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WORLD EDUCATION



**PROJECT  
NEWSLETTER**

**IMPACT  
HIGHLIGHTS**

- 209 participating schools, enrolling over 95,500 students
- 3,017 primary school students receiving scholarships
- 635 secondary school students receiving scholarships

**IBEC  
PARTNERS**

IBEC is funded by the American people through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). IBEC is implemented by World Education in close collaboration with Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE) and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education Youth, and Sport (MoEYS).

# Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) Project

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## IBEC Activities Begin

The USAID-funded Improved Basic Education in Cambodia project (IBEC) began on 1 October 2009. IBEC is promoting better educated youth with increased access to a quality and relevant basic education. Working in the key target provinces of Kampong Cham, Kratie, and Siem Reap, IBEC is partnering with schools, communities, and governmental and NGO partners through an approach that emphasizes holistic programming, stakeholder-driven development, and improved educational relevance and management. The project's Year 1 activities are underway and already impacting thousands of school children, teachers, school directors, community members and government officials through four project components:



- Local NGO and Government Capacity Building & Advocacy for Sustainability
- More Equitable School Access
- Improved School Management & Community Engagement
- Improved Educational Relevance

This issue of the IBEC newsletter highlights key project start-up activities and describes IBEC's progress to date under the four components.

## School Selection

IBEC is being implemented in a total of 31 districts in Kampong Cham, Kratie, and Siem Reap provinces. Through a highly participatory process which required school directors to apply for IBEC participation, 76 lower secondary schools were identified for support, as well as 133 primary schools (organized into 30 cluster groupings as per MoEYS policy). Combined, these schools enroll over 95,500 children. Of the schools selected, 25% are urban, 55% rural, and 20%

remote, aligning closely to IBEC targets of 20%, 60%, and 20%, respectively.

In order to quickly initiate programmatic activities, IBEC classified participating schools as full or half-stream schools, based on their prior participation in the USAID Schools for Life (SfL) project. Schools that participated in SfL, and underwent a rigorous review process, were classified as full-stream schools and began IBEC activities in November and December 2009.

Half-stream schools, which did not receive prior SfL development assistance, began IBEC activities in February 2010. In order to modulate technical and material assistance based on schools' developmental readiness, IBEC further organized participating schools into three developmental tiers based on an assessment of their management potential. Schools were classified as advanced (Tier 1), intermediate (Tier 2), or preparatory (Tier 3).



## Partnership Building

IBEC is dedicated to implementing all activities through broad collaboration with partners from a wide of backgrounds. This includes central government, provincial and district governments, commune councils, local communities, as well as international and local NGOs. IBEC has undertaken a large number of activities to build partnerships at different levels. At central government level, IBEC was successful setting up a Consultative Working Group that will have representation from all relevant departments including the Department of Curriculum Development, Secondary Education Department, Primary Education Department, and Teacher Training Department. The

Planning Department and Quality Assurance Department will also have some form of representation in the CG.

As part of the close working relationship that IBEC envisions with government, World Education organized orientations to how IBEC will work in each Provincial Office of Education (POE). These orientations occurred early in November 2009 and were attended by key representatives from the various technical offices in each POE (e.g., Primary Education Office, Secondary Education Office, etc.) as well as all the District Offices of Education in each province. During these orientations, IBEC managers

announced the need to set up Provincial Working Groups that will assist in the school selection process and the approval of annual plans by Full Stream Schools.

Three local partners have so far been inducted into IBEC to undertake various aspects of field implementation. These agencies include Women and Children's Rights Development (WCRD), Buddhist Social Development Association (BSDA), and Khmer Women's Association (KWA/ Kampong Cham).

## Component I: Local NGO and Government Capacity Building & Advocacy for Sustainability

The component has moved forward quickly with capacity building preparations, including a major partner meeting and site visits to all partners. Importantly, IBEC has developed a series of tools to facilitate the project's capacity building process, particularly with local partners. The tools help assess and track progress on the seven domains targeted by capacity building efforts: governance criteria,

administration, human resource management, financial management, organizational management, program management, and project performance management.

