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PROJECT NEWSLETTER

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

- 129,373 children supported as of Year 3 beginning
- Total scholarship recipients during Year 3: 4,171 primary, 1,934 secondary, 360 tertiary institution students.
- School discretionary grants approved total \$290,850

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 Kamuchean 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 Year 3 Begins with a Productive Quarter

Life Skills advocacy and outreach receive major focus during the quarter

1 October, 2011 marked the beginning of IBEC's Year 3 of programming, coinciding with the start of the new school year. The project was considerably ahead of the curve this past quarter as a result of all school planning having been completed at the end of the last academic year to save time. IBEC personnel from the four Components reported that 92% of the 233 activities to be implemented during the quarter were completed or in progress. With important tasks done more quickly, IBEC personnel and government counterparts were able to focus more intensively on the implementation of the life skills education pilot, a flagship activity for IBEC. All preparations for the pilot were completed during the quarter including the development of an assessment framework, final printing and distribution of life skills materials (modules, posters, learning slides), and orientation workshops for government counterparts.

IBEC continued life skills advocacy and outreach efforts to the government and local NGO community using various channels of action. Early in the quarter, IBEC Deputy Chief of Party for Life Skills, Sok Eng, was invited by South East Asia Radio to join a live talk show, to disseminate information to stakeholders about the life skills policy of the government, the guidelines and implementation framework for local life skills programming (LLSP) in Cambodia, and the challenges faced by practitioners. During the talk show, there were

many calls from listeners to get clarifications about the policy and how USAID-IBEC is helping the Ministry to implement the policy. Apart from IBEC delegates, speakers at the radio show also included NGO Education Partnership (NEP) representatives.



On 14 November, 2011, IBEC was invited to share information on life skills with all related government counterparts at an important congregation at the Teacher Training Subsector Working Group within the MoEYS. IBEC Chief of Party, Kurt Bredenberg, and Deputy Chief of Party for Life Skills, Sok Eng, conducted a presentation on IBEC's Life Skills Pilot which began implementation in November 2012. The presentation covered the background for the pilot, results of the preliminary pilot last year, and how the current pilot would be implemented in Year 3. This meeting was chaired by H.E Nath Bunreoun, and was attended by about 40 participants from the various Ministry Departments (including the Curriculum Development Department) as well as various NGO representatives. It was heartening to

see that the Ministry was once again very supportive of this initiative. H.E. Nath Bunreoun asked the Director General of Education to issue clear guidelines to Provincial Offices of Education about the number of hours devoted to life skills education each week, emphasizing that this allocation of hours was obligatory. H.E. Nath Bunreoun also asked IBEC to report key challenges as well as successes related to life skills implementation in the next education congress in March 2012.

IBEC also organized other courtesy workshops at the request of the Teacher Training Department. IBEC hosted a number of school visits for interested development partners such as the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) and UNICEF, with the hope that they will promote best practices developed under the project.

One of the major changes in the policy governing life skills education has been to make such instruction at secondary school level mandatory under new guidelines to be disseminated by the Department of Curriculum Development. Under the previous policy, life skills education was optional and depended on the availability of local community teachers to teach specific life skills courses. The school system will now be moving away from this approach to life skills education. This change in policy has been timely for the implementation of the IBEC Life Skills pilot.

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

With the start of Year 3, IBEC initiated a new round of capacity building for both local partners and the government. IBEC's four local partners completed the process of setting a new set of performance benchmarks and training schedule, respectively. Two partners, KAPE and BSDA, moved closer to accreditation by CCC, with KAPE expecting its certification as early as the beginning of the next quarter. IBEC organized extensive capacity building workshops to equip partners for the RCA audit as well as to improve compliance with USAID procurement guidelines.

At the national level, IBEC worked closely with the MoEYS during a transition in leadership at the Consultative Group (CG), the national committee that oversees the project. New members were inducted into the CG, including a representative from the ICT office. In a positive move forward, the CG officially agreed to the participation of three departments in the Life Skills Education Pilot including the Department of Curriculum

Development (DCD), the Vocational Orientation Department (VOD), and the Secondary Education Department (SED).

