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CAMBODIA

CASE STUDY

Scholarships Help a Girl to Overcome Many Obstacles



So thanks her mother for letting her stay in school



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Telling Our Story

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Thea So is a 14-year old girl studying in Grade 7 at Pheus Pi High School in Kampong Cham Province. There are four members in her family including her grandmother, mother, and one younger brother. So's father passed away when she was in Grade 4 due to a serious illness. Her mother was forced to sell her land to pay for his medical bills, putting the family in serious debt. So's mother went to work in Malaysia, forcing her to put her children with their grandmother who sells cakes from door to door.

There was intense pressure from the family for So to quit school and help the family earn some income but So begged her mother with tears to stay in school.

So begged her mother with tears to stay in school. Seeing that she does so well in school, her mother finally relented and allowed her to stay in school. Thea So is very close to the school director and her teachers at her school and she explained her situation to them. They were able to advocate for her so that she could receive a scholarship to continue her studies from the US Government, which provided a bicycle, uniforms, and stationery. This support has made all the difference in the world for So to stay in school. The school also advocated with the other teachers there so that she could attend extra classes without having to pay any fees.

So is really getting the most out of her education at Peus Pi. She is a member of the History Club at her school, participates in research, and is learning about business skills from her life skills class. The school also reported that So was first in her class this year and received a special award from H.E. Theng Chan Sang Veasna who was acting as a special representative of H.E. Hun Maneth. Mr. Chheav Leap, a teacher at Peus Pi and an LSMC member said, "Thea So is an industrious and dynamic student. From my observation, she is curious and never hesitates to ask questions."

Thea So likes doing business and helps her grandmother to earn some money whenever she has free time and during vacation days. At her grandma's house, the interview team saw some chickens that So has raised herself as a micro-enterprise. "I saved the stipend that I received from KAPE (\$1 per month) to buy three hens and one rooster and now they are having some small chickens," So said with a smile while she was throwing feed for her chickens.