

4th Family Party
13th anniversary of Krousar Thmey
5th, 6th & 7th April 2004



More than 1000 children gathered at the bottom of Kampong Cham's bridge crossing the Mekong river.

- April 1991 : birth of Krousar Thmey with the opening of the first orphanage welcoming 30 children, orphans or abandoned children, within the Site II refugee camp at the Khmer-Thai border.
- April 2004 : Krousar Thmey is the first Foundation assisting deprived children in Cambodia. It caters for more than 1000 children and helps financially or materially around 3000 others within our 63 programs.

To celebrate our 13th year of activity all the children and staff from Krousar Thmey made the trip to Kampong Cham from their schools and centers located all over Cambodia.



In total, 1232 people gathered at the new school for blind or deaf in Kampong Cham.

Since 1998 such celebrations are scheduled every 2 years and this pace shall carry on in spite of the hard work required to organise them.

These Family Parties aim at creating a family spirit between our children, younger and elders, and the staff. In Cambodia, family links are of the highest importance and belonging to a group such as a family is a key to gain a place in the Khmer society. Many

children we support are left on the fringe: orphans, abandoned children... and it is once in Krousar Thmey that they discover the feeling of a united family.

The aim of the party is also to put in the limelight the good work produced by our staff and to reward their daily devotion for the good blossoming of those children.

This is an abstract of Benoît Duchâteau-Arminjon's speech, founder president of Krousar Thmey, during the opening ceremony :

"Without solidarity and mutual support, without this ongoing network we created and awaiting to grow stronger, the future will not be as easy especially in a difficult economical situation. Besides, the elders shall help the younger ones. With these 3 days ceremony of games, exchange and party you should develop a spirit of solidarity, respect, mutual aid so that a real family spirit can arise. This is what will help you gaining a real future by being positive actors of tomorrow's Cambodia."

The opening ceremony, held with his Excellency Khieu Kanharit, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Information and spokesperson of the government, and with the Vice Governor of Kampong Cham province, started with the blessing of the ceremony and the audience by the monks. Then while the Cambodian flag slowly rose up all the crowd sang the national anthem and the deaf signed it.



Arrival of officials together with Kosal, Bénito and Phalla.



Eventually the young deaf of Chba Ampeou school performed the blessing dance opening traditionally any official ceremonies in Cambodia. It was really moving to see this youth perfectly together presenting such a quality show.

His Excellency Khieu Kanharit delivered a speech confirming all his support to our Foundation and invited the staff to carry on their work. He personally committed himself by informing

Bénito he would help us obtaining a new piece of land to build a new school for deaf and blind on the outskirts of Phnom Penh.

Shows and dances from each of our centers took place in the afternoon and the following days. To be noted, a very funny play mimed by the deaf children of Battambang was performed. Some of them had been lucky to join a training on basic circus skills proposed by the NGO *Phare*.

Traditional games such as the musical chair, bag races or finding a coin into a plate of flour were organised. The games where a lot of energy was spent by the children were usually followed by a good laugh.



Our new logo symbol : being part of a new family.

Several times, some children who used to live in our centers took the microphone to tell their story and success. They all warmly thanked Krousar Thmey insisting on the fact that without our Foundation they might have never achieved the position they have today. They give advises to the younger ones to hold on to the support offered by Krousar Thmey to finish their studies and make their own place in today's society. They managed with simple words of young adults to convey important messages. They gave them hope and now embody models they can identify themselves to.

Finally 3 contests occurred: general knowledge, singing and poetry. Children showed great motivation in these events they all well prepared in advance.

Concerning the poetry contest they had to create this year a poem on the following theme: « Cultural resources in Cambodia » in less than 10 lines on the rhythm called « Phuchung Lilea » (typical melody). The winning poem wrote by Koy Livoeut, a young boy from the School of Khmer Arts and Culture in Sisophon, goes as follows (it was translated and rewritten by a French volunteer... if any one wishes to translate it into English, please let us know!) :

*" Aux 4 coins du Royaume Cambodgien jaillit un formidable patrimoine,
Les temples et les moines y côtoient Kénori et divines apsaras.
Quand de puissants garudas et géants enrochés à même la pierre resplendent et inspirent,
C'est Angkor Wat qu'ils admirent, emportant des collines d'hommes et de femmes dans son élan majestueux.
Le Bantey Srey miraculeux, citadelle qui s'enracine en beauté suprême indétrônable,
où le temps égraine le sable avec lequel nos ancêtres ont minutieusement glorifié la nation.
Khmers filles et garçons, chérissent et vénèrent le prassat Bayon adoré,
De danses irisées, le ressac ondulant kbatch leu ou krom, imprègnent la renommée
D'un pays glorifié, par ses danses apsaras, de virevoltes populaires en joutes traditionnelles.
Le grès face au ciel fascine les âmes d'un peuple qui se blottit tendrement dans ses creux,
Volutes d'un guide autrefois lépreux, ses arabesques l'épousent et témoignent en silence."*

The organisation of the general contest reached the standard of a national event. Every question was read aloud and the deaf could read on the piece of paper the same question. The blind answered in Braille. Each center had prepared well ahead this event and the children trained themselves with the game *Neak Na Doeung*, a sort of trivial pursuit in Khmer made by Krousar Thmey. Most of them produced brilliant scores but the winner was... the blind team of Battambang !!!

More than just a simple victory the blind gained a deserved gratitude and respect from all the other children. They became real actors of their own integration inside the Cambodian society. To us, it means a great symbol of success regarding Krousar Thmey's actions towards schooling of handicapped people, this after 10 years of hard work !

The first prize was a computer for the school and the 3 students were offered plane tickets for a trip to Ratanakiri (province located north west of Cambodia where many ethnic minorities live). They were all delighted with the idea of flying over there !



Trophy given from Bénito to the blind team of Battambang.

Every evening children and staff mingled to dance on either traditional Khmer or modern rhythms (Madison !!!).



The solidarity dance to close the 3 days event.

These 3 days enabled the children to meet new friends and share personal experiences even though children rarely talk about their own history. Deaf teenagers from Siem Reap and Battambang who recently met during the last visit of our hearing aid specialists in January 2003 inside the school of Siem Reap were really happy to meet again. Even blind from various centers, especially musicians, loved to improvise songs together.

It was a great time for disabled children who could join those events as any other children. Thus the other children realized how well the disabled could cope with groups of people and later on integrate the Cambodian society. We wish that such a respect can find its roots among the behaviors of the youngest that could pass over this message to their family and friends... thus, one day, acceptance and respect of the disabled population in Cambodia may be a main pillar.



Blind from Battambang celebrate their success together with their friends from Phnom Penh.

All the children left site on the morning of 8th April. It will still be holidays until 18th April so let's wish them good holidays with dreams of these 3 days of partying, sharing and friendship !

But the festivities are not completely finished yet since on 13th, 14th and 15th April will be celebrated the entrance in the Khmer year 2548, year of the monkey !



For this special event, all children from Krousar Thmey join us to wish you a very happy Khmer New Year.