At provincial level, Provincial Working Groups met in each province to review and approve all school improvement plans, comprising several hundred thousand dollars in grant assistance, as well as to advise IBEC on the selection of new schools that are to receive ICT labs, science labs, new water systems and renovated libraries. This quarter, IBEC personnel were able to complete a second round of training for 6 new Commune EFA Committees (CEFACs), bodies designed to support and sustain educational development activities at the IBEC target schools through the provision of matching grants. IBEC conducted a trial in two communes within Kratie and Siem Reap for the implementation of matching grants, wherein nearly 30% of the total school grant funds provided were from funds matched by local resources. The trial's success will help the project in designing

better implementation protocols for next year when many schools from development Cycle I will begin their own support of matching grants from CEFACs.

IBEC partner Equal Access continued to deliver its life skills radio program, *We Can Do It*, and community engagement activities. Key activities completed in the past quarter include four episodes of radio program production and broadcasting, the production and distribution of two interactive comic books, a variety of student reporter activities, and monitoring listening and dialogue group meetings activities. EA has prepared its work plan for the next quarter, January – March 2012, which will be the last quarter of implementation under EA. It should be noted that EA will be phasing out its presence in Cambodia and its operation will be localized. A successor local NGO called *Media One* will continue working with the project, pending approval from USAID.

Educational Outreach through Radio and Other Media

Equal Access Cambodia broadcasts the *We Can Do It* radio program on the same two Kampong Cham provincial radio stations that have been used since the program first aired in 2009. Each episode airs twice on each station on a weekly basis, and the broadcast times are staggered so that the show can be heard during school hours or during after school hours, depending on the preferences of the students and their teachers. In October, EA began the process of producing new life skills radio programming. The new programs were created after a thorough review of feedback from listeners, particularly the feedback received from listening groups who had tuned into earlier broadcasts. Equal Access also motivated the student reports by holding another student reporter contest. The objective of the contest was to see which reporter could produce the best audio monologue. Equal Access producers sent their comments and encouragement to the student reporters, encouraging high levels of participation in the activity.



Equal Access made progress on the fifth comic book and board game, part of the series of print materials that are designed to be both educational and

entertaining being produced and distributed since 2010. The book was completed and in the process of being published, whereas the board game was in the final design phase at the end of the quarter. Each of the comic books covered a topic explored in the *We Can Do It* youth radio program, focusing on key messages from the episodes. The comic books also came with interactive exercises, which are designed to engage, entertain and educate the young students. In addition to the live broadcasts, Equal Access distributed CDs of every radio program to twenty schools within KAPE's area of coverage in Kampong Cham Province. The CD copies will be part of a growing audio learning library in each school. The audio exercise is meant to encourage further learning and classroom activity related to the programs' themes. Hosts ask listeners to think critically about program topics and complete a short assignment that can be shared with their classmates, teachers, parents, and friends.

Positive Feedback from Beneficiaries



"Since I have become a student reporter, I have had more opportunities to meet new people and I have learned how to conduct good interviews and collect good information. I have realized that I have become more confident and more brave and so I have become a better student and more

knowledgeable about social issues. Before I was not good at studying, and as a result I was not really happy at school, but when I interviewed an outstanding student about his study tips, he shared important information. I have followed his advice and my scores have increased as a result!"

Sopheak, Grade 10

"I observed that my friends who acted as student reporters had increased their knowledge, such as learning how to conduct an interview and use sound recorders, and how to communicate with other people. I want to become a reporter in the future; that is the reason why I decided to work as a student reporter at my school."

Muoy Im, Grade 8



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IMPROVED BASIC EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA (IBEC) PROJECT

Component 2: More Equitable School Access

Scholarships

The first quarter of the academic year is always a very busy quarter for the Access Component and this year was no exception. During this time, IBEC focused on three main activities: continuing collaboration with schools and communities to organize school fairs in order to increase parental awareness about improvements in their local schools, school mapping activities to identify children not attending school, and the administration of scholarships at both primary and secondary school levels. Apart from the primary focus, IBEC also worked with the Teacher Training Department and the Provincial Working Groups (PWGs) to identify candidates from especially remote communes suffering from teacher shortages who will be recipients of IBEC scholarship support to attend Provincial Teacher Training Colleges. At the primary level, IBEC administered scholarships to 4,171 vulnerable children (57% girls, 5% minorities). At secondary school level, the project undertook a new intake of 766 high risk students in Grade 7, bringing the total including those earlier supported to 1,934 beneficiaries (69% girls, 3% minorities). A new batch of 120 PTTC candidates have been inducted into the scholarship program as well, with the project now supporting a total of 240 teachers in training.

