Name: Rabbit School-Building Toilet**

**Account Number:3600-05-330984-19**



*Thank you to our dedicated partners*



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