

Scholarships Help Poor Students Stay in School

Over the 2015-2016 academic year, nearly 160,000 students from primary and secondary schools received scholarships from the government.

For nearly four years, Phorn Sreymao did not have a proper school uniform or adequate school supplies. Her family's financial situation was compounded by the fact her parents were already in debt from covering school expenses.

But after receiving a scholarship in 2015, 12-year-old Sreymao now walks happily to school, content in the knowledge she has all the supplies she needs to continue her studies.



After receiving a scholarship in 2015, Sreymao (right), 12, attends school, equipped with all the study materials she needs in Phnom Penh.

"I was very happy to get the scholarship because now I have enough money to study and to buy a uniform, books, pens and a bag," she said. I have more study materials than ever before. It eases the money problems which caused me so much trouble before." Sreymao receives USD60 per school year. She is one of three classmates awarded the scholarship when they were in Grade 4.

Now in Grade Five, she still remembers the day when her teacher asked students who needed financial help to raise their hand if they were interested in the scholarship fund. Sreymao did not hesitate.

"I raised my hand and I was interviewed. I told my teacher about my hardship and eventually I got the scholarship," she said. Nowadays, Sreymao and her mother are not as worried about spending on her studies and Sreymao is never absent from class.

Sreymao is the younger of two siblings. Her father is a security guard and her mother works at a garment factory in Phnom Penh. After school she takes care of her one-year-old niece and cooks for the family in addition to doing other household chores and school homework.

Although the scholarship does not completely meet all of Sreymao's needs, it goes a long way. Her mother Mrs. Leas Puk, 55, said the scholarship encourages her daughter to study hard. "I spent the money from the scholarship to buy a set of uniforms and study materials and the rest of the money is for her to go to school every day," she said.

"She always goes to school and studies hard even if we are poor and don't have enough food to eat sometimes." She studies hard in order to achieve her ambition of becoming a dentist so she can support her parents.

School principal Mr. Khut Mony said the school has had the scholarship scheme in place since 2015. He also mentioned that there are many poor students. Consequently, the school must intensively examine and select those living in serious poverty who meet the criteria for the award. A qualifying factor is having a good school record and high grades.

81 students, including Sreymao, have received financial support so far at the school. "After getting the scholarship, the condition of students has greatly improved, their class attendance and results have substantially increased." Khut Mony said.



Sreymao helping her teacher in the classroom

“Sreymao's teacher said she is one of the most outstanding students in his class. “She is a good and clever student. The scholarship is good and helpful for poor students to continue their study. The more students get a scholarship, the better it is” he added.

Mr. Sat Boramey, Teacher

The EU supports the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to effectively implement and manage the scholarship programme through both financial and technical assistance. Specific attention is paid to capacity development for implementation of the current national strategy and ongoing reforms, and to areas such as early childhood education, school operating budgets, teacher qualifications, quality assurance and national learning assessments.

