



# where the asphalt ends

Karuna Battambang Organization (KBO), Cambodia  
Karuna Obrum Education program - Activities 1st semester 2021

# Karuna Obrum Education

**2021 has started with many new adventures for Karuna Obrum Education team: Appart from supporting 15 remote primary schools, we have started many new initiatives that you will discover in this newsletter.**

**Despite all the difficulties, we are grateful that during this 1st semester of 2021 we have met new communities, new schools and new realities.**

**We are glad to share with you, who make all this possible, what is being this new year so far.**

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*In the picture, the way to go to Peam Phsaot school, one of the newest communities we have met in this 2021.*

# 2021: new horizons

**We want to focus our activities on the improvement of the education's quality in our target schools.**

**To work towards it, we are strengthening our capacity for follow-up: we keep a fluent communication with our teachers and we do regular visits to the schools to get to know their needs and their challenges, to accompany them and to encourage both, families and teachers, to keep going despite all the difficulties.**

**We are also reinforcing our relationship with our schools' local communities to make them take an active implication in the education of their children.**

# The consequences of COVID-19

As all over the world, COVID-19 is still very much present in the day to day of Cambodia. In 2020 all the schools in the country stopped from March to October.

In January 2021, a new school year began. But in March 2021 the COVID-19 cases started to increase in some big cities over the country. On the 20th of March, all the schools in Cambodia closed again and the Ministry of Education asked to keep the studies online. However, in the communities where KOE works, the Internet connection is not generalized and without the active support of the teachers and a physical school to study, most of the students do not have the proper tools to keep learning.

To cope with the new educational crisis that surged from the schools' closure, the team has taken different actions.

*In the picture, one of the students of Pheas school wearing a mask in his class.*

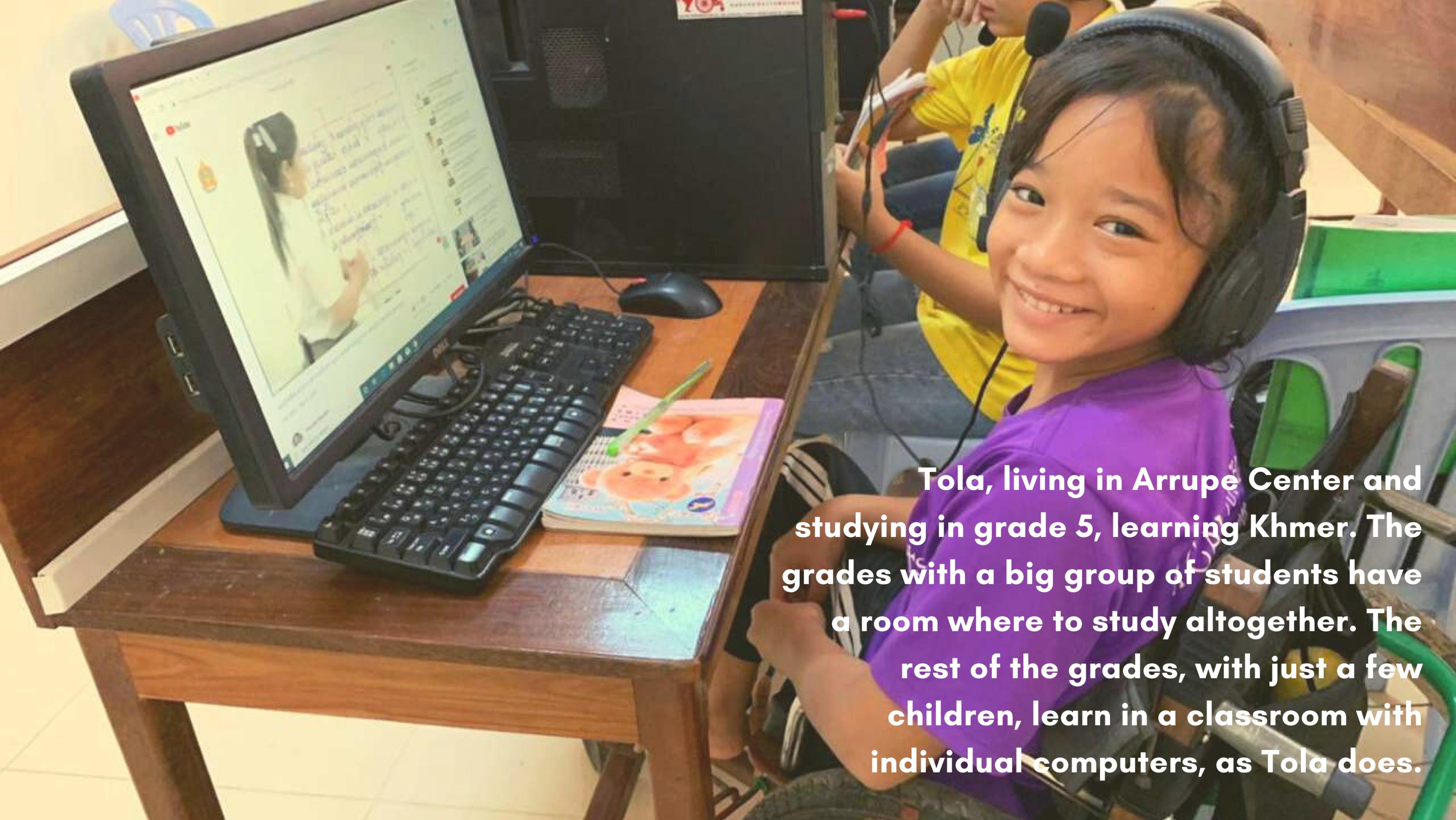
# Home schooling project

With the schools' closure, the students from the welcome centres of the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang stopped their courses. All the kids welcomed in these houses come from very vulnerable families, therefore, they don't have the chance to follow their studies at their homes.

