



**Phy Phea loves studying and she has always received excellent grades. Her dream is to become a schoolteacher. However, at the end of 2016, her parents decided to send her to the garment factory, as they needed money. But thanks to CIOMAL's help, Phea was finally able to return to school.**

A father affected with leprosy whose hands and feet are severely impaired and who has taken to drowning his despair in alcohol, a mother with multiple pain problems due to arthritis, and a younger brother. This is Phea's family.

In 2015, thanks to a loan from CIOMAL, the parents were able to open a small shop in their home of thatch and corrugated metal. They sold groceries in their village in the province of Prey Veng, southeast of the country. But that wasn't enough. As the children grew and school fees increased, the little family no longer managed to make ends meet.

One day, the mother called her two children, Phea and her brother Sy. "I can't keep both of you at school anymore," she told them. "Phea, you're the older one and you're a girl. So, you're going to leave school. You're going to go work at the factory to support your family and help your brother stay in school."

This was how Phea, then barely 17 years old, was sent to a factory on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. "I was so unhappy to leave school," the young girl said. "I only had one year left and then, I could have taken entrance ex-

aminations to train as a teacher. But that's just the reality for girls in our villages. My mother just did the same thing as everyone else."

What followed was an extremely hard year for Phea. Far away from her family, she shared a small room with a cousin and worked 9 to 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. "The manager of our division was a Chinese man. He was very tough and would scold us or insult us without any reason." She made \$150 a month and after paying for the costs of accommodation, food and transportation, she only had a few dozen dollars left to send back to her village.

It was only in February 2018 that a CIOMAL team who had come to visit the family discovered this sad reality. CIOMAL's social workers started a long discussion with Phea's parents. They offered financial support to help Phea go back to school but most importantly, they explained that Phea would be able

to get a stable job with a better salary if she completed her training. The math convinced her parents. Two months later, Phea was back in school.

Today, Phea is working hard to graduate and start her teacher's training. She is convinced that when she has a good job that is paid well, she will be able to support her parents. In the meantime, the family's thatched cramped home has been replaced with a permanent house thanks to CIOMAL's help.

**Phea's studies are funded by a scholarship from the Peter Donders Foundation.**

**The house was built thanks to the financial support of the Compounding Partnership Fund.**

the family in front of their former thatched home



the family in front of their new home



Phy and her mother behind their shop



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