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**PROJECT
NEWSLETTER**

**IBEC
AT A GLANCE**

- Five-year project: October 2009 to September 2014
- Implementing activities in three provinces (Kampong Cham, Kratie, and Siem Reap)
- USD \$10 million in funding
- Supporting 202 primary and 101 lower secondary schools to increase access and quality

**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 Kamputhian 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 Project Marks End of Successful First Year



On 30 September 2010 the Improved Basic Education in Cambodia project, or IBEC, marked the completion of the first year of implementation. IBEC is the largest current single initiative in the Cambodian formal education sector supported by USAID.

Working in a total of 303 schools across Kampong Cham, Kratie, and Siem Reap provinces, IBEC is characterized by a stakeholder-driven development approach, the use of activity menus, school grants, holistic programming based on the Ministry's six Child Friendly Schools (CFS) Dimensions, and the use of local committees for direct implementation of activities.

IBEC expands on previous USAID programming by also introducing a major focus on life skills education at the secondary school level, creating the institutional context to support life skills education, major investments in water and sanitation systems at primary and secondary

schools, and a strong focus on the development of local institutional structures (especially local NGO partners and local government).

Despite the logistical challenge of starting a project at the same time as the opening of the school year (October 2009), IBEC implementing partners completed start-up activities within just 6 to 7 weeks, enabling the project to nevertheless provide significant support to schools during the first year. By the end of October 2009 local partners were already disbursing technical and material assistance to schools. As early as November 2009, 133 primary schools and 56 secondary schools began to receive IBEC grant support. In all, IBEC disbursed \$130,975 directly to schools during the year as part of locally determined programming. By the end of Year 1 the number of participating schools had risen to 202 primary schools and 101 secondary schools for a total of 303 schools.

IBEC direct granting to schools was complemented in Year 1 by central grant support for water and sanitation improvements (\$132,000), infrastructure upgrading projects (\$61,000), IT Labs (\$84,000), Classroom Materials (\$35,000), Scholarships (\$83,000), and Community Teachers (\$49,000), among other support. This included a radio program on life skills programming with links to school-based listening & dialogue groups.

By the end of its first year, IBEC was operational in all provinces, set up strong government links for co-implementation at all levels of government, and completed preparations for an additional expansion in Year 2 and the implementation of a flagship pilot activity on life skills education at secondary school level.

This edition of the IBEC newsletter provides highlights of the project's Year 1 impacts across its four project components.

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IBEC Year I Impact Highlights



IBEC developed and aired six episodes of a radio program called *We Can Do It*, which allows students to share their experiences about life skills education. The episodes are developed with intensive stakeholder collaboration through the establishment of a Content Advisory Group with representation from schools, communities, and government officials. In addition, IBEC produced, published and disseminated 2,300 copies of two life skills comic books to 41 schools.

IBEC assisted schools in setting up committees to administer scholarship assistance to 3,017 vulnerable children in primary school and 635 secondary school students. A strong focus was placed on affirmative action for girls, minorities, and the disabled. In addition, IBEC provided scholarships to 120 students attending primary teacher training colleges (PTTC).



IBEC spent approximately \$132,000 to repair, expand, or develop new water and sanitation systems, enabling 128 schools to start to organize running water for toilets, fishponds, school breakfast kitchens, and other facilities in the school in need of water. Fifty-six schools (56) completed their systems by the end of Year I. An estimated 26,748 students are benefitting from IBEC water and sanitation support in the target provinces. IBEC also trained 209 school directors and teachers in developing maintenance plans so that the investments made in water and sanitation are sustained well after the end of the project.

A total of 436 previously un-served children are benefitting from 13 new Intermediate Classrooms (ICRs) built with IBEC support. ICRs are temporary structures made of local materials that can be built by communities in as little as six weeks. Construction of permanent masonry structures often takes up to two years from the time of initial planning to completion. ICRs allow children with no or difficult access to a school can start attending a school in their own village almost immediately. IBEC also provided Community Teachers to staff the schools and advocated with local authorities for more permanent construction and a regular state teacher.



IBEC made investments in special use classrooms, installing over 11 labs during the year including eight IT labs and three science labs. These investments generally took the form of tiling floors, painting, and ceilings as well as reinforced security of doors and windows. The labs also received upgrading support for electrical wiring and in the case of the science labs, sinks were installed to facilitate experiments in chemistry, biology, and physics. Half of the IT labs were installed using private funds raised by World Education as part of cost share provisions. An estimated 6,640 students at secondary level are benefitting from these inputs under IBEC.

IBEC completed the design of a School Management and Leadership Training Course (SMLTC), which is a key capacity building initiative that will be essential to the success of the implementation of IBEC interventions across all components. The entire outline for a two-year training program was completed by the end of July 2010. The School Management and Leadership Course was introduced to schools at the end of Year I and will be implemented for two consecutive years (Years 2 and 3 of implementation).



