



## GOUTTE D'EAU – A CHILD SUPPORT NETWORK

### 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



This document is a translation of our 2023 Annual report to the attention of our English-speaking donors – click here to read the original report in either German or French: <https://www.gouttedeau.org/documents/>

### CONTENT

1. Concrete aid in Cambodia
2. A difficult year for Goutte d'eau in Cambodia (DT) and GEcsn's support
3. Goutte d'eau – a child support network in Switzerland

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Abbreviations in the text:

GEcsn: Goutte d'eau – a child support network

DT: Damnok Toek (Goutte d'eau Cambodia)



## 1. CONCRETE AID IN CAMBODIA

The following pages describe the flagship projects that GEcsn was able to support thanks to your donations in Cambodia in 2023:

### 1.1 Migration: Poipet

For many years, GEcsn has been supporting the programs of Damnok Toek (DT – Goutte d'eau Cambodia) in the field of unsafe migration in the town of Poipet on the border with Thailand. After the pandemic, the reopening of the border has generated an even higher level of migration than in the past along with the associated risks of trafficking. The situation of migrant families and their children is particularly complicated when they are arrested in Thailand (illegal migration) and deported to Cambodia. DT's program to combat unsafe migration – co-financed by Caritas, Manos Unidas, Agence Française de Développement, and Aide et Action – has regained its relevance and it is able to respond to the needs on the ground. Thanks to its flexibility, GEcsn was able to fund the following components of the program that were not funded by other donors:

- **Non-formal education (NFE):** this project allows vulnerable and marginalized children to receive free basic education adapted to their levels which then allows them to (re)integrate into the public school system to complete their education. Indeed, child trafficking and exploitation is both the cause and the effect of their lack of education and the latter remains the most effective weapon against poverty as it plays a key role in preventing violence and reducing vulnerability to abuse.
  - ✓ **In 2023, 623 children attended non-formal education courses, and 221 children (re)entered public school.**
- **Future's Office (FO):** This project plays an important role in preventing unsafe migration. It provides job seekers with soft skills and job training. In addition, DT has set up income-generating activities that include training and small loans to start a small business.
  - ✓ **In 2023, 595 people benefited from the FO's advice and 329 people found a job.**
- **Office for Migrant Children (CMO):** This project provides support to at risk migrant children and youth by identifying them and managing emergency situations on a case-by-case basis. This project is located at the border, where Thai authorities drop off Cambodian citizens after deporting them.
  - ✓ **In 2023, 107 children received support from the CMO, and 19 unaccompanied minors were cared for by other DT projects.**



## 1.2 Handicap: Neak Loeung (children)

The care of children with physical and/or mental disabilities remains a major challenge in Cambodia due to the stigma of disability and the lack of infrastructure to support them. In recent years, GEcsn has intensified its support to Damnok Toek in this area so it can offer innovative projects including support for families and raising awareness among the population. These steps are in line with the desire of the Cambodian government to improve the care of people with disabilities and with UNICEF's recommendations. Programs supported by GEcsn include:

- **The Outreach and Home Care Program** for children with physical and/or mental disabilities living in the Neak Loeung area. An educator visits the villages to meet them and to provide regular support to the children and their families.
  - ✓ **In 2023, 36 children with disabilities were supported by this program.**
- The **Day Care and Rehabilitation Center (DCC)** offering physiotherapy, occupational therapy, sensory stimulation, art, music, etc. to children in the outreach program and to children living in the center.
  - ✓ **In 2023, 45 children are receiving care at the AFC.**
- **Three group homes** taking in children who cannot currently live with their families or with foster families.
  - ✓ **In 2023, 18 children were welcomed into the group homes, and 1 child was reintegrated into its family.**

### Life story of Chantha (name changed)

*When the educator of the outreach and home care program met Chantha (9) a year ago, she was completely dependent on her relatives. She could not sit or feed herself and showed signs of mental illness. Her parents had to leave her with her grandparents to go in search of better work opportunities, leaving them completely helpless in the face of their granddaughter's needs. They thought nothing could be done to help her and lacked information and support to take care for her.*

*When DT got in touch with them, the situation quickly improved: the educators taught them how to care for Chantha at home and arranged for her to come to the DCC for physiotherapy, occupational therapy and sensory stimulation. A splint and rehabilitation sessions allowed her to quickly regain some independence and even to take classes at school.*

*Chantha has since been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder which is now being treated. DT's intervention – sharing information, learning simple management techniques, providing accessories – allows Chantha to live with her family and to follow a basic education that improves the lives of Chantha and her grandparents both in terms of care and quality of life.*



### 1.3 Handicap: Kep (young adults)

In order to continue the commitment made in 2003 to children with mental disabilities and realizing that there were no structures in Cambodia to welcome them once they became adults, GEcsn decided in 2016 to create the 1st social enterprise for young adults with mental and/or physical disabilities in Cambodia: the Kep Farm, a sheltered living and working space adapted to the needs of its residents.

