



“A Hinrich scholar learns to listen. Then responds in meaningful ways.”

Rotha Chhoem, Business Consultant
Global Sources Exhibitions, Cambodia
De La Salle University, MBA '15

“Success for me is to accomplish a goal. It is to keep a value in place, whether in terms of academics, career or family.”

Rotha Chhoem is a unique blend of old-school traditional values coupled with modern-day, progressive ambitions. For him, no success is complete without clear emphasis on the value system that one holds dear. His fresh and balanced perspective lends equal importance to personal as well as professional growth.

Inspiring role model

Born in a refugee camp along the Cambodia-Thailand border, life was a struggle for Rotha and his family, especially as they were caught within the turmoil of the Cambodian civil war. His early years were spent in the aftermath of strife until his family was repatriated to Cambodia in 1992. Once back in his hometown in Battambang province, in the far northwest of the country, Rotha continued his studies and received a bachelor’s degree in Management at Battambang University.

He strived hard to gain work experience as an Agriculture Value Chain Officer to facilitate market linkages between the farming community and buyers of agricultural products. He trained chicken growers and cassava farmers in conducting research and marketing across agriculture value chains. Although this was strictly a non-profit segment, it enabled him to create value for the community and work experience for himself.

“I have seen so much poverty that I feel education is the only way to change things,” Rotha said. “I also had a burning desire to bring Cambodian products into global markets and see them appreciated for their high quality and intrinsic value. That prompted me to enrich myself with required knowledge skills to bring this dream to life.”

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Opportunities to learn and grow

In 2011, the Hinrich Foundation awarded Rotha the Hinrich Global Trade Leader scholarship to study an MBA at De La Salle University-Manila, one of the top universities in the Philippines and recognized across Asia.

After graduating in 2013, Rotha worked at the Hinrich Foundation to lead the Export Assistance Program Cambodia, where he worked closely with other HF alumni until 2015.



Rotha (right) manning the Hinrich Foundation booth with fellow Cambodia alumni Sophal Bun (left) and Sophorn Huy (center) at the Global Sources Export Trade Show in Hong Kong, April 2015

"It was my first job where I was engaging with people from different countries. I cherished those days because during that time, I learned to listen more and then respond in meaningful ways. It was when I learned to support my team in planning and training, and honed my marketing skills to help Cambodia small and medium companies to get export orders."

Advocating education

In 2016, Rotha returned to Battambang University to work as Marketing Manager. He promoted the university's academic program to encourage parents to send their children for higher studies. In many ways, he felt that advocating education at the community level was the right way for creating impact.

He also used his two years at the university to promote business concepts, social media awareness and entrepreneurial mindset among young students. He invited business-minded speakers to influence students who were interested in trade.

One of Rotha's friends invited him to become a co-investor and consultant for a leadership training program for SMEs in Cambodia, where Rotha trained them in financial management, business planning, and social media sales and marketing.

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Building bridges

In 2019, Hong Kong-based B2B online platform Global Sources offered Rotha a position as a Business Consultant to oversee the Cambodia operations.

As a Business Consultant, Rotha enjoys his role of supporting Cambodia suppliers and producers to connect with global buyers.



Rotha (seated) conducted an Hinrich Foundation Alumni Association (HFAA) professional development workshop on Communication for Success held January 2018 at the Cambodia-Japan Cooperation Center. Fellow Cambodia alumni attended the event. Standing from left to right: Tola Ean, Pheana Sopheak, Sophorn Huy, Leanghort Sok and Sophal Bun

His role encompasses selecting and training qualified export suppliers in effective marketing platforms. He works with potential partners such as the Government of Cambodia, NGOs and the private sector to boost export programs in the country.

“My role for developing Cambodia suppliers is two-fold: First, my team and I develop plans with the senior management to ensure that our suppliers have the skills to produce and that they are connected to the right buyers.

We also help them market their products to global importers through trade shows in Hong Kong.”