Together with the responsible teachers of the centers, KOE organized classes for them. More than 35 students from Arrupe Center, welcoming kids with disabilities, and from Lidy's House Center have the chance to follow online classes and have part of KOE's staff helping them in their learning.

In Taken Center, 25 other kids study English thanks to us.

*In the picture, one of the classes where Arrupe students from Grade 6 study online.*



**Tola, living in Arrupe Center and studying in grade 5, learning Khmer. The grades with a big group of students have a room where to study altogether. The rest of the grades, with just a few children, learn in a classroom with individual computers, as Tola does.**



**Students from grade 11 in their class.**

# Home reading club

As part of our activities that aim to reduce the negative impact of the school closure, we have started a pilot home reading club program in three of our schools. The students of grades 4 and 5 from Pheas, Arun Reaksmey and Phnom Kpuos schools, in very remote areas of the country, will borrow books from KOE. A week after, our team will visit again the kids in their homes and will discuss and reflect on the books read; to make sure that the children improve their reading comprehension skills. Once the program works by itself, we plan to implement it in other schools.

*In the picture, the classroom of one of our schools.*

# Giving access to secondary education

In many of our schools, once children finish primary school they do not have the opportunity to continue with their studies. The closest secondary school is kilometres away from their homes and they do not have the means to continue their education. This is a common problem that communities from rural remote areas have to face in Cambodia.

Even though it is a very deep issue, the KOE team works to mitigate it by opening conversations with competent authorities and helping financially with scholarships for KOE students in secondary school. What is more, we bring some of our children to the host welcome centers set up by the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang. In these studying centers, the students can follow their education and develop themselves in a safe and structured place without losing contact with their families. In 2021, 6 KOE children have had the chance to come to study in one of our centers.

*In the picture, a Christmas dancing performance by a group of secondary students in Taken welcome center*

# Health check-up for the school's communities

Our schools are located in isolated areas where health assistance is not always easy; often this makes people turn to traditional healers who do not have the proper health knowledge.

In February 2021, we started to collaborate closely with the Health Center of the Apostolic Prefecture of Battambang to offer regular doctor health check-up for our students and communities. Families and neighbours gather in the school and a doctor, together with our team, assists them and, in case of need, administrate the proper medicines.

*In the picture, Saron, part of the KOE team, giving the medicines prescribed by the doctor to one of the neighbours of Bolang school.*



**One of the students from Bolang school  
being checked by doctor Chamrom.**

# Rural schools: agriculture and education development project

In collaboration with the Community Development Program (CD), also part of Karuna Battambang Organization, eight new schools have been selected for a pilot program. The new project seeks the active implication of the communities of the schools in the education of their children.

Both teams work together to follow up the centers and develop agriculture activities that aim to teach the kids ecologic rice crop techniques that can be implemented in their homes. Once the farming activities are working, the schools have the chance to receive support to launch other small projects that may help to improve the education of their communities: as the reparation of the school building and the organization of Cambodian traditional dance classes for the students.

*In the picture, two students from Beng Kngaok school, center that is part of the project explained..*



**In Beng Kngaok school the students have cultivated 1 plot of rice field following the ecologic technique SRI, which helps the soil to get more yields. Afterwards, the project supported them for the reparation of the school building; the people from the community themselves were the only labourers on the construction.**

# Other new communities

Apart from the 22 schools that are already in our program, we are working with new communities to walk towards an improvement of their education. Recently, we have been lucky to get to know the families of the floating village of Peam Phsaot, a strongly committed community in a very remote area.

We have also started to work with the Primary and Secondary school of the village of Tahen; together with the teachers, we will follow up on the courses. Thanks to generous contributions, during the second semester of the year we'll build 4 classrooms for primary students.

Moreover, we have started conversations with the local authorities of the remote village of Prey Thom, to work together on the possibility to facilitate kindergarten and Secondary education to the children living there.

*In the picture, two students from Peam Phsaot school..*

# Fe y Alegría

During these first months, we are very happy to be part of the beginning of the Jesuit educational movement Fe y Alegría (in Spanish, *Faith and Joy*) in Cambodia, the first set up in Asia. Started in Latin America, Fe y Alegría is a federation of local organizations which offer educational opportunities to the poorest sectors of society, along with teacher training in 19 countries.

KBO is happily part of the Fe y Alegría Cambodian committee to start building this network that may bring a lot of opportunities to our schools and communities "on the margins of the World".

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*In the picture, Obrum's students going back home after school.*

A long, covered wooden walkway at a school. The walkway is made of light-colored wooden planks and is flanked by wooden railings. On the left side, there are several blue wooden shutters or doors, some of which are open. The pillars supporting the roof are painted yellow and show signs of wear. The walkway leads towards a bright outdoor area with green trees in the background. The overall atmosphere is one of a well-maintained but slightly aged educational facility.

**This first part of the year has been full of stories that fill us with hope. We are always delighted to create new bonds of friendship and common understanding with all the communities with whom we work. KOE wants to accompany them and walk together towards an improvement of their education that may enable them to have the power to choose their own future.**

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*In the picture, Pheas school, one of the centers supported by KOE..*



From all our  
communities...

**THANK YOU  
VERY MUCH!**