A total of 183 schools completed school improvement plans that met standards laid out in grant administration workshops. The development of School Improvement Plans is a key activity in IBEC and promotes stakeholder control of the planning process as well as needs-based assessments of the local context. This includes the use of activity menus, training modules, and a Provincial Working Group review and approval process that ensures engagement by local authorities.

IBEC completed the design of a conceptual Life Skills Framework and development of Implementation Guidelines and a Teacher Training Manual in preparation for the implementation of Life Skills pilot activities in over 40 Lower Secondary Schools in the 2010-2011 academic year. IBEC further developed 11 Life Skills modules to guide teachers in their instruction.



Visit IBEC on the Web for key project updates, information and resources!

www.ibec.worlded.org

Component 1: Local NGO and Government Capacity Building & Advocacy for Sustainability

The establishment of a component dedicated exclusively to building the capacity of civil society organizations involved in education and local government is a new innovation in USAID programming in the Education Sector, and focuses on a number of local organizations as well as with local government, including Provincial Working Groups (PWGs) who help project personnel oversee the project and Commune EFA Committees (CEFACs), which are responsible for working with schools to promote access to education.

Capacity-building efforts for NGOs began in Year 1 with the completion of self-assessments using the Discussion-Oriented Self-Assessment Approach. All NGOs used the assessments to develop annual benchmarks for improvement and determine technical assistance required over the course of the year to achieve them.

The process of setting up PWGs began during the Second Quarter of Year 1. However, due to busy schedules in many Provincial Offices of Education, Kratie was only the province to complete the PWG formation process at that time. It was not until the Third Quarter that the PWG formation process was completed in Siem Reap and Kampong Cham. All PWGs have issued formal appointment letters for all their members and attended an orientation on operational principles during May and June 2010.

Due to the late start-up, capacity building for CEFACs focused on refresher training activities for 12 CEFACs that had been active under USAID's previous Schools for Life Project. All of these communes were located in Kampong Cham or Kratie Provinces. Capacity building efforts during the year covered topics including: Overview of IBEC, Review of EFA Policy, MoEYS'

Educational Strategic Plan & Education, Sector Support Plan, Child Friendly School Policy, and CEFAC involvement in IBEC.

Component 1 has a mandate to promote sustainability of project inputs through building institutional capacity, as well as to disseminate best practices through such means as radio programming, production of project literature, and the publication of research articles in relevant areas. In Year 1, IBEC developed and aired six episodes of a radio program called *We Can Do It*, which allows students to share their experiences about life skills education. The life skills topics were closely listened to by many schools but with highly systematic inputs in Listening-Dialogue Groups set up in 13 target schools. Efforts in this area also included the development of two audio exercises and two comic books on life skills topics.

In addition to the development of the newsletters to share progress on project implementation, IBEC also completed development of a project website, available now at www.ibec.worlded.org.

IBEC research activities in Year 1 included research on the effectiveness of primary school scholarships (as a justification for future support) and on attitudes among school directors towards development.



Component 2: More Equitable School Access

This component focuses on a wide range of activities to promote sustained enrolment by all children as well as transition from primary to secondary school. These activities include scholarships at all levels, children's councils through which to mobilize children, infrastructure upgrading to enhance educational supply, water and sanitation facilities in schools, outreach to vulnerable groups such as minorities and the disabled through child-to-child help networks, and others.

In Year 1, IBEC succeeded in providing scholarship support to 3,017 primary school students, 635 secondary school students, and 120 students at PTTCS. A majority of all scholarship recipients were girls, minority students, or disabled, in accordance with IBEC's focus on addressing the educational needs of the most underserved populations. Among primary and secondary school scholarship recipients, total

retention was 95% for the year (97% for primary and 88% for secondary). Dropout rates in participating schools decreased, but important differences by region and by gender underline the need for expansion of support to increase retention levels of girls, such as the significant increase in scholarship programming aimed at girls that will occur in Year 2.

IBEC's stakeholder-driven discretionary grants provided significant resources in Year 1 to promote access to target schools. At the primary level, IBEC focused on 30 cluster schools in Year 1, all of which were feeder schools for targeted lower secondary schools. Clusters were provided with a total of \$66,526 in grant funds to budget for in their planning documents, which averages about \$2,200 per cluster. A review of annual plans indicated that there were 44 discrete activities identified in cluster plans, spanning the six Child Friendly School dimensions

spelled out under MoEYS policy. Scholarships, child-to-child help networks, and school review visits were among the most frequently cited activities in the plans submitted. The fact that there was significant variation in the activities selected indicates a strong stakeholder role in the identification of activities, based on local need.

A total of 76 lower secondary schools completed school improvement plans using the same stakeholder-driven approaches described for primary schools. Schools identified a total 47 discrete activities that they implemented to make learning environments more child friendly. Because secondary schools were divided into full and half-stream schools, planning and school grant activities occurred in two stages. Full-stream schools did plans for the full year in November 2009 and received a full annual grant. Half-stream schools did their planning at the end of the First Semester and

only received a half-year grant that focused mainly on preliminary activities in preparation for Year 2. These included setting up Student Councils, Girls' Counselors, and some basic life skills activities.

