

2024

Monitoring and Evaluation Report



Samrong Education Centre, Cambodia



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CHILDREN OF THE MEKONG

Children of the Mekong has worked in Cambodia since 1991, and with the Ministry of Education since 2002. We currently operate across 6 countries in Southeast Asia and work with local communities to improve education access and quality. Education is at the heart of what we do as the UK Branch of *Enfants du Mékong*, a French charity founded in 1958, and a **registered charity** in the Charity Commission for England and Wales (No.1116375).



VISION	Poor and suffering children can be models of responsibility for their countries.
MISSION	Providing education, training, and support; we help youth and children to improve their standard of living and to grow intellectually, emotionally, and morally . We accompany them as far as possible , according to their abilities and desires, until their professional integration.
VALUES AND FOUNDING PRINCIPLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing inherent respect for all, regardless of circumstances, culture, or religion. • Seeing unique individuals in each suffering child and responding in the best fit for their needs. • Building trust in communities we serve. • Helping sponsors and the children they support to develop personal and amicable relationships; the meeting, the exchange, and the bond that is woven from person to person. • Facilitating concrete and humble action. • Instilling long-term loyalty. • Supporting structured and individualised educational projects; helping each child or youth overcome academic, emotional, and moral shortcomings; allowing them to shape their personality.

Children of the Mekong supports child education in 3 ways:

1. Individual **child sponsorship** programmes.
2. Management of **education centres** and **foster houses**.
3. **Development projects** to enhance living and study environment.

Our programmes in Cambodia:

In 1993, Children of the Mekong opened 4 educational centres with boarding houses, tackling the prevalent issue of school dropouts which is particularly rampant near the Thailand border. Our efforts in Cambodia have grown since, to these in **2024**:

2,600

children sponsored
by
104 programmes

1,540

students benefiting
from extra classes in
our 6 education
centres

72

local employees
and 15 overseas
volunteers

21

development
programmes

SAMRONG EDUCATION CENTRE

Samrong, the capital of **Oddar Meanchey province** in Northwest Cambodia, has a **defective educational infrastructure**. There are 219 primary schools but only 30 secondary and 9 high schools scattered across the area. Additionally, approximately 27.9% of the population live in multidimensional poverty, where 50% of children are affected. This leads to a **61% dropout rate**, with many families **prioritising income over education**.

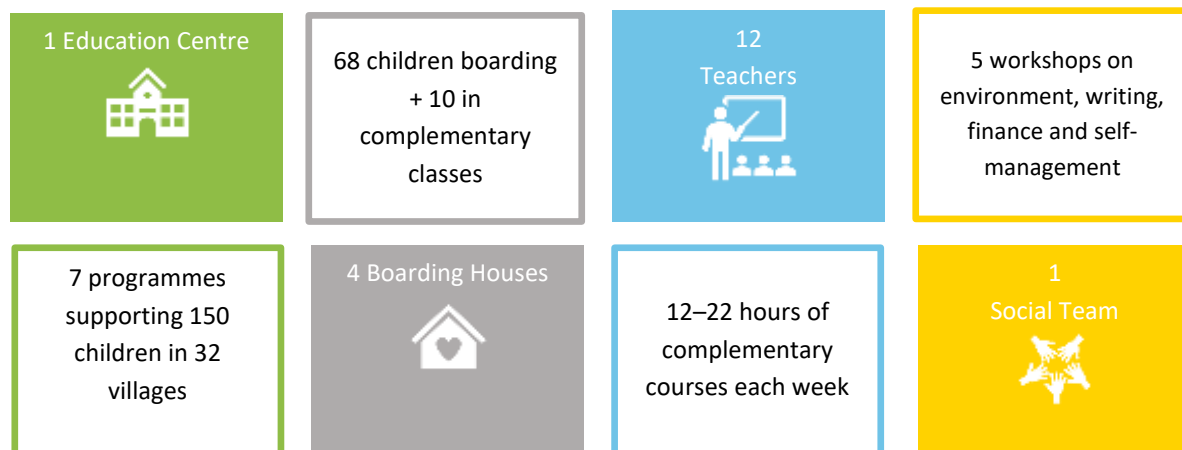


Driven by **extremely low wages**, some teachers resort to **making students pay extra fees** for after-school private tuition, thus perpetuating a system that **keeps disadvantaged children trapped in**

poverty. In addition, many children **join the workforce at a young age**, either within Cambodia, where families rely on small-scale farming for income, or by crossing the Thai-border to work in the tourism industry, where they are often **exploited**. These circumstances highlight the **urgent need for sustainable, high-quality education**.

