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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 primary and secondary level 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 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 the American Institutes for Research (AIR).

Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) Project

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IBEC Project Begins Year 2 with Important Expansion in Siem Reap

The quarter from October to December 2010 marked the start of Year 2 implementation for the IBEC project and the start of the new school year in Cambodia. Building off of a very successful first year, IBEC began the quarter with an important expansion of project activities in Siem Reap province. IBEC commenced support to 52 primary schools in Siem Reap, which had earlier only received support for secondary schools. In addition, 11 more primary schools were added in Kampong Cham, and three in Kratie, bringing the total number of project schools to 303 (202 primary and 101 secondary). Finalization of new primary school selection was completed in close collaboration with Provincial Working Groups in each province. Selected schools demonstrate a mix of important demographic characteristics, and include urban, rural, and remote schools.

Coinciding with the increase in number of IBEC supported schools, the number of Cambodian children benefitting from project activities has also increased. IBEC's monitoring and evaluation team compiled student numbers reported by all schools for the new academic year.

Total enrolment in target schools now stands at 135,495 students or an increase of 43% over Year 1.

These students are benefitting from school improvement activities supported by \$93,981 in grant aid (exclusive of scholarships) provided to IBEC primary schools for the 2010-2011 academic year, and \$162,849 awarded in grant aid to

target secondary schools for implementing school improvement plans. At primary level, this funding is supporting 49 types of activities across the six Child Friendly School dimensions. At secondary level, target schools requested support for 75 different kinds of activities based on their problem analysis and current needs.



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

IBEC capacity building activities during the quarter focused on schools, local partners, Beacon Schools, and Commune EFA Committees (CEFACs), which are responsible for working with schools to promote access to education.

IBEC aims to better empower CEFACs with respect to the role they play, or can play, in the local education sector. CEFAC committees were established in 2003, but in many cases, they are not yet fully operational. Roles and responsibilities are sometimes not clear and may overlap with other local bodies (e.g., School Support Committees). IBEC works to support the CEFAC role in connection with Commune Councils' operating mechanisms, empowering both bodies, strengthening their management capacities and supporting their collaboration. Empowerment activities focus on technical education knowledge improvement, followed by technical skills development in order to make CEFACs more effective in their role within the Commune Council Structure.

During the quarter, 12 new CEFACs were identified for assistance, joining 12 earlier selected. In December 2010, five of these committees received their first orientation training on the role of CEFACs and key Ministry policies to implement. After a review of earlier training sessions, IBEC personnel have also started revising training module contents that will be used for future training of CEFACs. The revision process started in December and will be completed next quarter.

To make capacity-building work possible in this area, component personnel tried to encourage District Governors to issue the official nomination letter for CEFAC members. With such a letter in place, the project can work more effectively with these Committees. The response from District Governors has so far been extremely positive and of a total of 31 Districts, 12 have already issued nomination letters.

Educational Outreach through Radio

With the start of the new school year, IBEC partner Equal Access began the process of producing new life skills radio programming with a review of feedback from the radio show's audience, particularly listening groups who had tuned into earlier broadcasts. A new set of 10 life skills topics were discussed and approved, and the first radio program addressing these topics was broadcast on November 18, 2010, in Kampong Cham, followed by two repeat broadcasts of the program. This feedback loop can help strengthen the appeal of the *We Can Do It* life skills radio program among its target audience of lower secondary school students. Based on positive comments from audience members the show's hosts, Sothea and Phirom, will continue hosting the show into Year 2. The general format of the program also received high marks and continues this year.

Ten more listening and dialogue groups were formed this quarter, and there are now 30 listening clubs conducting regular meetings every month. During the quarter, the listening and dialogue groups conducted 32 meetings with 781 attendances. An average of 24 students attended each meeting, a 33-percent increase from the past quarter. The increase is due in part because parents and other community members, not only the students themselves, were encouraged to participate in the listening and dialogue group meetings.

