

Youth Concerning on SRHR during COVID-19

Health is very important and it even more important during COVID-19 pandemic, especially female adolescents...

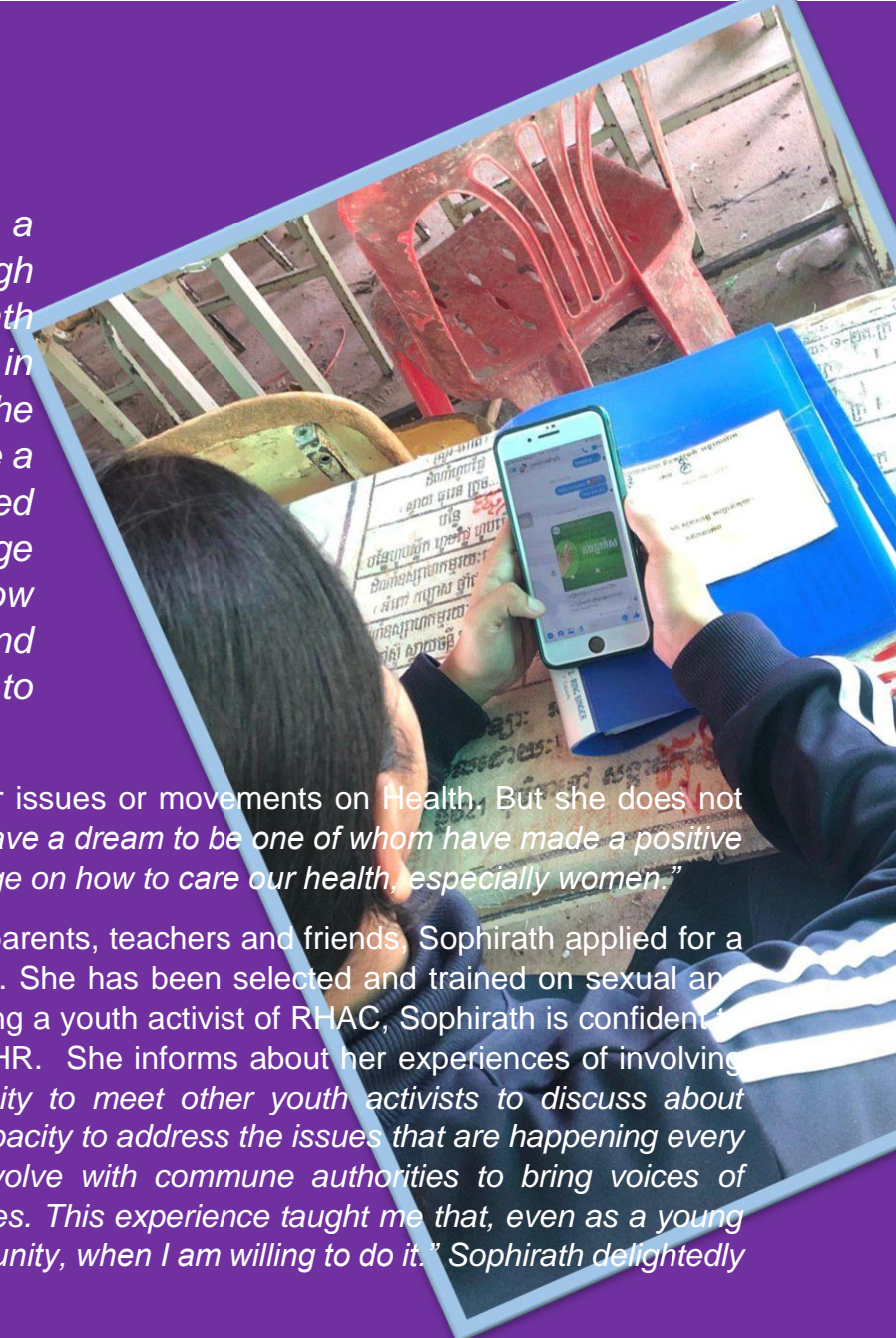
A 17-year-old, Roeun Sophirath, is a student in grade 12 of Sor Sor Sdom High school, Siem Reap province. Sophirath was born in a simple farming family in Yieng village, Puok district where she grows up and find opportunity to become a youth activist. Her dream is closely linked to educator who could provide knowledge to other people to understand about how much important of health care and prevention of illness, especially related to SRH.

Sophirath is very passionate about a particular issues or movements on Health. But she does not know where to start or how to get involved. *"I have a dream to be one of whom have made a positive change in my community and sharing knowledge on how to care our health, especially women."*

With a full support and encouragement of her parents, teachers and friends, Sophirath applied for a volunteer position as a youth activist at RHAC. She has been selected and trained on sexual and reproductive health and rights accordingly. Being a youth activist of RHAC, Sophirath is confident to talk and challenge to the issues related to SRHR. She informs about her experiences of involving herself as a youth activist. *"I have opportunity to meet other youth activists to discuss about adolescents' issues and how to build up my capacity to address the issues that are happening every day in daily life. I also have chances to involve with commune authorities to bring voices of adolescents and youths to advocate for changes. This experience taught me that, even as a young girl, I could make a positive impact in my community, when I am willing to do it."* Sophirath delightedly stated.

Reviewing back to where she had been before becoming a youth activist, Sophirath was a very shy girl and unconfident to talk to many people, especially to any topics related sexual health. She had been taught as a girl should not learn or know about this knowledge before marriage. She was also disregarded to what she shared to other youths in her community. The main reason is because she is young, who they expectedly do not know anything about life. *"I was ignored by my friends when I asked them to talk about SRH. Their parents also thought that I am just a girl who have no any knowledge about SRHR."* She added.