The **Samrong Education Centre** directly addresses these challenges, including the concerns of families who fail to recognise the value of education. The Centre offers comprehensive support, including **boarding houses, tuition, extracurricular activities**, and essential resources such as **food, hygiene products, uniforms, supplies, and medical care**. To ensure our help reaches those most in need, the selection criteria for applicants are meticulously designed, considering their family's **economic situation, personal motivation, and academic achievements**.

IMPACT OF THE SAMRONG EDUCATION CENTRE



In 2024, the **Samrong Education Centre** made a huge impact on its 68 direct beneficiaries and the 150 children in our programmes across the surrounding villages. We also believe that at least **twice the number of indirect beneficiaries**, including siblings and family members, benefit from **food distribution** and **health cost reimbursements**. With regular classes in mathematics, Khmer, English, chemistry, physics, biology, and computer technology, alongside complementary courses and extracurricular events, we are **empowering students** with the tools they need to **give back to their community** and **actualise their dreams**.

The centre has 4 aims and provides these students with the means to:



Improve their environment, working to achieve a more sustainable future for all by actively developing solutions.

Get a qualification, encouraging brilliant pupils from underprivileged families to receive quality education and the potential to enrol in the university courses.



Prepare for employment, supplying students with the means necessary to succeed in their future careers.

Become well-balanced young people, giving students complete humanist training that fosters intellectual, interpersonal, professional, and moral growth.



WHAT IS IN THE CENTRE?

The Centre consists of 6 classrooms, 4 boarding houses (2 for girls and 2 for boys), a library, sport facilities (a football and a volleyball pitch), an I.T. room, an office, a kitchen, a bicycle shelter, and a pond which serves as swimming pool.



Last year, we had to put a pause on the vegetable garden as there was not enough water in the centre.



Charlotte Albier
French Overseas Volunteer



Sochea Mour
Centre Manager
Social Worker



Ratha Soeung
Cook



Charles Albier
French Overseas Volunteer



Sopheap Tes
Social Worker



Sophornn Bin
Guardian

The Centre is supported on a day-to-day basis by a dedicated team, including **2 French overseas volunteers**, **2 Khmer social workers**, a **guardian**, and a **cook**, all of whom reside onsite. In 2024, one of the social workers was nominated “**Centre Manager**”. This aims at empowering our local team. She received appropriate training on management and financial management.

This local team often acts as a **surrogate family** for our students. They ensure welfare by maintaining a safe and orderly environment, which aligns with the Centre's goal of nurturing well-rounded students who can focus on their studies without the burden of financial stress. In addition to providing essential support, the team organises a variety of extracurricular activities in areas such as arts, cooking, travel, culture, wellness, and sports. These activities are designed to **boost students' confidence, foster a strong sense of community, and instil a sense of purpose.**



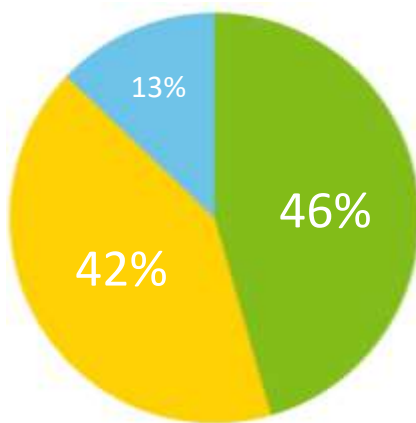
Profile of the Beneficiaries

68 children reside in the centre's boarding houses, receiving educational support. An additional 10 children attend daily complementary classes while staying in nearby villages and commuting. Students in the boarding houses are selected from extremely low-income families with little to no educational background, and benefit from the sponsorship programmes. These programmes operate in 32 surrounding villages, supporting 150 children and their families.