The listening clubs are only one way that audiences interact with the *We Can Do It* radio program. General audience members can send their feedback to program producers through letters and SMS messages. From October to December 2010, Equal Access received 455 letters and 267 SMS messages.

The feedback received from listeners indicates that they find the radio programs to be important and relevant to their lives. Respondents cited topics such as goal setting, body changes, money management, and the importance of studying foreign language, as significant to them. Real Lihour, a listening and dialogue group facilitator from Hun Sen Kor High School, wrote, "I felt that the episode about the importance of studying foreign languages was very good and it was important to me because it encouraged me to become more committed in my study of languages." He continued, "There are more and more people joining my listening group," an indicator of the growing popularity and importance of the listening group in his school.



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Component 2: More Equitable School Access

Scholarships & Stakeholder-Driven Discretionary School Grants

The start of the school year and the new year of IBEC implementation made for a very busy quarter, as IBEC distributed scholarships for the 2010-2011 school year and all 303 target schools completed their school improvement planning.

IBEC stakeholders awarded scholarship support to 3,947 vulnerable children at primary school level (60% girls and 9% minorities) and 1,321 poor students at secondary level (72% girls and 7% minorities).

The number of secondary school scholarships represents a 108% increase over the 635 scholarships provided last year. The project also awarded scholarships to 115 successful Provincial Teacher Training College (PTTC) candidates recruited from remote, high priority communes to meet teacher

shortages. The total number of PTTC candidates supported this year includes 115 new Year 1 students plus 72 Year 2 students. Scholarship support consists of \$20/month over a period of 9 months. Since start-up, the project has supported 256 PTTC students, 69 of whom were recently posted to schools in the new school year.

In conjunction with the start of the school year, school improvement plans were completed for 61 clusters comprising 202 target primary schools as well as 101 secondary schools. **The approval of school improvement plans was done in very close cooperation with Provincial Working Groups, and led to a total grant award of \$256,831 for the 303 target schools identified.**

New schools received an extended training in principles of planning using Logical Framework Approach principles that include the identification of problems, objectives, key activities, and resource requirements as well as external factors that may affect the plan's implementation.

At the primary level, the most commonly implemented activities included support for School Support Committees, School Mapping, First Aid Kits, and support for Children's Councils. At the secondary level, the most commonly cited activities included support for Student Councils, Leadership Training for School Directors, Library Development, and Girls' Counselors.



Success Story

Hun Sen OrRaing O high school is one of the larger high schools in Kampong Cham Province with about 1,639 students (639 girls) and 58 teachers working in this school. Most of the school's buildings were built in a different era, well before the civil war in 1970, and are old and dilapidated. As enrolments at secondary school level have swelled in recent years, the school was forced to rely on many of these dilapidated buildings. Pointing to the old building, the school director said, "It is not safe for students to study in that building and we could not set up a good learning environment because we are lacking classrooms, even though we try to use all the available resources."

In 2009, IBEC selected Oriang O High School as a new target school. The school showed good progress in its first year and was subsequently upgraded to Tier 1 status in 2010. As the school started its school improvement planning process, it was obvious that this school had a building momentum of enthusiasm

about what its potential as a school might be.

With funding support from USAID, the project agreed to make significant investments in infrastructure upgrading, including solar powered computers, a science lab, refurbished library, and life skills activity room.

The school reciprocated with a considerable contribution in financial resources (\$1,300) and enthusiastic teachers interested in staffing the computer lab. It was an example of 'enthusiasm reinforcing enthusiasm.' The school has succeeded in repairing two buildings with project and community support, thereby adding eight desperately needed classrooms and much improved learning facilities. The school has also moved forward with managing other investments with the water system installed by the project including flourishing gardens and a fountain donated by a local benefactor. The story at Oriang O High School is demonstrable evidence of the power of IBEC's approach of insisting on stakeholder-led development and bottom-up programming.



Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

A major highlight for IBEC this quarter was the delivery of the project's first School Management and Leadership Training Workshop (SMLTC). This is a key training process that underpins the project's hopes to leave school managers with the skills needed to manage the investments made by USAID in the education sector after the conclusion of the project. Using a team of 32 core trainers recruited from local government, IBEC trained 521 school administrators, including school directors, secretaries, and librarians from Lower Secondary and Primary Schools across the three provinces.

The contents of the workshop borrowed heavily from the good work done by the Cambodia Education Sector Support Program (CESSP), particularly with respect to leadership principles such as visioning exercises, definitions of leadership, and the idea of visible presence. The workshop also took in principles of management such as planning, scheduling, and

organizational skills. This synergy with CESSP helps to build on the lessons and good work of the past and maintain continuity.

The SMLTC workshop for school administrators concluded with a set of assignments and tasks for participants to complete during the interim period until the next workshop in February 2011. Participants were given freedom to choose one core task. The core tasks included such things as the development of a school vision, practicing visibility, improved communication with teachers, being a chief of learners in the school, enhanced parent and community engagement, basic analysis of data, and development of a school improvement plan.

Over the period starting from November to December 2010, monitoring teams visited 430 school administrators (or about 82% of the school directors and deputy directors who participated in Workshop 1). Results from the

monitoring indicated that, in general, the school administrators who participated in the leadership and management training demonstrated better performance in comparison to their baseline assessments. Through group discussions with teachers, students, and community representatives, monitoring teams learned that school administrators appear to be more visible and that their relationship with teachers, students, and parents and communities improved.



Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

Important first steps for implementation of the Local Life Skills pilot program took place this quarter, building on preparatory work completed during the year. The summer holiday had been used to prepare training materials, provide orientations to all selected secondary schools who will participate in the pilot and to ensure life skills activities have been incorporated in the individual School Improvement Plans. In September, an important review process took place to reflect on the developed implementation manuals since feedback and critical observations of the technical teams indicated that the content and complexity was too ambitious for this first phase of introductory Life Skills Programming. Therefore, a special working group was formed with staff from IBEC and the relevant technical departments from the Ministry to review and revise the existing materials to make them more user-friendly.

To avoid delay in the tight implementation plan, the IBEC team acted efficiently in planning another round of orientations on the fundamental changes for key stakeholders and trainers in October so that the training of school staff in the pilot schools could still begin in the first quarter of this academic year. This was critical because it enabled schools to make a start with implementation of a number of life skills activities in their schools as planned in their school improvement plans without much delay. In all, IBEC trained 638 school personnel in life skills implementation, including 318 lower secondary school teachers, 207 primary school teachers, and 99 school directors. This will support 492 discrete life skills activities that will occur across 172 schools (including 99 primary schools and 73 secondary schools).

Other important IBEC project activities in support of improved educational relevance also occurred this quarter. Teacher education interventions focused mainly on the teachers in the new schools at both primary and secondary level. In all, the project trained 154 teachers at primary level and 446 teachers at secondary school level for a grand total of 600 trained teachers. These teachers received thorough introductions on CFS concepts and the Ministry's policy guidelines in this area. Methodologies such as cooperative learning were also introduced to encourage teachers to use different teaching strategies to enhance students' learning. These workshops provide an essential basis for further professional development support in the next quarters. For secondary schools that are new to the project, the concept of subject classrooms was introduced as an effective way to enhance the learning environment.

IBEC's IT team focused this quarter on negotiating school selection for new computer labs with the PWGs (using standardized criteria), placing procurement orders for equipment, and actually beginning lab installation in five schools towards the end of the quarter. IBEC plans to support a total of seven new labs this year. The project is also expanding the size of its labs from 13 to 15-19 workstations as per a request from MoEYS. This tactical change in lab establishment reflects a decline in unit costs negotiated with the supplier as well as the availability of cheap electricity in two schools so that funds for solar power could be diverted into larger labs. Total coverage by USAID funding is expected to reach 26 labs this year with access by 18,227 students.