As the aim of the program is to give as much independence as possible to its beneficiaries, GEcsn has financed the construction of semi-independent housing in 2022-2023 that can accommodate up to 14 beneficiaries. Each bungalow has 2 or 3 bedrooms with individual bathrooms and a common area where the kitchen and living area are located. The first beneficiaries were able to move in in March 2023. Thanks to the structures put in place and the support of the care team, these young people live practically independently while having access to the resources offered by the Kep Farm (care, advice, transportation, work, etc.).

Financing the Kep Farm remains complicated as very few international organizations or foundations fund projects for people with mental disabilities. This is why GEcsn contributed 50% of the farm's operating budget in 2023. This observation has been taken into account in the review process on the future of GEcsn (see chapter on GEcsn's situation in Switzerland for further details).

- ✓ **8 young people were able to move into the semi-independent bungalows in 2023.**

#### Life story of Tola (name changed)

*Tola was abandoned at birth and ended up in an orphanage where she was neglected because of her physical and mental disabilities. When the government closed the organization where she lived, she was transferred to the Neak Loeung center and two years later, having reached the age of 18, to the Kep Farm where she has resided since 2020.*

*After 2 years of caring and work with the educators, Tola has made such great progress that she was part of the group of young people who moved into the semi-independent bungalows at the beginning of 2023. Since moving into the bungalows, Tola has become more and more independent, taking care of herself, doing some cooking, and communicating better with her peers and community members. She takes great pride in her work on the farm where she particularly enjoys helping to make tea.*

*Tola's story is a great example of success and is a perfect reflection of what DT seeks to achieve through its programs. DT is confident that Tola will eventually be able to live completely independently outside the center.*



## 1.4 Protection

GEcsn supported DT in 2023 as it reviewed and strengthened its safeguarding standards and procedures, with the safety and well-being of children being key elements of its projects and mission. The aim was to undertake a comprehensive review of existing standards and procedures, as well as their application, to ensure the protection of children and young adults and to meet international standard making sure that the needs of all beneficiaries, including those of children and young adults with disabilities, were being addressed. The process was led by a renowned international expert in child protection who has extensive experience with special situations involving children and young adults with disabilities. A Cambodian consultant also contributed to the process to support the expert's work and to ensure that the Cambodian context was taken into account.

Here are the main points of the GEcsn-funded process:

- Analysis of the level of understanding and knowledge of staff and beneficiaries in terms of protection standards and procedures in all places where programs are carried out. The participation of children and young adults in the projects was a key priority in this process.
- A comprehensive review of any suspected abuse documented by DT over the past 10 years and an analysis of the steps taken to identify the best procedures.
- Review and update of the security policy by the international expert ensuring that it meets the needs of the beneficiaries and international standards taking into account the Cambodian context.
- Creation of a protection committee composed of members of the various programs and members of the organization's headquarters that is responsible for the management of protection within the organization.
- Development of a training program for employees, children and young adults to present the new policy and protective procedures. The training will be done in 2024.

## 2. A DIFFICULT YEAR FOR GOUTTE D'EAU IN CAMBODIA (DT) AND GEcsn's SUPPORT

The year 2023 has been a very challenging year for our main partner in Cambodia, Damnok Toek (Goutte d'eau Cambodia). Indeed, after dealing with the consequences of the Covid-19 crisis and the global repercussions of the war in Ukraine, both of which led to a massive increase in the cost of living and therefore an increase in the organization's budget, DT saw major donors stop supporting projects in Cambodia to focus on other crises.

Faced with the resulting difficult financial situation, the newly recruited Operational director left DT overnight at the end of January 2023, leaving the organization in a delicate and weakened position in terms of its management and finances.

To save DT and ensure the continuation of the programs for its beneficiaries, GEcsn decided to get involved at two levels: 1. provide exceptional financial support and 2. participate in the organization's activities at the operational level (management).



To do this, two members of GEcsn's Board joined DT's interim management to support the organization on a daily basis in terms of budget management, fundraising, decision-making at the strategic level, finding new donors, etc.

The objective of this exceptional support was to ensure the survival of DT so that the organization could continue its work with its beneficiaries and to put in place a new leadership structure.

