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**PROJECT
NEWSLETTER**

**IMPACT
HIGHLIGHTS**

- 5,460 secondary school students benefitting from IBEC computer labs
- 209 schools with completed school improvement plans
- Specialized community support to 259 vulnerable scholarship recipient families
- Life Skills Implementation Framework finalized

**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 Kamputhean 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 the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) Project

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IBEC Continues Support for Cambodia's Information Technology Development 18th Thin Client Computer Lab Opened

With support from USAID and in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the IBEC Project continues to demonstrate its strong commitment to promoting innovation in its approaches to Information Technology access in the education sector in Cambodia. On 7 May 2010, another new Thin Client Computer Lab was

inaugurated at Bunnary Hun Sen Speu High School in Speu Commune, Chamkar Leu District in Kampong Cham province.

Attending the opening of this new lab was Mr. Flynn Fuller, USAID/ Cambodia Mission Director, H.E. Ou Eng, Director General of MoEYS, Mr. Pich Por, Deputy District Governor of Chamkar Leu

District and other stakeholder representatives. This is the 7th lab that has been constructed during the IBEC Project thus far, joining 11 other labs that were built earlier under the Schools for Life Program.

H.E. Ou Eng spoke on behalf of the MoEYS and expressed appreciation towards USAID, World Education, KAPE, and all stakeholders that have partnered with the Ministry in providing support for the education sector. He emphasized the importance of IT skills for future participation in the labor market and anticipates the expansion of more computer labs in other schools in the future. With USAID's support, the IBEC project plans to construct a total of 27 new thin client labs over the life of the project.



USAID Mission Director and MoEYS Director General observe a student using a thin client computer.

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

IBEC continues to work on a wide range of capacity building activities for local partners and government.

In the project's effort to build better management capacity at school level, IBEC provided a one-day workshop in three separate locations to train Secondary School Directors on sustainability planning. The workshop focused on explaining why sustainability is important and how to ensure maximal sustainability of activities based on prioritization judgments by school directors. IBEC has also begun training and support activities for commune-based Education for All (EFA) Committees, geared at building a role for communes in educational development. Twelve communes received refresher training, and an additional 15 communes each year will be identified to receive IBEC support.

At the provincial level, IBEC Provincial Working Groups (PWG) play a key role in administering school grants, assisting in trouble-shooting, and collaborating in the oversight of the project. IBEC has completed PWG formation in Siem Reap and Kampong Cham, a process that was completed earlier in the year in Kratie. The formation process included the issuance of formal appointment letters to all PWG members and an orientation. The PWGs are playing a leading role in the identification of IBEC Beacon Schools—special resource secondary schools that will provide technical assistance to surrounding schools in improving their educational service provision. The Beacon School selection process was completed in both Siem Reap and Kratie and is finishing up in Kampong Cham.

Educational Outreach through Radio

IBEC partner Equal Access has produced four more episodes of the *We Can Do It* youth life skills audio program. The four 30-minute programs were broadcast 16 times, eight times on each of the two partner radio programs in Kampong Cham province. CDs of every radio program were distributed to 35 schools in Kampong Cham province. School-based listening and dialogue groups continue to hold meetings after every radio program to discuss the topics and exchange ideas in a moderated, cooperative group-learning environment.

A key part of the IBEC radio programming outreach is the Student Reporter Initiative. Equal Access helped to facilitate four student reporter trainings hosted by eight teacher mentors in the four selected Student Reporter Initiative schools. Over the course of eight days, 40 students were trained as reporters. These trainings each lasted two-days and were held at Ponhea Krek Secondary School, Hun Sen Kbal O High School, Bes II Secondary School, and Hun Sen Kor High School.

Trainees learned how to conduct interviews, how to collect sounds from the field using the project-supplied digital recorders, and how to do basic digital sound editing. Another main objective of the training was that both teacher mentors and school reporters work together to produce practice audio features (2-5 minutes) by themselves. This practical exercise allowed the teachers and students to put the theoretical concepts to practical.