Target secondary schools were provided with a total of \$75,739 in grant funds to budget for in their planning documents. This comes out to about \$1,800 per school on average (for full stream schools and about half that for half-stream schools).

A review of secondary school improvement plans revealed that the most commonly chosen activities included First Aid Kits, Student Councils, and School Self-Assessments. Once again, the breadth of activities selected (47 in all) demonstrates significant variation in perceived needs from school to school. IBEC's flexibility to accommodate these needs hopefully strengthens ownership and effectiveness.

Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

IBEC activities related to School Management and Community Engagement were slow to begin in Year 1, due in great part to the late start of the project vis-à-vis the 2009-2010 school year. Nevertheless, component personnel managed to complete the design of a School Management and Leadership Training Course during the year. This is a key capacity building initiative that will be essential to the success of the implementation of IBEC interventions across all components. With the assistance of a specialist in school management as well as extensive consultations with other school management programs, the entire outline for a two-year

training program was completed by the end of July 2010. IBEC is very appreciative of the good collaboration with MoEYS' Cambodian Educational Sector Support Program (CESSP), which has allowed IBEC to build upon their training program and use this as a basis for the management and leadership interventions for IBEC. The School Management and Leadership Course was introduced to schools at the end of Year 1 and will be implemented for two consecutive years (Years 2 and 3 of project implementation).

In addition to the preparations and activities related to strengthening

the capacity of school directors, IBEC also focused on strengthening school support committees (SSCs). IBEC provided a training workshop to 156 SSCs and 12 CEFACs in Kampong Cham and Kratie provinces. The training workshop took place at district level and brought 388 participants from among school administrators and community representatives who sit on the various committees. Main topics for discussion during the workshop included the introduction of IBEC, CFS policy, and roles and responsibilities of SSCs in the operation of schools, such as identification of vulnerable students

for special support and participation in school improvement planning.

In Year 1, 209 schools completed school improvement plans. The development of school improvement plans is a key activity in IBEC and promotes stakeholder control of the planning process as well as needs-based assessments of the local context. This approach is used for both primary and secondary schools and includes the use of activity menus, training modules, and a Provincial Working Group review and approval process to ensure engagement by local authorities.

Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

This component is tasked with developing and implementing a new life skills curriculum that is both consistent with MoEYS policy and educationally relevant to target populations. During the first year of the project, IBEC achieved several milestones regarding the preparation of a comprehensive life skills curriculum for lower secondary schools. The project succeeded in completing the design of a conceptual Life Skills Framework and developing Implementation Guidelines and a Teacher Training Manual in preparation for the pilot in lower secondary schools in the 2010-2011 academic year.

Besides the preparations at central level for an integrated approach to life skills programming, a number of preliminary life skills activities were implemented at school level so that currently targeted schools can build up some basic experience in life skills implementation. Students in IBEC schools had opportunities to learn different life skills throughout the year, which were demonstrated during such activities as Market Simulations. These exciting student events were conducted in several schools on June 1, to celebrate International Children's Day.

The Component also provided support to teachers in their regular

classroom instruction to foster child-centered learning and in some cases, provided intensive technical support in selected subjects such as Chemistry, Physics, and ICT.

A second important task for the component is to provide teacher education to those implementing the life skills curriculum in addition to more generalized pedagogical support that fosters child friendly learning environments. During Year 1, IBEC conducted numerous activities to support teachers at different levels with implementation of quality enhancing interventions. Since the start of the project, a large number of teachers have received training in Child Friendly School concepts at both primary and secondary school level. A total of 421 primary school teachers receiving training in Child Friendly School teaching and learning methodologies in order to promote retention in primary schools and transition to lower secondary school. In addition, 354 secondary school teachers were trained during the year in workshops on child friendly school programming and life skills.

To follow up on these initial training workshops, reflection sessions were conducted to give teachers an opportunity to share their



experiences in implementing these new approaches. The technical team also prepared teacher performance assessments, which were conducted in July 2010 at the end of the school year to measure progress and training needs for next year.

For the teachers in lower secondary schools, IBEC organized teacher orientations on Subject Classrooms and the corresponding provision of educational materials. The establishment of Subject Classrooms is one of the important features of Child Friendly Secondary Schools, because they facilitate easy access to learning materials for students during the lesson. Another important step towards quality

enhancement of classes in secondary schools was the establishment of eight IT labs and three science labs as well as an orientation for teachers how to optimally utilize these new facilities. IBEC acknowledges the need for a strong support network for teachers to guide them in the implementation of the various interventions, as the project introduces many new approaches and activities. In response to this need, Technical Support Groups (TSGs) were established in both primary and lower secondary schools as a mechanism to provide ongoing technical support to teachers.