

## Scholarship 2018 Impact and Evaluation Report

Education can break the cycle of poverty. But young adults are often tempted to forsake education in favour of fast cash, especially in difficult circumstances. Our scholarship programme aims to inspire them to pursue education despite the obstacles. The flagship scholarship programme was started in 2017 thanks to the generous sponsorship of Credit Agricole (CA-CIB). It offers a life-changing experience for two outstanding graduates who show great leadership potential. They get a chance to come to London for 3 months to improve their English language skills, engage in job shadowing opportunities, get exposure to international commerce, build confidence, improve their life skills and meet friends from all over the world.

In 2017, the pilot programme welcomed Chhengtay TOEUR and Kosal SOUEM from Cambodia. Once they returned home, they found a job in record time and inspired hundreds of other students to study harder.

In 2018, we welcomed two Cambodian graduates once again - Virort NAO and Cheang CHE.

Impact is core to our purpose of breaking the cycle of poverty through education and we would like to take this opportunity to share with you our assessment and impact report of the Scholarship of 2018.

### [Virort and Cheang have found a job!](#)

We are thrilled to say that both Virort and Cheang, who you supported, coached and inspired during their 10-week stay in London have secured full time employment in Phnom Penh.

**Virort works in QA department as a Raw material inspector** at NVC Corporation Co., Ltd, which produces a premium water called "[Vital](#)" in Phnom Penh.

**Cheang works as Actuarial Analyst Officer** at Dai-ichi Life Insurance (Cambodia) PLC in Phnom Penh.

### [Objectives & Measurement](#)

The original objectives of the Scholarship were to:

Give participating companies and volunteers the opportunity to actively take part in a global corporate social responsibility initiative.

Provide them with new skills and competencies;

Inspire and coach selected students to become mission-driven leaders who can make a difference;

Immerse them in an international English speaking environment to accelerate and improve their English language skills;

### 1) English language skills

Virort and Cheang had **10 weeks of total English language immersion** and their English language skills developed considerably during their stay in London. By the end of their stay both were able to express thoughts and complex feelings more confidently. Although there was marked improvement in the language skills of both scholars, early education appeared to have a significant impact even in young adulthood.

At an early age, Cheang moved to live with his uncle in a city because it offered better prospects for education. Consequently, we found that he was able to communicate his thoughts in English fluently. Virort on the other hand lived with his grandparents in a remote village in rural Cambodia. Although he had a lot to share, he found it difficult to find the right words at the right time. However, his enthusiasm always carried the conversation forward.

### 2) Professional Development

Their activities and experiences during their stay in London helped acquire key life and work skills.



They were exposed to

- 25 days of work shadowing experiences
- 6 participating companies, large and small
- Industries relating to their field of studies (Finance and Agriculture)
- HR, Sales and trading, IT, Comms
- 4 public speaking engagements
- Exposure to senior management and executive committee level

Virort and Cheang are proud to talk about their adaptability skills and are both satisfied with their new CV. One of them feels totally ready for job interviews.

### 3) Personal development

Both scholars showed unwavering enthusiasm, commitment and a willingness to learn throughout their stay. However, it was evident that they were both stretched beyond their comfort zone. The scholarship in 2018 was delayed due to unforeseen issues with getting their visas. Despite this, they

displayed a tremendous resilience in the face of all challenges. Due to the delay, not only was the time period of cut short but also the end of the scholarship programme coincided with the deep onset of the British winter period. Both scholars found this difficult to deal with. They also found the pace of life in London quite hectic and transport options quite confusing. Both found it hard to reach their appointments on time sometimes and had to be coached on punctuality.

Although one of the scholars appeared to have some trouble integrating with the host family, living with host families proved to be essential for support, increased the quality of the experience and became a source of inspiration. In addition, the scholars particularly appreciated having international friends and mentors.

Both scholars were very grateful for their overall experience. The following quote sums up their overall feedback.

“It’s just a starting point but it’s a big change for me, my family, and my country. It’s an important factor helping me to reach my business goal and plenty of projects of my country.”

In addition, here are the soft skills that scholars reported to have gained after their experience in London.

Cheang	Virort
Know how people work in the office	Improve my time management
Better prepare for my future career	Learn how to communicate efficiently
Learn how to adopt a new place especially a new country where everything is different	Learn how to be more patient
Open my mind	I am now more sociable



CACIB's team



Cheang testimony



Virort work shadowing



Cheang and Virort

#### 4) Work prospect

The skills developed in London will serve them, as Virort and Cheang left for Cambodia more confident and determined to change the mentalities in their country.