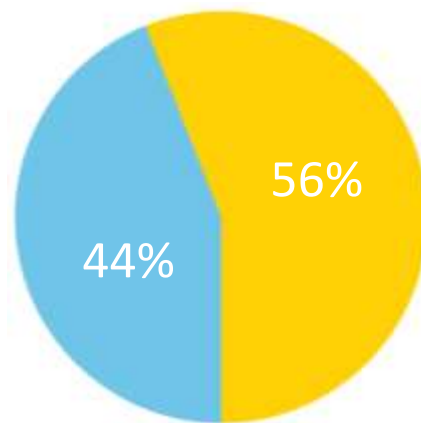
In the following graphs, "**Sponsorship Programmes**" refers to the 150 students residing with their families in surrounding villages, while "**Education Centre**" pertains to the 68 students residing in the boarding houses at the Samrong Education Centre.

Level of Studies

● Primary School ● Secondary School ● High School



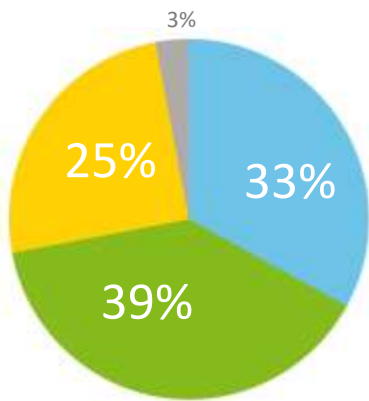
Sponsorship Programmes



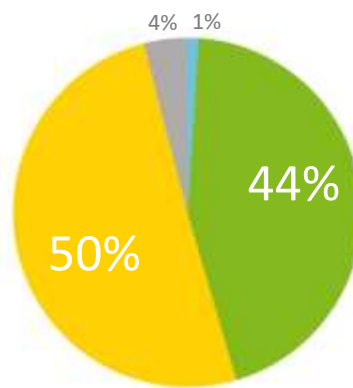
Education Centre

Age of Students

● 11 or below ● 12 to 14 ● 15 to 18 ● 19 or above



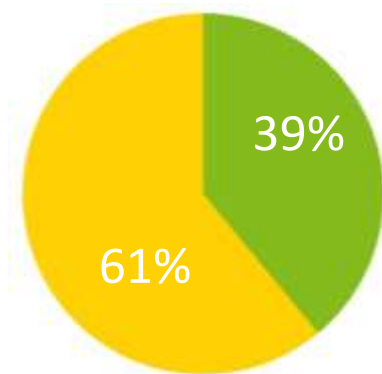
Sponsorship Programmes



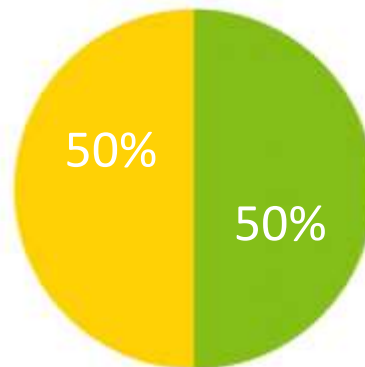
Education Centre

Gender Ratio

● Boys ● Girls



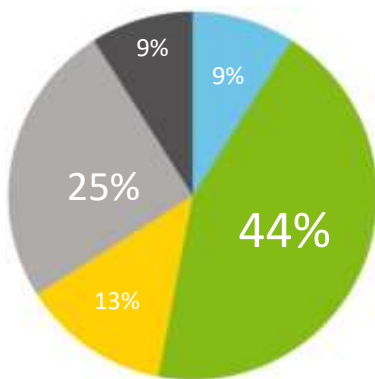
Sponsorship Programmes



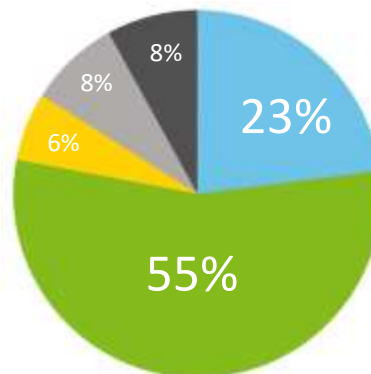
Education Centre

Occupation of Parents

● Soldier/Police ● Farmer ● Worker/Builder ● Unemployed/Deceased ● Other



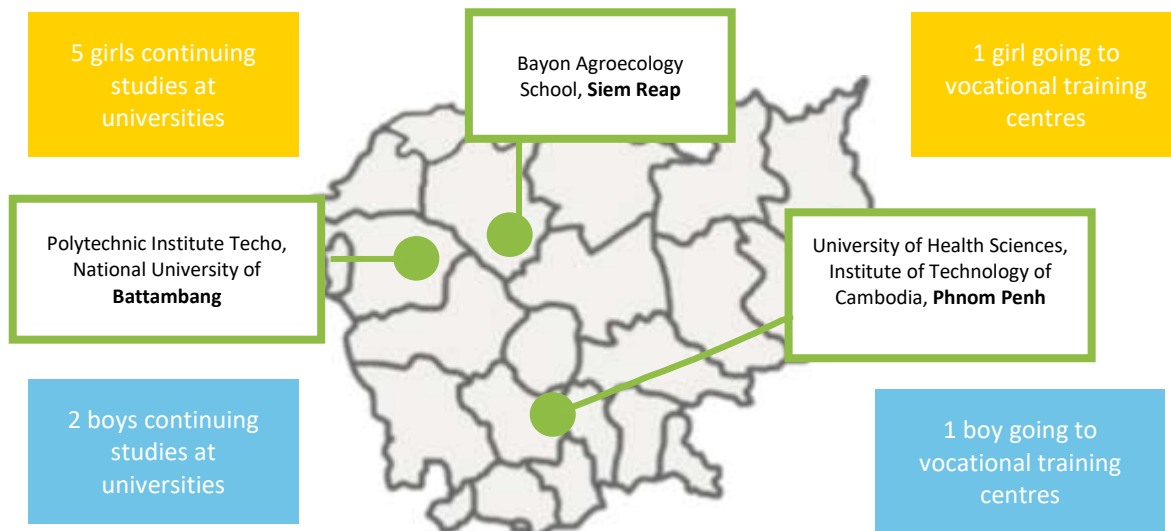
Sponsorship Programmes



Education Centre

ACHIEVEMENTS IN STUDIES

We had 9 students in Grade 12 in 2024, and 8 of them successfully passed the Baccalaureate exam, with 92% achieving certification, surpassing the national average of 79%. Following graduation, 100% of the students are pursuing higher education at universities or specialised training centres. Their chosen fields of study are medicine, literature, technology, mechanics, engineering, electric engineering and agriculture. These educational institutions are predominantly located in **larger metropolitan areas** such as Battambang, Siem Reap, and the capital city, Phnom Penh.



The centre encourages students to attend university forum, vocational training forum, and job forum. All Grade 9 to 12 students, including those in the surrounding villages, attended these.



JOB FORUM

General professionals explained their job, the qualifications required, the expectations of an employer, and showed screenings of careers videos.

Representatives of vocational schools, partners of Children of the Mekong presented training courses and opportunities available.



VOCATIONAL TRAINING FORUM



UNIVERSITY FORUM

Visits to universities, talks about life at the university and advice on how to best succeed were conducted.

AIMS, ACTIVITIES AND INDICATORS

*Our overall aim is to improve the material living conditions of young people and enable them to develop **intellectually**, **emotionally**, and **morally**.*