Following the training, the student reporters began working with Equal Access multimedia content producers to collect sound and interviews from Kampong Cham to compliment the audio programs and long-format exercises. The objectives of these activities are to enhance the learning of audiences both in and out of school and offer new ideas, insights and information from young people within the

community. Since the training, a total of 16 features were produced by 24 student reporters at the four Student Reporter Initiative schools. Five of these pieces were used in the broadcasted radio programs. The student reporters interviewed a variety of people such as teachers, school administrators, fellow classmates, local villagers, and community officials.

Radio Program Topics

Peer Pressure

- Introduce various types of peer pressure
- How to take personal responsibility and avoid peer pressure

Cooperative Learning

- Show the advantages of cooperative learning
- How cooperative learning works
- Encourage students to participate in cooperative learning activities to improve knowledge and confidence

Poverty and Education

- Raise awareness of poverty barriers to education access
- Encourage students to find solutions to barriers to education

Children's Role in the Family

- Promote the idea that youth can play a positive role in the livelihood of their families
- Encourage youth to become more active in their households



Radio Programming Impact Stories

Two students benefiting from capacity building activities supported by IBEC share some of their feelings and observations:



Reth Kanha
Listening and Dialogue
Group Facilitator

Before becoming a listening and dialogue group facilitator, Reth Kanha was “shy and scared to speak in large groups.” Now, Reth Kanha says, “I am not as shy anymore, I am not afraid to facilitate club meetings. As a facilitator, I have gained courage and important leadership skills.” Kanha also mentioned that she feels the skills that she has learned as a facilitator of listening and dialogue groups will also help her in the classroom as she has become more active in class than she was before. “I have been very happy to gain more knowledge from the radio programs and from discussion with other club members. These skills that we learn spill over into our real lives.”



Kein Sotheara
Student Reporter

For Kein Sotheara, a student reporter at Hun Sen Kor High School, learning from the people he has interviewed has been the best part of being a student reporter. “I enjoy interviewing people very much because it helps me to increase my knowledge.” Sotheara feels that being a student reporter is important because it helps to bring different perspectives to what students learn from the *We Can Do It* audio program. He enjoys discovering new things from people he has interviewed, such as the history of his school, traffic rules, and information about the issue of domestic violence. In the future he hopes to learn more skills from his student reporter responsibilities that will help him throughout his life.

Component 2: More Equitable School Access

Scholarships

With the close of the school year, IBEC turned attention to assessing the internal efficiency of the project’s scholarship programming. Reports showed that only 92 primary school scholarship recipients had dropped out, or 3% of the total primary-level recipients. At secondary level, it was reported that retention among scholarship beneficiaries was 88% (87% among females). Tracer studies reported that among the 78 secondary level scholarship students leaving school during the year, financial reasons continue to be a dominant reason reported by families. Of those 78, 44% reported leaving school to look for work outside of the home while 18% reported the need to help at home. Only 8% had found employment in factories.

Preparations for the next cycle of IBEC scholarship support will include an expansion in the number of participating schools. The total number of secondary schools with scholarship support will increase from 21 to 42.

Stakeholder-driven Discretionary School Grants

As the school year ended, most school grants for various activities focused on access began to reach completion, and while IBEC provided some residual training on gender, libraries, and student councils, much attention was spent on assessing impacts of various interventions. Dropout data for various interventions was compiled.

For example, vulnerable girls receiving counseling support resulted in a 90% retention rate among such children across primary and secondary school. Similarly, students in various help networks such as tutoring, homework clubs, and pen pals reported a 93% retention rate while referred children with disabilities and chronic illnesses evinced 95% retention. In all, these results testify to the efficiency of these interventions since they target the most vulnerable children.

Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

The IBEC project has reached a key milestone with the finalization of the training framework for school directors. The completed framework includes the entire outline for a two-year training program. IBEC is very appreciative of the good collaboration with the MoEYS and its Cambodian Educational Sector Support Program (CESSP), which has allowed the IBEC team to build upon the CESSP training program and use this as a basis for the management and leadership interventions for IBEC.