Even Sophirath faces some challenges on playing a role as youth activist, she still has a strong commitment to this work, because she trusts that what she is doing is very significant to help other adolescents and youths understand about themselves, and their health. *"I did not provide the information without any scientific principles, what I have learned from RHAC are scientific knowledges which provide a very cleared and detailed about sexual and reproductive health and rights."* She claimed.



Since the Royal Government of Cambodia announced about closure of schools as nationwide, which deprives students of social engagement with their peers and educators, adolescents may be led to additional blocked to education, social support mechanisms and access to health services.

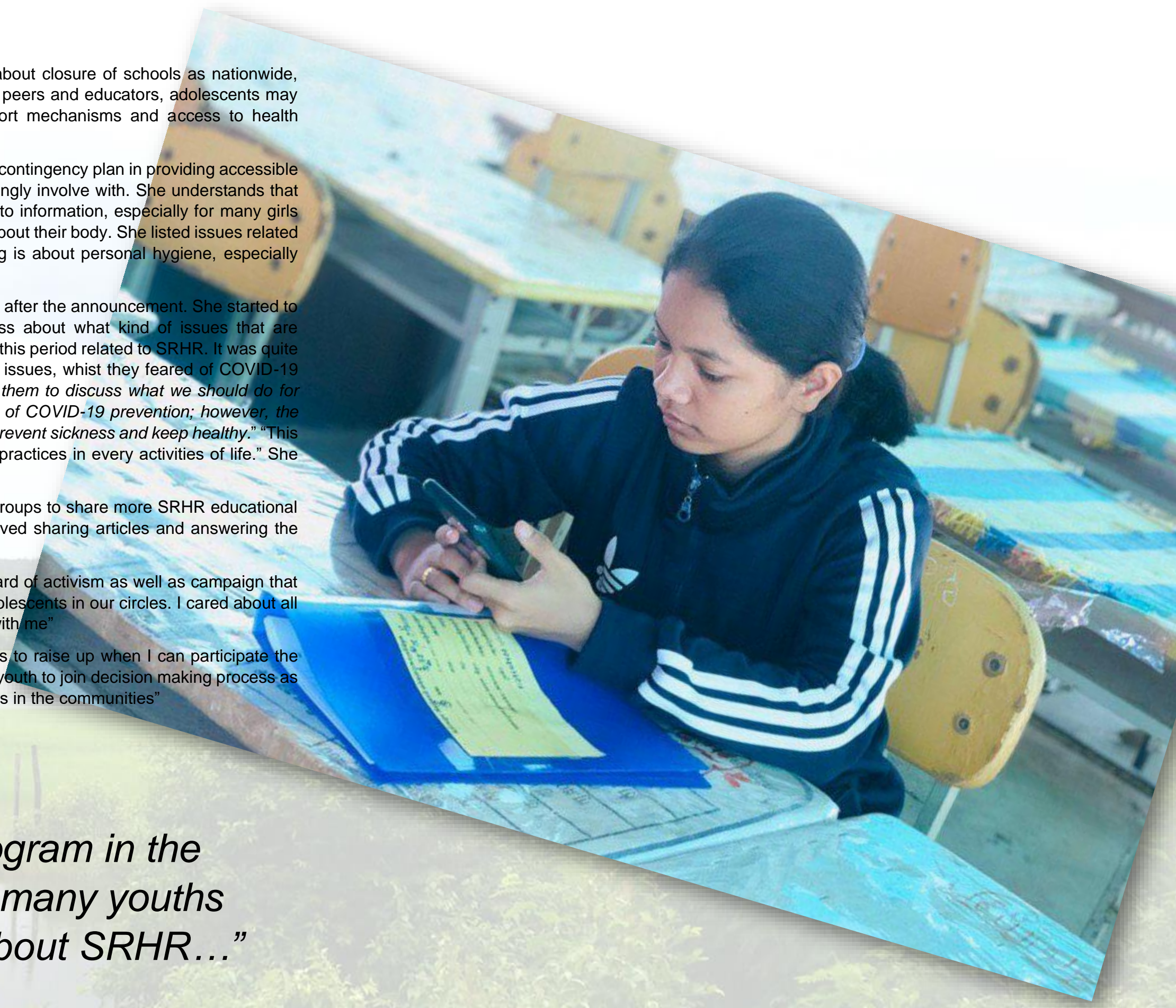
In mid of March, Sophirath contacted to RHAC to request contingency plan in providing accessible knowledge as well as virtual activities that she could strongly involve with. She understands that the period would strongly require every possible access to information, especially for many girls who are not aware and focus on how to particularly care about their body. She listed issues related to SRHR. The most interesting topic that she is focusing is about personal hygiene, especially during puberty period.

Sophirath did not expect that the school would open soon after the announcement. She started to initiatively contacted to her friends and peers to discuss about what kind of issues that are happening and could be happened to adolescents during this period related to SRHR. It was quite difficult for her to lead other people to interest about the issues, whist they feared of COVID-19 transmission only. *“I contacted to my friends, and invite them to discuss what we should do for others during this time. I talked to them about important of COVID-19 prevention; however, the more important is about raising up awareness on how to prevent sickness and keep healthy.”* “This is not just only a practice during COVID-19, it would be practices in every activities of life.” She claimed.

Sophirath is nominated to create Facebook Messenger groups to share more SRHR educational information she received from RHAC. She actively involved sharing articles and answering the questions from their friends and peers.

She believes that this new platform can really push forward of activism as well as campaign that could lead to a whole new level. I tried to interact with adolescents in our circles. I cared about all of the issues they concern and I invited them to share it with me”

I plan to raise the issue up when the commune allows us to raise up when I can participate the commune council meeting. This is a good opportunity for youth to join decision making process as well as to build up their commitment of caring about others in the communities”



“I wish to have this program in the remote areas, because many youths need more information about SRHR...”