The challenges were daunting given that DT cares for 700 children daily, that 1'700 children and their families have access to the organization's programs, and that the organization employs 110 people.

### **GEcsn's concrete operational support to DT in 2023:**

- Restructuring of DT's management by creating 2 new positions. The management is now composed of 3 people: the Executive Director, the Program Manager and the Finance – Fundraising Manager.
- Establishment of the new management with more skills in the field of fundraising.
- Participation (ad interim) in the weekly meetings of the new management and day-to-day support for management decision-making.
- Monitoring monthly cash flows and adjusting expenditures to ensure programs continue. Supervision by an international consultant for the implementation of new financial and accounting tools.
- Expansion of the Board of Directors to include members with new competences and delegation of certain tasks of the Board of Directors to a newly created 'steer' body (Steer Board) which supervises the management team on a monthly basis.
- Recruitment for key positions on the management team.
- Fundraising support, including finding new donors.
- Funding and leading a safeguarding policy study within the organization to ensure the safety of the beneficiaries in this time of financial hardship.

The process has been successful and will be completed in 2024: DT was able to maintain all its programs in 2023.

## **3. GOUTTE D'EAU – A CHILD SUPPORT NETWORK IN SWITZERLAND**

### **3.1 Change in staff**

Our long-standing colleague, Head of the Zurich office and accounting, Mrs. Ruth Ledermann, has taken her well-deserved retirement in 2023. We would like to thank her for her outstanding commitment during her career with GEcsn.

Mrs. Ledermann will continue to be the contact person for our donors in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

### **3.2 Strategic Process**

In 2022, after almost 30 years of activity, the Board of GEcsn launched a review process on the future of the organization considering the following factors:

- The imminent retirement of the founding members (within the next 5 years).
- DT's growing difficulty in raising funds in Cambodia.
- The fact that support for disadvantaged children and young adults and their families remains of great importance in Cambodia.
- The fact that very few organizations (international, foundations, etc.) support work in the field of mental disability in Cambodia, but also in other countries.

The difficulties encountered by DT in 2023 have accelerated this process and strategic decisions are expected to be made in 2024.

Since GEcsn is engaged in this review process on the future of the organization, the Board has decided not to replace Mrs. Ledermann but to distribute her tasks on an interim basis between the Geneva office and members of the Board.

The involvement of some members of the Board to support DT at the operational level highlighted the organization's need to get expertise, fieldwork, and management advice from GEcsn. This led Christoph Jakob to resign from his position as President of the Board to work on a part-time basis for the foundation from 1 January 2024 to take over the tasks of Mrs. Ledermann, to support DT's operational activities on the ground, and to lead the review process about GEcsn's future. Cristina Masso (development expert) and Martina Honegger (fundraising specialist) will take on the role of co-chairs of GEcsn's Board.

The following options are emerging:

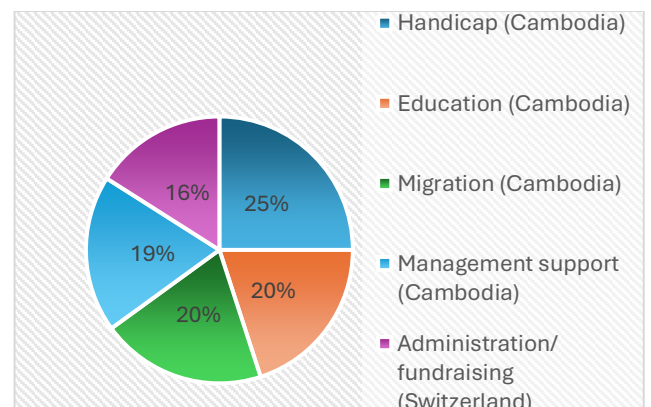
- Support DT at an operational and financial level so that it becomes independent in the areas of unsafe migration and education over the next 2-3 years. GEcsn's support for DT and other organizations may thereafter be limited to the area of disability.
- GEcsn becomes, in the medium to long term, an organization specialized in the field of disability and provides financial and/or technical support to organizations in Cambodia and other countries.
- Continue to support DT to enable the organization to achieve full independence within 3 to 5 years and subsequently dissolve the foundation.

### 3.3 Finance

Thanks to your donations and our reserves, we were able to meet the exceptional needs on the ground in 2023.

2023 in figures\*:

|                                |             |
|--------------------------------|-------------|
| Donations collected:           | CHF 382'048 |
| Funds drawn from our reserves: | CHF 78'361  |
| Total funds used:              | CHF 460'409 |



\* The full annual accounts are available on <https://www.gouttedeau.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Goutte-deau-Jahresrechnung-2023.pdf>



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