

# CIOMAL

CAMPAGNE INTERNATIONALE DE L'ORDRE DE MALTE CONTRE LA LÈPRE

Quaterly Bulletins - September 2018 - N°140



**Yang Bunthoeun,  
a tenacious educator**

Dear donor,  
Today, leprosy is 100% curable with a medical treatment. But even when they are healed, those who were affected often continue to suffer severe disabilities. Together with their families, they are excluded from society, lose their jobs and houses, are rejected by hospitals, or are unable to send their children to school. These multiple forms of exclusion represent serious violations of their fundamental rights.

CIOMAL works not only to eliminate leprosy from the world but also to put an end to the discrimination against those that were affected and their families. It is crucial that people carrying the marks of leprosy be perceived as “disabled persons” and not as “lepers” anymore.

Your generous support helps them regain dignity and find their place in society. We thank you most sincerely for supporting us in our fight against this often neglected disease.

Changement d'adresse à communiquer au: CIOMAL - Ch. du Pt.-Saconnex 28 A - 1209 Genève  
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JAB  
CH-1209 Genève

## Empfangsschein / Récépissé / Ricevuta

Einzahlung für / Versement pour / Versamento per

Fondation CIOMAL  
1209 Genève



Merci !



## Einzahlung Giro

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## Versement Virement

Keine Mittelungen anbringen  
Pas de communications

Non agglungele comunicazioni

## Versamento Girata

Referenz-Nr./N° de référence/N° di riferimento

Konto / Compte / Conto 01-54850-2  
CHF

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**A sufferer of leprosy, Yang Bunthoeun shares his story of overcoming the disease as well as poverty to find his calling, teaching the destitute.**

Already in his thirties, Yang Bunthoeun is now the director of a small primary school in a village in Kompong Speu, in Southern Cambodia. The hamlet was built in the 1980s by disabled people injured in a war that was still devastating the country.

Bunthoeun is a native of a town 100 km away. His story is characterized by another misfortune. He was born in a family of 7 siblings and four of the children, including Bunthoeun himself, contracted leprosy. A gifted student, he managed to continue studying education at university despite his parents' great poverty, thanks to his tenacity and CIOMAL's support.

"The first signs of the disease appeared when I was 15," he said. "But I didn't know what they were. When I was 18, I lost the use of one of my legs. It had atrophied and I had to drag it when I walked. I was absolutely shocked when I realized I had leprosy. I had heard that those affected were expelled from villages and they were doomed to roam the country without being able to find shelter anywhere. I was very worried and so were my parents. They moved heaven and earth to get me the medicine I needed. They spent all their money on doctors, healers and fortune tellers... It was only two years later that we **heard of the KKLRC health center run by**

**CIOMAL in Phnom Penh.** That's where I finally received a treatment and where I realized that the disease could be cured and people with leprosy still had a future."

It was also at the center that Bunthoeun met his now wife, a garment worker and the mother to their two children. "We met each other on the phone. She had dialed my number by mistake," he said. "But we continued talking to each other for over a year. I had never seen her, not even in pictures. When the CIOMAL surgeons operated on my leg in 2011, she came to see me. She realized I'd had leprosy but she never asked me any question. We have never talked about it. I stayed two months at the hospital and she had made arrangements to stay one month with me."

"We got married three years later. First, I had to finish my studies – I had started studying in 2009. I was very poor but I ended up with rich kids, daddy's boys, who had no interest in studying. They made a deal with me. They would give me money

for private lessons, materials and meals, and in exchange I would let them make a photocopy of my report card – they would simply change the name on it and show it to their parents. This way, they were able to skip school while I studied in their place."

I have always worked in addition to my studies. I started as a teacher at this small school, before they eventually offered me the position of director. The children who come here are extremely poor. Some come from very far, they walk barefoot and haven't eaten anything. I want to provide them with knowledge so that they manage to do well in life as well."

**Yang Bunthoeun was able to study thanks to a scholarship of the Peter Donders Foundation. He is a member of the executive board of the Association of Disabled People With Leprosy.**



CIOMAL is certified by ZEWÖ



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