Result 1 – Get a Qualification

Outputs	Inputs	Indicators
OBJECTIVE 1: <i>Get a degree</i>	ACTIVITY 1: Increase access to education with sponsorship programmes in villages.	Through individual and international sponsorship, 150 children across 32 villages benefit from 7 sponsorship programmes administered by the Centre in Oddar Meanchey. Each month, these children receive financial and material aid to facilitate their education. Selection criteria for participants include an evaluation of family poverty levels, the child's motivation to pursue studies, and academic performance.
	ACTIVITY 2: Improve access to education with education centres.	All Grade 12 students successfully completed the 2024 Baccalaureate exam, with 92% achieving certification, surpassing the national pass rate of 79%. The Baccalaureate exam serves as a gateway to higher education or well-paying jobs, depending on the individual's and their family's preferences. The Grade 12 students have progressed successfully in their educational paths, through university enrolment or vocational training, in sectors to do with medicine, literature, technology, mechanics, engineering, and agriculture.
	ACTIVITY 3: Social support and monitoring of the children and their families.	Our dedicated overseas volunteers and social workers coordinated the disbursement of sponsorship donations to the children, and involved the kids in a community activity to harvest rice and provide supplies to families in need. Additionally, the Centre initiated a school transport project in the village of Ou Badav, ensuring six Grade 7 students receive monthly support for their school transportation. There are plans to implement this in Kouk Ampil village as well. The Centre also built new houses for 2 students from the villages, based on poverty criteria and the condition of their previous homes. The Centre provides monthly food and hygiene kits to 2 families unable to benefit from full sponsorship.
OBJECTIVE 2: <i>Have a high enough level of education to be successful</i>	ACTIVITY 1: Quality supplementary courses in the centre.	Supplementary classes are offered at the school and Centre between 12 and 22 hours per week, varying according to grade level. Approximately 10 additional children, aside from those already enrolled at the centre, attend these classes every day.
	ACTIVITY 2: Evaluation exams in the centre.	Public education in Cambodia often falls short, leaving some students struggling to adapt to more rigorous academic programs. To address this, Children of the Mekong conducts regular exams at our centre to assess student performance and intervene when difficulties arise. Additionally, Children of the Mekong operates several other centres across Cambodia, with our Sisophon centre being the largest. Every three months, students from all centres take exams prepared by Sisophon teachers to evaluate the overall performance of each centre. This ongoing assessment aims to guide students towards the most suitable path—whether pursuing university studies or vocational training in larger metropolitan cities—based on their abilities and progress.
OBJECTIVE 3: <i>Focus on studies without financial problems</i>	ACTIVITY 1: Accommodation and food in foster houses.	At the Samrong Education Centre, 68 students benefit from comprehensive accommodation arrangements. Divided into 4 boarding houses—2 designated for boys and 2 for girls—each house is equipped with rooms featuring bunk beds, ensuring every student has their own personal space. The cook prepares 565 meals, 6 days a week. Each boarding house cook for their Sunday meals.
	ACTIVITY 2: Medical support	This year's medical budget amounted to \$1,200, covering expenses such as vaccines and hygiene products. Additionally, this support extends to assisting students' families with health insurance coverage at public hospitals.

Result 2 – Prepare to Get a Job

Outputs	Inputs	Indicators
OBJECTIVE 1: <i>To build one's future</i>	ACTIVITY 1: University, Vocational Training and Job Forum	Children of the Mekong hosts forums annually at our largest centre in Sisophon, Cambodia. These forums are designed to offer students valuable information regarding future educational and career prospects. In 2024, every student from Grade 9 to 12, those that lodge and those that stay in the surrounding villages, actively participated in all forums. These events provided students with a unique opportunity to explore available academic pathways within the country and gain insight into the necessary academic skills. Additionally, they gained valuable knowledge about potential future employment opportunities.
	ACTIVITY 2: Support from alumni	Alumni regularly visit the centre when returning to the province to visit their families, expressing deep appreciation for Children of the Mekong. Throughout the year, alumni generously share valuable advice, testimonials, job demonstrations, and even meals. These interactions provide students at the centre with insights into potential future paths and help them better understand what to anticipate. Sopheap, one of the social workers, is also an alumnus who serves as a great inspiration to the children.
	ACTIVITY 3: Organic vegetable garden and rice paddy	The students helped harvest 600kg of rice to distribute to their families. Before the rainy season, they also helped clear the ditch of weeds, similar to the work they do every Sunday. This year, the vegetable garden could not be maintained due to lack of water.