A key part of IBEC's advocacy strategy is educational outreach through radio programming and other media. Specifically, IBEC will produce radio program broadcasts on life skills, establish listening and dialogue groups to ensure follow-

up of the broadcasts, and conduct a school radio initiative to teach select schools how to develop their own broadcasts. Significant planning efforts by IBEC radio implementing partner Equal Access Cambodia have set a strong foundation for implementation. IBEC has already secured the support of the two Kampong Cham radio stations and the first broadcast will take place in March 2010.



## Component 2: More Equitable School Access

This component is responsible for work in two areas: administering scholarship programming and administering discretionary school grants that are programmed by stakeholders.

### Scholarships

In the project's first quarter implementation period, IBEC staff worked closely with full-stream schools and local partners to organize scholarships for vulnerable children at both primary and secondary school levels. Local scholarship committees at primary level were quickly formed and trained in November 2009 so that child seeking school surveys could begin as quickly as possible. By the end of December 2009, a total of 3,017 children in Grades 4 to 6

received scholarship support at the primary level, while 645 students at the lower secondary school level received support. At the primary level, a scholarship package consists of two uniforms, stationery (writing books and pens/pencils), and shoes. The scholarship package for secondary school students (if the student lives 5km or less from school) includes a bicycle, uniforms, stationery, and tutoring support. Students living farther from school receive the same items plus room and board support with a local female teacher.

As part of scholarship programming, IBEC has also instituted school-community outreach activities to teach vulnerable scholarship beneficiaries specialized life skills that will help them and their families

become more financially self-sufficient and achieve food self-sufficiency. The objective behind these activities is to address some of the opportunity costs that cause students to leave school before the completion of the basic education cycle. At this early stage of implementation, 33 families have so far benefited from these outreach activities aimed at school retention, with more expected as IBEC unfolds.

IBEC is also working with government to identify suitable candidates from communes suffering from severe teacher shortages, to be supported by IBEC Provincial Teacher Training College (PTTC) scholarships. IBEC personnel have worked closely with the Teacher Training Department, Provincial Personnel Offices, and PTTCs to recruit 71 new PTTC scholarship recipients in Year 1 (with another 49 planned for Year 2).

### Stakeholder-driven Discretionary School Grants

The most important activities to take place under this project component of IBEC are the facilitative planning sessions that use an approach that promotes stakeholder control of the planning process, as well as needs-based assessments of the local context. This approach includes the use of activity menus, training modules, and a PWG review and approval process that ensures engagement by local authorities.

At the primary level, IBEC identified 30 cluster schools for Year 1 support. The clusters selected all comprise feeder schools of targeted lower secondary schools. More clusters will join this group in Year 2 when additional feeder primary schools are identified in Siem Reap. When clusters completed their plans, they used standardized activity menus organized according to the Child-Friendly School (CFS) dimensions mandated by MoEYS as part of its policy. Clusters were provided with a total of \$66,526 in grant funds to budget in their planning (about \$2,200 per cluster on average). Grant amounts varied

depending on the size of a cluster with larger clusters receiving grants of up to \$3,000 to \$5,000 while very small clusters received somewhat less than \$2,200. A review of annual plans indicated that there were 44 discrete activities identified in cluster plans spanning the six CFS dimensions.

A total of 23 lower secondary schools completed school improvement plans using the same stakeholder-driven approaches described for primary schools. Although the MoEYS has not yet articulated a clear framework for activity menus at secondary school level, target schools have been relying on a tentative framework developed under SfL in collaboration with the Secondary Education Department. Target secondary schools were provided with a total of \$41,590 in grant funds to budget in their planning (about \$1,800 per school on average). Grant amounts for secondary schools were decidedly larger than those provided at primary level, demonstrating IBEC's more intense focus on secondary education.

## Success Story

On December 11, 2009, students, families, government officials, teachers and commune leaders gathered at the Ponhea Krek High School in Kampong Cham province for one of an on-going set of scholarship distribution ceremonies for the USAID-funded IBEC Program. During this ceremony, 57 students received a scholarship package containing a bicycle, school materials and a school uniform which will enable these young students to continue to attend school. Students from Ponhea Krek Lower Secondary School, Ponhea Krek High School and Kandal Chrum Lower Secondary School were among the scholarship recipients.