Stakeholder-Driven Discretionary School Grants

A key activity this quarter was to review and approve all school improvement plans submitted by all 61 clusters and 98 secondary schools participating in the project. Schools are encouraged to identify matters of concern by themselves, and then formulate action plans by drawing from Activity Menus which were developed by the project in adherence to the six dimensions of the Child Friendly School Policy Framework of the MoEYS. There was considerable diversity in activities selected by participating schools demonstrating that the stakeholder-driven design of the project is gaining traction. Among cluster schools, a total of 53 different kinds of activities across the six CFS dimensions were chosen while secondary schools chose 64 discrete activities. In terms of discrete activities across the three provinces, local reports indicate that primary schools will be undertaking a total of 1,503 activities while secondary schools will be implementing 3,087 discrete activities. IBEC will provide \$290,850 in direct grant support to schools to implement these activities.



Learning Compassion: Child to Child tutoring in Kampong Cham

Witnessing Change: A Struggling Community and Its Teachers See a Light



Community teacher conducts class under a tree



A new school arises



Teacher handing out educational supplies received from USAID

Two neighboring remote villages located in the middle of a forest in Kratie Province consist of 187 households with 114 children. The children are unable to attend school for the simple reason that the state has not yet been able to provide the community with a public school. In November 2011, IBEC staff from World Education and KAPE made a visit to assess need in the area, to find that there was a community teacher undertaking lessons for a few children, without any training, textbooks or training materials. Given the incredible interest shown by this community to set up a school, IBEC decided to respond by committing its support. Members of this largely Phnom populated community expressed gratitude and relief to hear of IBEC's commitment, saying that USAID has been the only donor to express interest in helping their villages.

Early in the quarter, the school construction was completed and teaching currently assumed progress. Children are now provided with learning materials such as writing, slates, notebooks, pencils, pens, mobile blackboards and textbooks for all subjects. IBEC has drawn plans to provide water and sanitation facilities, wells and water filters. Seeing this remarkable transformation and the impressive local investment in education, the Head of the Commune Education For All Commission (CEFAC) promised to try to get the school registered with the Ministry of Education, so that they become eligible to apply for state teachers in the future.

Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

During this quarter, IBEC completed the third of four seminal workshops that are part of IBEC's School Management and Leadership Training Course. This course will lead to an eventual certification for those school administrators participating. The workshop was held at the beginning of the quarter, and was attended by a total of 536 school administrators. The workshop was delivered by 31 Ministry trainers recruited from across Provincial and District offices of Education, and focused on key topics including the concepts of 'instructional leadership,' creative risk-taking, and using 'vision' as a planning tool. This three-day workshop was followed by a reflection workshop with the Core Trainers, designed to identify the strengths and weaknesses in workshop delivery, in order to improve future training events. IBEC personnel then undertook a number of follow-up visits to schools to see how SMLTC participants were progressing on the completion of their task work, which is one of the key assessment criteria of the certification process for course participants. Core Trainers and project personnel visited 215 schools over the course of the quarter providing support to a total of 395 school administrators. However, IBEC interventions related to School Support Committees (SSCs) were delayed due to the incidence of flooding, a common phenomenon in this time of the year, at a large number of schools during this quarter. Similarly, Schools Helping Families activities were also delayed due to the need to await USAID approval for the procurement of a number of agricultural commodities for this activity. Despite delays, however, IBEC was able to identify 30 new vulnerable families with children who are to receive scholarship assistance via IBEC's school outreach program. The families will receive assistance from schools to utilize the same knowledge their children learn in their life skills education classes, particularly the practical livelihoods, so as to improve the family's income, mainly through agricultural activities such as chicken raising and vegetable cultivation.

Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

Access to Information Technology

The IT team completed the installation of four new IT labs this quarter, as part of the Year 3 plan to install a total of eight new IT labs (two of which will be co-funded by Oaktree Foundation). Five labs are to be placed in Kampong Cham, and the remaining three in Siem Reap. In continuing efforts to involve the Provincial Office of Education in the process, IBEC worked in tandem with Provincial Working Groups to determine the selection of schools to receive IT labs. Including labs built under earlier programming, USAID will have supported a total of 34 labs by the end of this year. As is practice, once labs were completed, the IT team provided training in computer use to regular subject classroom teachers, paying extra attention to the designated IT teachers. This year a total of 24 IT teachers have already been identified to receive training. IBEC has also revised a concept note on Technology Theme Schools to the Ministry. The proposed “theme schools” are to be developed as part of a public-private partnership with Microsoft Corporation. The Ministry is currently reviewing the proposal for compliance with the official Ministry ICT policy and has promised to provide a response on the matter soon.