In preparation of the start of the School Management and Leadership training, IBEC conducted a basic training for School Directors in the target provinces. The Department of Finance of the MoEYS, in close collaboration with NGO Education Partnership (NEP), developed a training session for financial budget management as part of the activities for the Global Campaign for Education (GCE) 2010 which has the theme “Education Financing.” IBEC agreed to support the training

sessions for directors in the IBEC supported provinces of Kampong Cham (7-8 June), Kratie (25 May) and Siem Reap (3 May).

GCE conducted a total of 16 workshops in eight different provinces with approximately 800 participants including 120 from IBEC supported districts. The main purpose of the training was to build capacity of school directors on basic financial management to ensure they have a better understanding of the updated education budget management, the use of an accounting journal, and how to report within the program-based budget framework. The training team aimed to enable school directors to improve their budgeting skills and awareness, as well as highlight the work of GCE Cambodia.

Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

Life Skills Framework

After thorough preparations for the development of a Life Skills Framework and Implementation Guidelines for the pilot in Lower Secondary Schools in school year 2010-2011, IBEC conducted several consultation workshops to collect input and feedback from a variety of stakeholders. These sessions were very well attended and resulted in an increased interest and involvement of the Ministry and its partners in the area of life skills education.

The final draft documents were reviewed and approved by the Department of Curriculum Development after a productive internal MoEYS consultative review with staff of seven different departments on 25 June.

Teacher Education

IBEC continues to support numerous activities to support teachers at different levels with quality enhancing interventions:

- Reflection sessions for 421 primary and secondary teachers on their experience implementing Child Friendly School approaches.
- Orientations for Lower Secondary School teachers on Subject Classrooms, an important feature of Child Friendly Secondary Schools (CFSS).
- Facilitation of two subject club fairs, with student representation from eight schools and 26 clubs in Kampong Cham and Kratie.
- Establishment of three new science labs and an orientation for science teachers on how to optimally utilize these new facilities.
- Creation of 33 Technical Support Groups in lower secondary schools.

Improving Access to Educational Technology

The introduction of Information Technology (IT) has been an important aspect of fostering 'constructivist learning' approaches in IBEC-supported schools, since it encourages interactive learning experiences as well as provides the needed tools to discover information (e.g., electronic encyclopedias); create PowerPoint presentations; and develop other forms of written media. Thus, the availability of IT facilities not only ensures the acquisition of information literacy skills but also fosters a new form of classroom learning. Throughout the school year, students have been using newly acquired IT skills to

research interesting topics of social and academic interest and 'construct' dynamic presentations for their peers. IBEC sponsored a coming together of these activities at a 'Project Work Fair' on 28 June in Kampong Cham and 5 July in Kratie. About 45 students from six schools participated in these fairs along with their teachers (18 in all). During the fair, there were numerous PowerPoint presentations made by students demonstrating a confidence that is rarely seen among Cambodian students. A delegation from MoEYS comprising members of the Consultative Group overseeing IBEC were extremely impressed with these rural students who had only recently discovered IT.



Market Simulation

Life skills activities were completed in the schools in May and June. To practice and demonstrate the newly gained skills, a total of 13 schools in Kampong Cham and Kratie celebrated International Children's Day on the 1st of June with a market simulation in their school. A market simulation allows students to use generic

skills and specific technical skills developed through the community-based life skills program. During the simulation, students are given the opportunity to utilize budgetary skills related to buying, selling, bookkeeping, borrowing money, and prioritizing purchases. The primary means for doing this is through the organization of seller stalls in which students 'sell' the fruits of their labor, i.e., the skills

that they learned during the year. These stalls may include a restaurant, a barbershop, a vegetable stall, a dance theatre, and many others. Other enjoyable but educational activities that are also organized include a movie theatre in which educational films and cartoons are shown. The market simulations at IBEC schools proved a great and popular success.