One young mother, May Yan, from the minority Cham community shared that she had told her daughter, Math Li Phiyas, ever since she was in the 4th grade, that it would be difficult for her to be able to continue her studies. As a family with four children and with both parents unable to read or write, Phiyas' parents wanted her to assist in income generation for the household. Every time her mother asked her to leave school, Phiyas refused. Instead, she decided to study even harder and continued to attend school while helping her family by working in the fields in the hours and days that she was not in the classroom. She worked her way



to become one of the top three students in her class.

When applications for the scholarship distributions were announced at her school earlier this year, Phiyas sought out the school director to request an application, which she filled out and submitted on her own. She is thrilled to have received the assistance necessary to continue her studies. Now 15 years old and in Grade 7, Phiyas hopes to complete her studies all the way through Grade 12. She states that no other Cham students in her village have been able to complete Grade 12 and she wants to be a role model so that other children will be able to aspire to do the same. Phiyas hopes to one day become a teacher and to help the other Cham children in her village to receive an education.



## Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

IBEC interventions under this project component focus primarily on life skills curriculum development and teacher education. Because of the considerable lead time required for teacher training activities, most component activities in the months immediately following project start-

up have focused on getting life skills activities up and running. By the end of December 2009, IBEC had developed a plan for the design of a draft Implementation Framework, and met with various partners to discuss these initial ideas, especially the Department of Curriculum Development (DCD). Discussions with the DCD have so far been particularly productive; the department has welcomed assistance and support from IBEC and considers this support timely as it is in the process of reviewing its life skills curricula.

IBEC teacher education activities since start-up have included intensive planning for implementation of teacher training workshops in Effective Teaching and Learning (ETL) techniques, which are part of the MoEYS' CFS classroom improvement program. IBEC has also already conducted several teacher training workshops for Community Teachers and Bilingual Classroom Assistants (BCAs). A total of 205 Community Teachers and 26 BCAs were trained.

### IBEC Life Skills

IBEC is supporting the teaching and learning of a variety of important and relevant Life Skills, including:

- Civic Awareness-Raising
  - Safe migration
  - Practical ethics in society
  - Drug awareness and prevention
  - Student council development
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Intensive aquaculture
- Practical livelihoods:
  - Cooking
  - Bicycle repair
  - Beauty and make-up
  - Culture (dance, crafts)
  - Hair cutting
  - Hammock making

## Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

Under IBEC, school management training will be delivered as a formalized three-year course, which will build on the work of other programs, including training materials recently produced by the Cambodia Education Sector Support Program on school leadership. IBEC school managers and technical support group (TSG) members will receive graded transcripts each year based on completed task work. The development of a management training curriculum as well as the delivery of training are a significant part of IBEC's Year 1 activities, in addition to extensive support provided to school support committees (SSCs), sometimes also known as Parent Teacher Associations, and capacity building of school leaders and communities to manage IBEC discretionary school grants.

In preparation for school improvement planning, which began first in the full-stream schools, IBEC has modified training and planning materials to accommodate the somewhat special planning requirements of the project's half-stream schools. There are 53 such school in all, mainly in Siem Reap and Kampong Cham. IBEC's half-stream schools will not be implementing

activities over a full year, but will be focusing on preparatory development activities that can be implemented between February and June 2010 or a period of about five months. This required modifications in the activity menus and planning approach to reflect a more abbreviated implementation period. Preparatory activities include infrastructure improvements, water and sanitation systems, student associations, and other institutional support that will facilitate a wider range of development activities planned for Year 2. In addition to these preparatory activities, IBEC has also begun development of a template for sustainability planning that will be used in next year's planning.

IBEC has also taken steps to prepare to for development assistance to SSCs. A survey instrument was developed to collect baseline data on the SSCs, such as the existence of statutes and job descriptions for SSC members, the role of elections (if any) to appoint officers, financial support from community members, frequency of meetings, and other factors that indicate the level of dynamism in community support bodies. Implementation of these surveys began in December 2009.