Toward the tail end of the last quarter, IBEC personnel attended a regional seminar held in Hanoi, Vietnam, where the IBEC IT Manager made a presentation about the success of the IBEC’s sustainable IT lab set-up and design. It proved to be an exciting opportunity to garner international exposure for IBEC’s successful work in IT access in Cambodia.



New lab installation in Kampong Cham. The project has designed new tables to ensure more resistance to flooding especially in schools in areas prone to it.

Teacher Education

This quarter, IBEC carried out a large number of teacher training workshops on numerous topics ranging from Child Friendly Schools, Subject Clubs, Hands-on Science, and Teacher Mentoring. New teachers in Siem Reap Province attended two foundational workshops on Child Friendly Schools, one to primary school teachers (93 total/ 54 female), and the other to secondary school teachers (71 total/ 42 female). Previously trained CFS teachers in Kampong Cham and Kratie are set to receive a refresher course in the coming quarters. The purpose of the training was to upgrade teacher capacity in principles appropriate to Child Friendly Secondary Schools. Specific training content focused on (i) subject classroom set up and management (ii) questioning skills (iii) development learning games (iv) how to enrich classroom environments (v) developing reading and writing skills (vi) student assessment (vii) teaching reflection and (viii) self assessment. The

training workshops used the *Effective Teaching & Learning Manual* developed by MoEYS. IBEC staff, along with their Ministry counterparts, carried out follow-up visits to numerous schools to provide additional technical support and distribute educational materials.

The Component also completed training an additional 51 teachers (20 female) in setting up Subject Clubs to help students develop special interests such as History, Creative Writing and Science. The 93 clubs across 53 schools are student-led but receive oversight from the teacher. IBEC also completed a four-day workshop about Hands-on Science for 37 teachers using a resource book developed by the project last year designed to provide pedagogical training to science teachers in schools with new science labs, especially with regards to moving from theory to actual science practice. Severe teacher shortages continued to

be addressed, with IBEC staff recruiting and training 63 new Community Teachers who will assume roles in the most affected schools and areas. In terms of using networks effectively, IBEC has just entered into a partnership with the organization See *Beyond Borders*, which will work with the project to promote numeracy skills among primary school teachers as well as mentoring behavior in Technical Support Groups. A baseline test was administered to several schools in order to monitor the changes in numeracy skills that result from the math packs and mentoring support provided by SBB.



Effective Learning Taking Root: A Child Friendly Secondary School (CFSS) teacher in Kratie monitors the group work in her classroom.

Life Skills Framework

The key focus of the Life Skills team this quarter was the implementation of the life skills pilot at the secondary school level. All activities for Year 3 got under way during the quarter, including the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that lays out the approach and the fourteen instruments to be used in data collection. This framework will be implemented in collaboration with representatives from each of the three key departments working in collaboration with the project, namely, the Department of Curriculum Development, (DCD), the Secondary Education Department (SED) and the Vocational Orientation Department. IBEC distributed thousands of life skills manuals, posters, and learning slides to target schools at the beginning of the quarter. In all, IBEC oversaw the distribution of 73,867 curricular items to target schools. The project reported significant activity across all three target provinces in terms of the number of discrete life skills activities occurring in secondary schools. Across 96 participating schools, there were 784 instances of life skills activity at the secondary level, and 148 instances at the primary. Life skills activity at the schools are incorporated in to the learning process across multiple domains including (i) socially relevant themes; (ii) business and economic studies; and (iii) practical livelihoods. IBEC staff reported that some life skills topics were very popular among schools with 66% selecting topics such as ‘Drug Abuse Prevention,’ 53% selecting ‘Money Management Skills, and 55% selecting ‘Bio-gardens’. Most schools selected at least two topics and many selected considerably more than that. the former two were quite popular this quarter, in terms of total number of times engaged (about 36% and 39% of life skills implemented, respectively). As a way to strengthen the program, IBEC staff organized two-day workshops for 837 teachers (315 female) from across target schools. These refresher training sessions on life skills educations covered concepts such as ‘mind mapping,’ cooperative learning principles, community engagement, and content-specific discussion on certain life skills topics.