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**PROJECT
NEWSLETTER**

**IMPACT
HIGHLIGHTS**

- Over 4,700 students receiving services through Child-to-Child Help Networks
- 2 life skills radio programs produced and broadcast
- 710 IBEC grant-funded water and sanitation infrastructure upgrading activities completed or in progress

**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).

Other local partners include: WCRD, BSDA, NEP and EDA. Other international partners are Equal Access and American Institute for Research (AIR).

Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) Project

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Official IBEC Launch Hosted by US Ambassador

The USAID-funded Improved Basic Education in Cambodia project (IBEC) marked a successful 2nd quarter with the official project launch on 11 March, 2010 and key progress in the four project components: (i) Local NGO and Government Capacity Building & Advocacy for Sustainability; (ii) More Equitable School Access; (iii) Improved School Management & Community Engagement; and (iv) Improved Educational Relevance.

The official launch of IBEC occurred on 11 March at the Residence of the US Ambassador, who hosted the event. The launch was well attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS), including H.E. Im Sethy and H.E. Nath Bunroeun as well as representatives from leading development agencies in the education sector such as UNICEF, Save the Children, World Bank, and ADB. In addition, the directors of each of the Provincial Offices of Education came from their provinces to attend the launch. The event provided an excellent opportunity for USAID to demonstrate its commitment to educational development in the sector, demonstrate some of the activities already in progress, and disseminate information about these activities through the press corps, which also attended the event.



US Ambassador Carol A. Rodley welcomes the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, H.E. Im Sethy, at the IBEC Launch Ceremony.

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



Component activities during the 2nd quarter focused on the organizational assessments of the partner organizations using the assessment tools developed by the project during the first quarter.

Using the IBEC organizational capacity assessment tool, staff questionnaire, and Board of Directors questionnaire, IBEC partners were able to assess their organizational strengths in areas including governance, program management, human resources, and financial and organizational

management. The scoring scheme used in the assessments is geared toward measuring partners' capacity to achieve the levels of organizational efficiency and project management required to directly receive funding from large donors such as USAID.

After reviewing results from the assessments, partners then worked to identify realistic, achievable benchmarks for the next nine months (up to December 2010). These benchmarks will be the basis for

final assessments that occur at the end of Year I. Importantly, both the assessment process and benchmark setting were driven by the partners themselves, reflecting the fact that IBEC capacity building is predicated on partners' own desire to improve and grow their organizations. The IBEC Capacity Building Team worked alongside staff in the partner organizations to identify what activities, support and training will be necessary to achieve the identified benchmarks.

Educational Outreach through Radio

Key to IBEC's advocacy strategy is educational outreach through radio programming. This quarter IBEC partner Equal Access produced the first two radio program episodes and accompanying learning exercises as part of its *We Can Do It* life skills radio program brand. Following a series of planning and script drafting activities, the first episode was broadcast on 17 March on the two Kampong Cham provincial radio stations. The second episode was broadcast on 25 March. Every episode is broadcast twice on both stations and the broadcasting times are staggered so that the show can be heard during school hours and after-school, depending on the preferences of the students and their teachers.

The *We Can Do It* program features two adolescent hosts with presentation styles that appeal to young student listeners. Joining the hosts in the studio for each episode is a fictional character developed especially for that

episode's topic, who engages with the hosts in a dialogue meant to resemble an after-school chat by friends. The fictional character relates his or her story, connected to the episode's topic, and then the episode transitions into a mini-drama segment. During the dramas, listeners are introduced to a range of key messages represented by the behaviors of the main characters. Audiences follow along as these characters face challenges and discover solutions to their problems. A discussion by the hosts and fictional character following the drama helps to repeat and emphasize important messages. The first two *We Can Do It* episodes explored the topics of morality inside and outside of the school, and how to be a good student (relating the achievement of academic success to the achievement of future life goals).

Linked to the radio programming, Equal Access also worked closely with World Education and KAPE to form 20 student listening and

dialogue groups in schools throughout Kampong Cham province. For every broadcast of *We Can Do It*, the listening club members gather to listen to the show and discuss the episode topics among their group. In all, 21 listening and dialogue group meetings were held this quarter with a total of 412 youth in attendance.



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

IBEC staff continued during the 2nd quarter to provide assistance to targeted primary and secondary schools for implementation of the IBEC scholarship program. A second distribution of materials to scholarship recipients occurred at all levels, comprised mostly of stationery items such as writing books and pens. This distribution benefitted the approximately 3,000 IBEC primary level scholarship recipients and 635 secondary level scholarship recipients. IBEC is also supporting 120 students at Provincial Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs). For these students, a second payment of \$75 for a three-month period occurred at the beginning of the quarter, involving a transfer of \$9,000 to each PTTC for distribution.

Stakeholder-driven Discretionary School Grants

A key development during IBEC's 2nd quarter was the implementation of school planning sessions in half-stream schools in all provinces. Half-stream schools are those IBEC participating schools which did not receive support under the prior USAID-funded *Schools for Life* project, and are thus engaging in smaller scale grant-funded activities in Year 1 as a preparatory step to a more complete planning process that will occur next year. Based on selection decisions made last quarter, 638 school directors, teachers, and community members in 53 half-stream secondary schools were trained in objective-based planning leading to the development of a school improvement plan. School plans were approved by review groups based in the Provincial Offices of Education and funds were released in March. The small grants (\$900 or less depending on school size) are supporting

school-level institution building activities such as library development, strengthening children's councils, and establishing girls' counselors.

