

Cambodia's leading business school is also leading the way in corporate social responsibility (CSR), helping poor students and supporting talented athletes and artists.

CamEd specialises in teaching accounting and finance and believes that getting students involved in CSR will help build skills that will further their careers, while giving something back to society.

"CSR is very important so that the students can build their soft skills like leadership and especially teamwork," said CamEd Business School Senior Vice-President Sam Sokuntheary.

<u>20%</u>

"Because of that we think that we should encourage our students to pay back to the community by motivating them to build a team and do whatever they think is important for poor families," she said.

Student CSR activity is so important to CamEd that it is included in the curriculum as part of the BA student's first year course in leadership philosophy.

Students have been visiting schools in deprived areas since CamEd started its BA programme in 2010. There are around 3,000 students taking the four-year Bachelor of Accounting and Finance course and about two thirds of them get involved in the schools programme in their first year. CamEd also has more than 50 student clubs and encourages them to take part in CSR as well.

In February the CamEd Student Government (CSG) organised its annual charity trip to the Donak Krobey and Koh Kok primary schools in Koh Kong province. Volunteers divided themselves into three groups collecting rubbish, planting trees and decorating the classrooms with posters. The groups then got together to play with children and hand out study material.

CSG Co-presidents Lai Thai Y and Chan Physrey Linh said taking part in events like this build communication and negotiation skills, help team members gain confidence and learn how to be flexible to solve problems and deal with unexpected issues. Participants also learn how to work as a team, improve their creativity and manage big events, making the best use of the available human and physical resources

The Coronavirus pandemic has made it harder to take part in CSR activities, according to Sam. Students couldn't go out to schools as often because of closures but they were able to continue raising funds to help needy children. Students also raised money to dig wells and install streetlights around schools. Staff also get involved by donating bicycles and study kits to pupils.

CamEd and its student clubs are also organising a fundraising event that aims to help children with AIDs in Battambang province. Sam says the children are facing great challenges at the moment because donations have dried up during the pandemic.







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### **Opinion**



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CamEd Business School Senior Vice-President Sam Sokuntheary in front of some of the art that lines the college's walls. KT/Michael Firn

Sam says she and her colleagues have been inspired by the work of CamEd's president. Casey Barnett has been running the business school in Cambodia for more than 20 years and Sam says he has made it his mission to give something back to the community and raise the Kingdom's international profile.

50%

60%

Barnett is an avid art collector who believes in helping struggling local artists. He has spent \$110,000 to build up the country's largest public exhibition of Cambodian contemporary art. The walls of the school, in central Phnom Penh, are lined with paintings and the corridors filled with sculptures from the collection along with pieces donated by Barnett and some on loan from his personal collection. Barnett often commissions work from less-popular artists in the hope of raising their profiles and furthering their careers.

"Cambodia has relatively few active contemporary artists due to limited local market demand. We believe our art collecting activities play an important role in encouraging Cambodian contemporary artists. And, by displaying art to students in the school facilities, we hope to stimulate abstract thinking and creativity," Barnett said.

Barnett has also spent the last two decades supporting talented sportsmen and women, sponsoring wrestlers, boxers and basketball. CamEd donated nearly \$38,000 to Cambodian sports federations over the last twelve months.

CamEd students go on to work at some of the world's leading accounting companies. More than half of the annual recruits of the big four audit firms in Cambodia (PwC, Deloitte, KPMG and EY) are students or graduates of CamEd.

"Most of the students who joined international companies have been promoted very fast," Sam said.

"As one of the people in charge of admissions and marketing I go two or three times a year to visit many employers. I have heard from a lot of them say that what students have learned is the importance of

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teamwork. What they learn when they join a charity or club is leadership and the soft skills they can use at their workplace. All the employers are very appreciative of that."

Sam said she was friends with many former students on social media and could see from their posts that they continued to use the skills learned from CamEd's CSG projects to organise activities and build relationships in the workplace.

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