“Second, our corporate social responsibility (CSR) program provides training for certain producers on market demand, customer behavior, product trends, and social media platforms. Products such as silk, ornaments, jewelry and bags have great demand in international markets, and we mentor suppliers to sell in global markets instead of local ones so that they get a better price and recognition.”

Rotha said: “my goal is to keep learning, keep sharing and keep exploring new avenues to improve myself, so I can create better opportunities for the

Cambodia people. We get support from Global Sources Vietnam – led by another HF alumnus, Khiem Vu – in pitching and market strategy best practices that we share with Cambodia suppliers.”

To date, they are supporting SME suppliers for Global Sources Trade Shows and Global Sources Online Wholesale Stores. They have been successful in gaining trust and partnering with different allies from government sectors, including the Ministry of Industry & Handicrafts and the Ministry of Commerce Artisans Association of Cambodia, Cambodia Women Entrepreneur Association and GIZ, a German government development agency.

Driving development

Rotha’s heart lies in driving development for the people of his country.

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“I want Cambodia to move from a developing economy to a developed economy.” Rotha said. “I think I’ve been able to make headway into my dream of changing the Cambodia business landscape by pursuing a career in export trade with Global Sources. Through this role, we are able to help create more jobs for the underprivileged and use local resources native to Cambodia.”

Rotha wishes to continue providing trainings and workshops for suppliers to develop their skills in export sales, digital marketing, business planning and product development.

“In the next five years, I aspire to become an independent and professional business consultant with export SMEs not only in Cambodia but also in other ASEAN countries such as Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.”

Success lies in your own hands

Rotha believes that success lies in the hands of each Hinrich Foundation scholar. His words of advice to future and aspiring Hinrich Global Trade Leaders: “Only you can create a success for yourself.



Rotha and the HFAA Cambodia chapter welcomed Princeton in Asia fellow, Sarah Bournane, in Phnom Penh during her visit in September 2019. Pictured (L-R) are Leanghort Sok, Sarah Bournane, Rotha Choem, Naratevy Kek, Sophorn Huy and Sophal Bun

“First and foremost, I am thankful to my wife and two children. They are my best friends who make me feel hopeful, courageous and worthy of pursuing my dreams and my career in trade. Second, to Hinrich Foundation helping me achieve knowledge skills that can help me give back to my country.”

Think outside the box with clear goals. Always feel self-motivated and strive to fulfill your responsibilities beyond expectations. Beyond a doubt, all good things will come to you.”

He also recommends interacting with people who have great attitude and flexibility in order to feel inspired and grow in life.

Lastly, Rotha believes in expressing gratitude to those that have walked with him throughout his journey. “First and foremost, I am thankful to my wife and two children. They are my best friends who make me feel hopeful, courageous and worthy of pursuing my dreams and my career in trade. Second, to Hinrich Foundation helping me achieve knowledge skills that can help me give back to my country.”



Rotha is a proud member of the HFAA. Pictured here is Rotha during his arrival in HCMC to attend the 1st grand gathering of Hinrich Foundation Alumni Association Global Connect: Vietnam 2019

Read more stories of inspiration from our Hinrich Global Trade Leaders [here](#).



"I am a soldier who helps drive positive change in the industry to improve work environment."

Ramzan Miah
Plant Engineer,
VF Asia Limited,
Bangladesh

Hinrich Foundation alumnus
Hong Kong Baptist University
MS in Manufacturing
Systems Engineering '15



"It is my responsibility to improve my circumstances and myself, and then support family, society and community to improve their circumstances."

Roger Li
Gadget Labs,
Founder

Hinrich Foundation alumnus
Thunderbird School of Global
Management, MBA '11



"Success for me is following the passion I've always had, doing the kind of work that has never been done before, and breaking new grounds!"

Juliet Shwe Gaung
Myanmar Private Equity
And Venture Capital
Association (MPE&VCA),
Project Manager

Hinrich Foundation alumna
Hong Kong Baptist University
Masters in International
Journalism Studies, 2012



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