Based on school plans in both full and half-stream schools, IBEC staff provided technical support throughout the quarter for the implementation of various grant-funded activities. This included training 168 individuals in 87 schools to set up or strengthen student councils and the training of 95 librarians at both primary and secondary school level. IBEC also worked with 90 individuals, including both school directors and female teachers, to establish girls' counseling networks in a large number of schools. The component also assisted in the establishment of Child-to-Child Help Networks in a large number of schools. These help networks include peer tutoring, pen pal networks, homework clubs, and social support groups (especially for the physically challenged) and reportedly provided services to 4,784 children during the quarter.

Grant-funded infrastructure upgrading and water systems projects were also underway this quarter. A total of 710 instances of water and sanitation construction, infrastructure upgrading, and construction or repair of intermediate classrooms were in progress across all provinces. The start-up of this work follows the completion of an environmental impact review process that was approved by USAID in February 2010. IBEC staff also repaired five Intermediate Classrooms (ICRs) that were constructed under the USAID-funded ESCUP and *Schools for Life* projects and constructed another eight more in remote communities where the children have no access to education. The use of ICRs to enable immediate educational service provision in unreached communities is one of the most successful interventions pioneered under ESCUP and has been adopted in IBEC as well. In only two quarters, 476 children with no prior access to education are now in school thanks to the construction of ICRs.

Success Story

Svay Leu is a typical remote village in Cambodia, located 35 kilometers from Snoul District town in Snoul District, Kratie Province. Svay Leu is home to 115 families. According to statistics provided by the village Chief, there were 80 to 100 children ages 8 to 15 living in the village with no access to school. Most of these children had never attended school.

Under IBEC, an ICR was constructed and named "Samaky," meaning "solidarity." This ICR was funded with support from USAID, but was also made possible through the important contributions of the community in the form of labor and materials. Mr. Keo Heng, the Village Chief, mentioned that the community people have always dreamed of having a school for their children that is close to the village,

but for a very long time this remained only a dream. With advocacy from the Svay Chreas Commune Council, the village contacted IBEC about building an ICR for this community where an estimated 90% of the local population is illiterate. Mr. Heng indicated that with the recruitment of a Community Teacher (also supported by IBEC), there are about 70 children ready to start learning at the new school.

Mr. Korng Samath, Svay Chras Cluster Director, stated that the people in this community are very happy with the support from IBEC to make this extension of educational services possible. They hope it will lead to even more improved educational services in the future.



Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

A highlight of IBEC's school management and community engagement activities in the 2nd quarter was the needs assessment for School Support Committees (SSC) conducted in target schools, followed by a major capacity-building training. The SSC training workshop was attended by 388 participants from 156 schools and covered such topics as the content of Child Friendly School (CFS) policy and what it means in actual practice in schools, the roles and duties of SSCs in school development, and community planning inputs in the future (based on current strengths and weaknesses). Some school management training also occurred this quarter, focusing mainly on

school improvement planning (for IBEC half-stream schools) and sustainability planning. In addition, IBEC helped to identify 63 Technical Support Group (TSG) members in full-stream secondary schools who subsequently received training about their roles in schools and how to do classroom observations. The use of TSGs is intended to build sustainability into teacher education activities by establishing a system of peer support in target schools. IBEC staff also organized exchange visits to a number of Beacon Schools, to demonstrate good development practices. A total of 678 individuals participated in such visits this quarter.



Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

IBEC activities under Component 4 focus on life skills development, teacher education, and improving access to information technology. Important progress was made across all these areas in the 2nd quarter. A major step forward was the development of a Life Skills Implementation Framework which was completed in draft form in collaboration with the Curriculum Development Department. A review workshop with the Ministry and a final national dissemination workshop are scheduled for summer 2010, which will mark the official start of the IBEC life skills pilot.

Besides the preparations at the central level for an integrated approach to life skills programming, a number of life skills activities have been implemented at school level as well so that currently targeted schools can get some preliminary experience in life skills implementation. Training in life skills education was provided last quarter to numerous teachers at both primary and secondary school. This training occurred across the various life skills domains identified in IBEC's design document. Although program personnel have not yet eliminated overlap in reported instances of life skills instruction, there were 292 instances of life skills instruction across all domains, involving 14,087 students. Practical livelihood skills have proven to be the most popular (e.g., bicycle repair, intensive aquaculture, cooking, sewing, etc.) followed by economic life skills, civics/health, and culture.

There were also numerous teacher education activities during the quarter. Of special note was the CFS training support for new secondary school teachers, which marked a major expansion in CFSS programming into the secondary school sector where little training of this kind has taken place nationally. A total of 113 secondary school teachers were trained during the



quarter with additional training scheduled to take place in Siem Reap in the next quarter. IBEC also started capacity building efforts to organize TSGs at cluster level. TSGs will also be established at secondary school level starting in the next quarter.

IBEC made substantial progress in improving access to information technology this quarter, establishing six new computer labs to complement 11 more that were earlier established under ESCUP and *Schools for Life*. As was true under earlier USAID programming, IBEC is using thin client technology to ensure that the labs provided are low maintenance, low energy, and ensure enough savings in terms of their overall cost to enable the use of solar energy to power the labs. Recent advances have led to the use of thin clients that are about one-tenth of the size of the previously used devices and \$20 cheaper per unit. These savings have enabled IBEC to increase the number of work-stations in a lab from 11 to 13 or an increase of about 20% at little extra cost.

During the quarter, IBEC focused not only on the establishment of computer labs but also trained 45 teachers in Project Method techniques (in order to facilitate the use of IT facilities in classroom learning) as well as another 28 computer teachers who have been assigned to new computer labs by their respective schools.