Result 3 – Become Responsible, Helpful and Well-Balanced Young Person

Outputs	Inputs	Indicators
OBJECTIVE 1: <i>Get involved in society</i>	ACTIVITY: Teamwork, chores, tutoring and gardening	Every Sunday, students actively participate in “pulakham”, engaging in thorough cleaning of the Centre and tending to the garden. Those not residing at the Centre contribute by assisting with classroom chores. Additionally, once a month, students collaborate to change bedding sheets, mats, and mosquito nets. Every 3 months, 2 students in Grade 12 will assume roles as the new hygiene leader and discipline leader, providing them with valuable leadership experience and emphasising the importance of older students supporting younger peers. Students also take turns shopping at the market and preparing meals on Sundays, organised into 14 teams within the Centre. Additionally, 1 team dedicates each Sunday to tutoring underprivileged children in Ou Badav village. These activities foster a sense of social responsibility and encourage students to actively contribute to their communities, reinforcing the notion that nothing should be taken for granted.
OBJECTIVE 2: <i>Knowing myself and be open to the world</i>	ACTIVITY: Self-development activities	Throughout the year and on weekends, overseas volunteers and social workers orchestrate various activities for all students residing in the centre. These activities encompass a wide range of options, from movie nights geared towards enhancing English proficiency to outdoor games and arts workshops. There are also excursions to Cambodian culture sites like Banteay Chhmar, hiking to mountains, pagoda visit for Pchum Benh, Siem Reap and Preah Vihear temple visits, Preah Vihear temples, and Khone waterfalls. Some students are also selected to participate in the Khmer Empire marathon and Inter-Centre sports tournaments, which helps foster appreciation for culture and community. There are also numerous workshops centred around creative writing, health and wellness, environmental awareness, arts and crafts, and sports and games held. Interviews with the local team further aid in identifying areas for improvement and refinement.

SUCESSES AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT



The Samrong Education Centre achieved significant success this year, demonstrating its unwavering commitment to fostering a supportive, nurturing environment for its students.

A noteworthy community engagement activity was the **rice paddy field harvest**, where students participated in harvesting **4 hectares of rice**. The day was filled with productive work, alongside a **picnic** and **games**. The harvest yielded **600 kg of rice**, which will be distributed to families throughout the year, based on their needs. This provided valuable experience for the students and strengthened the Centre's ties with the local community, which was further bolstered by the time spent in the villages. Also, the centre organised **summer camps** for the children from the surrounding villages, offering them an enriching opportunity to engage in educational and recreational activities.

The Centre also initiated a **school transport project** in the village of **Ou Badav**, ensuring **six Grade 7 students** receive monthly support for their school transportation. Discussions are currently underway with the head of **Kouk Ampil village** to expand this school transport initiative in 2025, aiming to support even more students in the future.

In response to the needs of the most vulnerable, the Centre built new houses for **2 students** from the villages, based on **poverty criteria** and the **condition of their previous homes**. This initiative provides these students with a safer and more stable living environment. Additionally, the Centre has been able to provide **monthly food and hygiene kits** to **2 families** who are unable to benefit from a full sponsorship, as their children are still too young.

In terms of infrastructure, the remaining budget from the **Improvements of the Centre project** facilitated the construction of a **second lavatory**, providing both boys and girls with their own space and privacy for activities such as washing clothes. Additional upgrades included the installation of **fans** and **new lights** in an outdoor area, where students often gather to socialise or complete their home exams. These enhancements ensure a more comfortable and conducive environment for both study and recreation.

These achievements underscore the Centre's ongoing dedication to improving both the academic and personal lives of its students, while also fostering stronger community ties and providing practical support to families in need.

Areas of Improvement to be implemented in 2025

The Samrong Education Centre has identified several key areas of improvement, with a focus on enhancing its impact within both the local villages and the Centre itself.

In the villages, two main priorities have been outlined. The first is to **engage more with children from the villages** in the activities and resources offered by the Centre. A clear distinction has been



observed between the children attending the Centre and those remaining in the villages, and the goal is to provide more opportunities for the village children to benefit from the Centre's presence. To achieve this, **extra afternoon sessions** will be introduced in the villages, focusing on activities such as **arts, manual crafts, sports, English, and cultural programmes**. Additionally, children from the villages



will be invited to participate in training sessions held at the Centre, including the **GreenLady menstrual health workshops**, which aim to promote better understanding of health and well-being.

