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To whom it may concern

My name is Bernhard Helfer, and I am a representative of SES (Senior Expert Service), Germany's leading voluntary organisation to provide the experience of retired experts and executives who still want to share their knowledge and expertise with companies and institutions that seek their support.

I am a retired teacher and director of a large private secondary school in Germany with experiences and networks beyond the responsibilities at school, e.g., partnerships with educational institutions like boarding schools and farming projects in Brazil and Vietnam, to name but a few.

From February 1 to March 7, 2025, I stayed at Thnaut GoAhead! School campus and the affiliated schools in the Kampong Leaeng district. My visit was designed to train teachers and senior officials in the fields of teaching methods and school management.

I learned how dedicated people have made great efforts to build the schools in Thnaut and the adjacent district. I can only admire what has come out of their endeavour and show great respect for the responsibility all the donors and supporters have shouldered and are still taking. The extensive pedagogical programme and the harmonious life at GoAhead! Schools, as well as their achievements, underscore that the donors' efforts have proved to be ultimately fruitful. The decision to establish such an ambitious project in the very rural centre of the country deserves particular admiration.

In the following, I would like to briefly explain what I experienced at these institutions.

As I was staying on the campus, I was able to study the everyday life at school from early morning, when at 7am some hundred children file for breakfast, until around 6pm, when the older students leave after their final lessons.

With respect, I realised how well organised the daily routines are and how self-evidently students and teachers follow these routines. Moreover, the pedagogical dedication and commitment of all the staff appeared to be above my expectations. My impression was that they are eager not to leave any child behind in their educational and caring needs.

Apart from my neutral observations, these findings are strongly based on my daily work with staff and students. In any of my conversations with the students, everyone emphasised how much they enjoy attending their school.

My job was to identify the methodological requirements especially in the acquisition of English as a foreign language and to develop an improvement schedule to keep the teaching methods up to the current educational discourse. During the first days of my stay I made myself familiar with the on-site learning and teaching situation. Talking to Mr. Chantha (Executive Director of GoAhead!) and Mr. Sakora (School Director) I gained a comprehensive picture of the history of GoAhead! as well as of the educational opportunities provided. Apart from the timetabled lessons the school offers a wide range of

student- (and teacher-) oriented options of further studies. There is a well equipped library and all children go there regularly, so they know how to work effectively in a library. The teachers meet once a day to improve their own language performance. I visited every teacher in order to analyse their teaching and later give a qualified feedback to them. Furthermore, we had regular meetings in which the teachers articulated their expectations and needs they wanted me to address. They all showed an unexpected level of interest and eagerness in moving forward in their own skills and the teaching quality of the school. All these experiences resulted in a complete week of training for the complete staff of all the GoAhead! schools. Lectures and workshops targeted the issues that I had identified together with the teachers.

Questions of school management were targeted the time after that week and a process which is designed to substantially change the teaching methods towards more student orientation was fixed and launched. Together with SES I am planning a follow-up visit to evaluate the progress of this project in 2026. Meanwhile, I am in regular contact with GoAhead! and the school director. So, I am up to date on what is going on in terms of process advancements. Correspondingly, I see the schools on a very promising way to modernise teaching methods and learning strategies.

The visible successes as well as the striving for further improvement are an integral part of the efforts there are based on the attitude and the professional approach of the seniors and teachers. Also, it is the result of the constant networking in the surrounding communities which leads to a mutual and integrated cooperation. All these aspects add to the exquisite reputation of these schools.

In conclusion, this institution not only shows great ambition to help especially the children from poorer families in the central countryside of Cambodia to acquire a compatible education, especially in the fields of foreign languages (English) and computer skills, it also dedicates itself to constant self-evaluation and further advancement. To modernise teaching in terms of effectiveness and targeting examination demands it appears to be helpful to shift to a more student-orientated classroom discourse rather than cultivating choral responding interaction. In particular, lesson-planning should consider units of the schoolbooks not only as carriers of new language structures, but also as chances to develop free speech and individual language use. Correspondingly, teacher-training meetings may concentrate less on the practise of grammar structures, but open up to free conversation.

It was agreed to define a roadmap to, step-by-step, implement more and more elements into the teaching and learning processes to reach these goals. Part of this roadmap will be a follow-up visit of an SES-expert after one school year. After all, GoAhead! Schools have already reached very high educational standards. And, of course, they eagerly continue to pursue ambitious goals for their future work.

September 29, 2025

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. H. H.', written in a cursive style.