Virort comes from a farming family and saw his parents kill themselves at work while remaining poor. His parents could not afford to pay for his education: *“I’m so lucky because... my parents asked me to stop studying but I refused to stop”*.

Thanks to his experience in London, Virort feels able to help people in Cambodia and especially the farmers: *“I want to create a lot of jobs for the people, I want to help farmers to earn a lot of money to support their living and their children [...] we grow to be a rich farmer, not to be a poor farmer [...] and that’s why I studied Agro-industry”.*

Cheang is passionate about mathematics and wanted to continue his studies to complete a master’s degree in applied mathematics. He recently told Children of the Mekong *“My father is getting old. He’s unemployed. He can’t work anymore. We don’t have plans like life insurance. My two sisters are studying at secondary and high school. I want to help them finish their studies”.*

Therefore, he decided to enter the job market and he says what he’s doing is not so far from his dream: *“I really like my job, It’s about maths in real life. I do calculations and analyse problems most of the time”.*

### **Feedback from participating companies**

Virort and Cheang’s stories deeply touched all those who crossed their paths. Based on the feedback questionnaire completed by companies, we have found that 100% of participants would like to renew the experience in 2019.

*“Fantastic grass roots programme, that actually makes a difference -- directly to change lives of those in programme and indirectly to those in their lives who will learn from them.”*

*“It was a pleasure to welcome Cheang amid our ranks these few days. Unfortunately, we were all very busy and did not manage to dedicate as much time to him as we would have liked. We probably learnt as much about him, and about ourselves, as he did about us, our line of work, and our culture. 10/10!”*

### **Planning and implementation process – some lessons learned**

- Unforeseen visa issues proved to be a significant disruptor particularly for a small charity like ours.
- A dedicated project manager is essential to this programme. This role also calls for someone who is familiar with or interested in chaperoning individuals from a different culture.
- Our network is largely within the finance sector. We do not necessarily have the network to provide tailored work-shadowing experiences in other sectors such as Agriculture. We have to therefore be careful in what we promise candidates. If we do take on candidates with education in other sectors, it would require additional planning and preparation.
- The overall selection process, the balance of activities and general schedule proved to be good.
- Four weeks of English classes prior to time spent within companies is essential.
- Cross-cultural training could be provided prior to the scholarship.

### **5) Scholarship impact – secondary benefits**

To ensure the smooth running of the Scholarship, the small team of Children of the Mekong has had to dedicate a very significant proportion of its resources on the project. The Board of Children of the Mekong justified this in light of secondary benefits of the Scholarship: increased general awareness of Children of the Mekong, new child sponsorships and potential new partnerships.

## 6) The desire to share

### A role of Ambassador of Children of the Mekong to play among their peers and the younger students.

The scholars want to share their London experience in Cambodia.

Cheang would like to talk about global and capital market with the young Cambodians and make a presentation about his life in UK.

Virort will try to spread the information about the scholarship of Enfants du Mekong to all poor student and children.



“My message to the person watching this video : no matter where you are, no matter who you are, don’t think that you’re poor and if you love education, you commit to continue to study, you will find a way”- CHEANG



“If you want to do something, you need to find all the information before deciding to do something” - VIRORT

## Acknowledgments

One cannot underestimate how life changing the experience was for Cheang and Virort. The contrast between their rural family background and their London experience could not have been greater.

We are also immensely grateful to the Hampton School, the Growing underground, the OrganicLea Horticulture and d’Angelin&Co for offering shadowing opportunities to Cheang and Virort. You significantly contributed to making the Scholarship a success and we are hugely grateful. Thank you for your time and giving them this opportunity. We could not have wished for better partners

Naturally, the Scholarship would never have happened without the support of our principal sponsor, CA-CIB, who have shown huge commitment, dedication and passion. We are delighted to say that they have accepted to renew the experience in 2019.

Deep and grateful thanks also go to Justice Au Coeur of the Lycée Français Charles de Gaulle who embraced this project with open arms. They not only opened their network but also embraced the opportunity to educate and raise awareness amongst their pupils.

Throughout their stay, which coincided with Autumn and Winter 2018, Cheang and Virort suffered no colds or illness, no food allergies, no visible home sickness. This is largely thanks to the incredibly warm, welcoming and generous host families who opened their homes to Cheang and Virort throughout their London experience.

It was a pleasure working with you all on this project and we looking forward to continuing working with you and further developing our partnership in 2019.

With very best wishes,

Eugenie Munakarmi  
COO Children of the Mekong

"I learned so many things from the Scholarship in London. It changed my habits after returning home. It was an interesting experience for my life and career. Thank you for giving me a golden chance." Cheang

## Appendix

**Cheang's home and village**



**Virort's home and village**

