



Le Don du Chœur

Chœur d'Enfants des Écoles Privées Genevoises



It's back to school for pupils in Cambodia: How Ta Pen is catching up on schoolwork post-COVID

We are very pleased to announce that our school in Ta Pen reopened on September 7. All Cambodian schools had been closed for six months. As this included school canteens, it meant that many children have been deprived of their only substantial meal of the day.

During this long period, the Ta Pen teachers went to great lengths to ensure their primary school pupils never stopped learning, going to their villages to give lessons to small groups. Senior and junior high-school students followed courses on-line thanks to the recent installation of electricity in the village.

Now that the school has reopened, the main effort is concentrated on catching up with what has been missed. Health regulations are strict and the Ministry of Education, confronted with overcrowded

classes (60 to 70 students), has had to opt for a resumption of studies in small groups (maximum 20 students), part-time and with a lighter schedule.

Ta Pen is better protected than state schools. Thanks to our good luck in continuing to receive donations, we have been able, so far, to retain our whole team, at 80% of their salaries. So we have a sufficient number of teachers to give additional lessons to small groups of 10 to 15 pupils. We are hoping to be able to bring everything back on track in three months, before the next school intake, foreseen for January 2021. Some of the older students had to find work to help their families survive. We are currently missing 150 students from the 538 enrolled. We are going to visit each family to try to convince them to send their children back to school.



For ten years they have dedicated themselves to the children of Ta Pen! Chamrong LO (left) and Sokmean PUT (right)

HIGHLIGHTS

Switzerland

- Mexican face masks in Geneva – a roaring success!
- Covid: fund-raising for Ta Pen's urgent needs

Cambodia

- Gradual reopening of Ta Pen
- Our local team strengthened
- 50 computers gifted by Firmenich Singapore

Mexico

- Building work resumes
- Five Santa Cecilia pupils admitted to university
- Music lessons online

India

- Assistance for 58 handicapped children in Anbumalar



At the school, health regulations are strictly applied but everyone keeps smiling!

A new life for 50 computers

In August, Firmenich Singapore undertook the task of clearing the hard drives of 50 computers, boxing them up and sending them to Ta Pen. The Cambodian Ministry of Education was closely involved in the project and delegated two local specialists to train our teachers in installing software and in the overall maintenance of the computers. We are very grateful to all those involved in this wonderful project. Having access to such equipment is vital for the future of our students!



Our local leadership – as motivated as ever

After ten years of outstanding service as director of Don du Chœur in Cambodia, Chamrong LO has decided to pass the torch to his right-hand man, Sokmean PUT, who has been our education advisor since the school opened and head of Ta Pen since 2016.

Chamrong LO will stay on the Steering Committee with Catherine NOP, former director of human relations of the Artisans of Angkor, and Borey VANN who, through local NGO Bandos Komar, has overseen the promotion of reading and of health in the school since 2012.

With its wonderful team spirit and its motivated and experienced staff, Ta Pen has excellent resources in the fight to get its pupils back on track.

We should have been celebrating the tenth anniversary of Ta Pen

... but, of course, we were unable to travel to Cambodia in August. However, it is just a pleasure delayed. We are monitoring the organization of the project very closely, with Michel on WhatsApp.



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THE COVID EMERGENCY

Fund-raising for Ta Pen: outstanding show of solidarity!

In April, at the beginning of the spread of Covid-19 in Cambodia, we launched an online appeal to cover the emergency needs of our rural school in Ta Pen. Through your generosity we raised CHF 10,350 – allowing us to distribute food parcels to 125 families who were in great difficulty, and to help to maintain the salaries of our 17 teachers at 80%. We were able to make face masks at the school for our pupils (from Grade 4 and up) and for our teachers.



All the members of the Ta Pen team have been able to keep their jobs, thanks to you

Two wide-screen televisions were also bought and installed at the homes of two of the rare Ta Pen residents connected to the electricity grid. It is really exceptional to be able to follow online courses in the middle of the countryside!

The Ta Pen team has been greatly moved by your generosity, especially at a time when thousands of Cambodians working in the tourism and textile sectors have lost their jobs. They send their thanks to each one of you!



Our future senior high school graduates were able to follow their courses online from Ta Pen

India has not been spared!

In May, we provided urgent food parcels to the families of 58 handicapped pupils in our Anbumalar school in Chennai.

What about trying our Mexican face masks!

For the last six months, with our French partner organization, La Banda de Musica, we have been importing hand-embroidered face masks from Mexico, allowing us to give work to women in a country particularly ravaged by Covid-19.

The Mexican masks are highly sought after! We have very motivated friends in Geneva schools, shops and restaurants (the École des Nations, Ceres Nature and particularly the Mexican grocery shop, Los Tacos, in Carouge) who help us sell them (CHF 10 each).

All the money received (CHF 2,230 so far) will go to paying the teachers at the Santa Cecilia music school as families can no longer afford the monthly inscription fees during lockdown. Contact us at info@don-du-choeur to order your own masks.



Special Halloween face masks have arrived in Carouge at the Los Tacos grocery shop

THE MEXICAN PROJECT

Five Santa Cecilia students admitted to university

Almost ten years ago, the Santa Cecilia music school opened its doors to a handful of students in the shanty-town of Oaxaca in Mexico. Today, there are more than 140 students.

Nothing seems to discourage them: neither the spread of Covid-19 nor the difficulties of study. They have been practising their instruments online with their teachers and with volunteer musicians in Birmingham, Paris and Geneva. Five students have just been admitted to the preparatory class for higher studies in music at Mexico University (UNAM).

They are the pride of their families. But also a source of anxiety because they cannot afford to pay for their studies and feel totally helpless. So the Santa Cecilia committee is working with the young students to assess exactly what their needs will be – and Don du Choeur wants to pitch in and help too.



Huge success for the sale of musical notes!

In 2019, several private schools in Geneva took part in this fund-raising initiative, which has already allowed grants to be given to 14 students from Santa Cecilia. In 2021, these will help to fund board and lodging and registration fees for the five students admitted to university.

-> Follow our young students on social media, as they embark on their new adventure.



Your donation will help us help these communities.

Don du Choeur

Swiss non-profit association, tax-deductible since 2008

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The extension work takes off again...

The Santa Cecilia school is still closed. Even though the spread of Covid-19 seems to have slowed, students continue to follow their courses online – on their smart phones. So it is a good moment to resume the extension work of

the school progressively with a reduced team of workers and with strict health precautions. Several weeks of work are still needed to finish the two large rehearsal rooms. It would be wonderful if they were ready for Christmas.

PARTNERS

Association Genevoise des Ecoles Privées, La Banda de Musica, Broliet SA, 1875 Finance, Fondation Albatros, Fondation Coromandel, Fondation Covalence, Fondation Rumsey-Cartier, avec le soutien de Ville de Genève.