The second priority is the **development of school transport** for children in the more **isolated villages**. There is a concerning **drop-out rate** between **Grade 6 and Grade 7**, primarily due to the distance of secondary schools from homes, often requiring a **30-minute motorcycle ride**. Expanding school transport services to these areas is therefore crucial to ensure continuity in education and reduce barriers to further learning.

Within the Centre itself, two primary areas for improvement have been highlighted. The first is the **management of water and electricity**, as utility costs have been rising year on year. Challenges such as **water shortages** and **increasing electricity prices** have put pressure on resources, and efficient management strategies will be implemented to address these issues. The second area of focus is **career orientation** for students. Currently, **50% of the children** at the Centre aspire to become **teachers**, primarily because teaching is the only profession they are familiar with in their villages. In response, the Centre plans to introduce weekly sessions to **explore different career opportunities**

based on the wider job market in Cambodia, broadening students' awareness of potential future pathways.

In the year ahead, several infrastructural improvements are also planned. **Ceiling renovations** are a priority, as many of the buildings have suffered from **water infiltration**, leading to **damaged ceilings**. One boarding house has even lost its ceiling entirely. In addition to the structural damage, a significant issue has arisen with **birds nesting between the roof**



and ceiling, which has caused **noise disturbances** for students. These issues will be addressed to ensure a more comfortable and conducive environment for study and rest.

The Centre also plans to continue and expand its various programmes. This includes the **afternoon activities** in the villages, which will be tailored to the needs and interests of the children, as well as the opening of **training sessions for children from the villages**. Furthermore, efforts to expand **school transport** to **isolated villages** will be a key focus, particularly for students needing to travel to secondary and high schools.

These targeted improvements aim to create a more sustainable, supportive, and enriching environment for both the children at the Centre and those in the surrounding villages, enhancing their educational opportunities and long-term prospects.

STUDENT PROFILE



Neang Peakdey, 17 years old, Grade 10 (Year 11)

The story of Peakdey begins in 2016, when he was just a **10-year-old boy** in **Year 6**. At that time, the **Children of Mekong** stepped in to support him, helping his family overcome their **financial struggles** and allowing him to continue his education without interruption. However, everything changed when **COVID-19** struck Cambodia, plunging Peakdey and his family into even more difficult circumstances. As the pandemic wreaked havoc across the country, the family found themselves unable to make ends meet.

Once travel restrictions were lifted, they decided to move to **Ratanakiri**, an eastern province near the border with **Vietnam**, in search of new opportunities. Unfortunately, the move meant that Peakdey had no choice but to **drop out of school**. His family's financial struggles were dire, and at just **14 years old**, Peakdey had to work to help support them. His parents had found work in a **fruit delivery business**, and Peakdey, despite his age, joined them in the demanding work.

In 2023, the family faced further hardship when they found themselves **unemployed**. As a result, they returned to their **home village of Pothivong**, where the **Children of Mekong** had first supported Peakdey years earlier. It was here that Peakdey, now 17, decided to take matters into his own hands. Driven by his deep desire to return to school, he came to see us **alone**, asking if he could receive support once more. His determination was clear, and he returned several times to **demonstrate his commitment** to his education.

Today, Peakdey is back at the **Children of Mekong Centre**, where he has been awarded a place to continue his studies. He is now in **Year 10**, a testament to his resilience and unwavering spirit. We are deeply grateful to his sponsors, **Maxime and Thaiene**, for supporting him on this new journey.

Peakdey is not only a model of **courage** and **perseverance**, but also of **sensitivity** and compassion. Despite his own challenges, he spends what little free time he has visiting his **mother**, who is currently in **hospital**. Beyond his academic pursuits, Peakdey is also a **talented singer**, and earlier this year, he took first place in a **talent contest** in the province of **Otdar Meanchey**. His story is one of immense strength and inspiration, proving that with determination and support, the future can still shine brightly, no matter the obstacles.



New Year Celebration



Cross Cultural Partnerships



Sports Events



Cooking Workshops



Writing Workshops



Battambang Trip



Talent Show



Hygiene Workshops



Thank you for your support!

