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**PROJECT NEWSLETTER**

**QUARTERLY STATS**

- 6,105 scholarship recipients
- 31,994 students receiving life skills instruction
- 79 newly trained classroom teachers at 8 new IT labs
- 70% of school discretionary grants budget has been utilized as of this quarter

**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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## Capacity Building Milestone Achieved

### Partner KAPE Receives CCC Accreditation

Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), a key local partner in IBEC, received its formal certification of accreditation from the CCC on 14 February 2012. KAPE now has the honor of being one of only 30 local NGOs in Cambodia to have been approved for accreditation by the Committee for Cooperation in Cambodia to date. KAPE successfully demonstrated compliance with all NGO Governance and Professional Practice (GPP) standards, a program within CCC's Voluntary Certification System which is designed to promote self regulation. The CCC is a highly esteemed membership organization for local and international NGOs in Cambodia that works towards strengthening the quality of civil society organizations working across Cambodia.

Following extensive capacity building activities conducted during 2010,

KAPE was set to begin the application process in the beginning of 2011. The CCC has a well-regarded accreditation process of great rigor. A three-step process for certification is used involving (i) document review and investigation; (ii) verification process; and (iii) external review and certification. KAPE completed the final stage of the accreditation process in September 2011 and was informed of its full accreditation by the CCC during the third week of February 2012.

As the largest local NGO working in the formal education sector, KAPE's recent accreditation projects considerably more local capacity into the sector. This contributes to the USAID Forward goals of enabling local NGOs to have the governance criteria in place to receive funding directly from USAID. This accreditation comes as a culmination of three years of capacity-building work with KAPE,



**A Proud Day:** KAPE managers and advisers pose for a picture, displaying the CCC-GPP Certificate of Accreditation.

making this a defining event for the IBEC Project.

A second partner agency, Buddhist Social Development Association (BSDA), has begun the process and hopes to receive its accreditation by the end of 2012.

## IBEC Project Reaches Halfway Point

The end of the 10th quarter signified the midpoint for the five-year IBEC project. Looking back, the project has achieved several of its most important implementation targets, including (i) the completion of the School Management and Leadership Training Course for all school managers; (ii) the publication of 30 life skills manuals and implementation of the pilot; (iii) three rounds of scholarship intakes; and (iv) completion of preparatory activities for commune councils to start taking a role in administration of school grants. The latter activity assumes greater importance as a 3-year development cycle for over 100 schools comes to a

close this year. Now that the project's mid-point has been reached, the project will begin to shift its focus towards consolidation, sustainability, and dissemination of the lessons learned over the last two and a half years. IBEC will be working with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to map out ways that the government can begin to incrementally roll out the life skills curriculum that was developed earlier. This process will accordingly begin with a mid-term Review Meeting planned in May 2012 and a number of national workshops planned for August and September.

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

As was noted above, several key capacity building milestones were achieved this quarter relating to the accreditation of civil society partners. In addition, the Vice President of World Education visited Cambodia early in the quarter and had several meetings with local development partners to review the progress made in capacity building support from World Ed and future directions in terms of the relationship between World Ed and its partners. Quarterly meetings were held with all local partners during the quarter to complete the benchmark identification process and set a schedule for monitoring the achievement of these capacity building goals during the remaining quarters of the year.

The Consultative Group completed its transition to a new Chairman (H.E. Sam Sereyath) and also expanded its membership with a new set of appointments. CG members have been actively involved in the life skills pilot evaluation and a full meeting of the CG occurred in March 2012. Meetings of the Provincial Working Groups, co-chaired by the POE Director or Vice Director occurred on a regular basis during the quarter. A key topic of discussion at these meetings included the transition to Commune Council matching grants next year as Cycle I schools reach the end of the 3-year development cycle this year. The Component also selected two communes (one in Kratie and another in Siem

Reap) to pilot a matching grant process in order to give the project a head start on gaining experience in transitioning to commune grants with matching support from the project. In order to better coach Commune EFA Committees to take on more responsibility for support to schools during Year 3 implementation, the Component also decided to expand the role of district and province-based project staff members in technical support. This process will allow IBEC to have greater visibility at commune level during implementation of matching grant activities and to respond more promptly when problems might arise.

### Midterm Spot Checks Implementation

As IBEC approached its midpoint, the project rolled out an extensive round of spot checks in the middle of March. From 12-15 March, IBEC fielded 13 teams to visit 74 primary and 131 secondary schools. The spot checks involve intensive monitoring visits to 205 primary schools and secondary schools to assess financial accountability and governance, as well as to assess the quality of activity implementation. It is also designed to give an overall view of project operations, identify problems for resolution, and to hold provincial teams accountable for their work. IBEC staff used standardized tools to conduct the survey, managing to tabulate all preliminary results by the end of the quarter. The midterm spot checks indicated that 15% of primary schools and 25% of secondary schools upgraded their status. Given the more intensive resource investments that occur at secondary school level, these findings at mid-year indicate that a good number of project schools are taking steps towards the right direction.

## Component 2: More Equitable School Access

### Stakeholder-Driven Discretionary School Grants

IBEC Field Offices reported that, of the allocated \$290,850 to discretionary grants for schools this year, they had disbursed total of \$180,547 (or 62%) in terms of approved advances. By the end of this quarter, IBEC statistics showed that 70% of the funds had been disbursed. Over 77% of disbursed funds were liquidated and put to use as planned at the primary school level, whereas secondary schools (where grants tend to be larger) had only liquidated about 60% of disbursed funds.

Discretionary school grants are funds that the schools program themselves as part of their annual planning, with the aim of addressing education needs specific to their own communities. Schools lacking sufficient teaching staff recruit community teachers to undertake lessons. There are currently 129 community teacher allocated across all target primary schools. In communities with significant minority populations, young students may have little knowledge of Khmer language and therefore have a difficult time in Khmer-medium public schools. There are now 18 bilingual classroom assistants (BCAs), across select primary schools, who act as liaisons between the classroom teacher and the children who have difficulties.

### Scholarships

The second scholarship distribution was conducted at the primary and secondary school levels, during this quarter, reaching a total of 6,105 students of vulnerable backgrounds. IBEC worked with 177 primary schools and 43 secondary schools to organize this assistance. It has been encouraging to find that drop out rates in primary schools have been negligible this quarter, whereas the secondary level has seen a rate of only 2% of beneficiaries, leaving secondary school for reasons such as employment, migration and marriage.

At the Provincial Teacher Training College where the project supports vulnerable students from communes with severe teacher shortages, there were no reported dropouts. The monthly stipends of \$20 awarded to each PTTC student were distributed on schedule. IBEC works closely with Provincial Offices of Education to interview and identify eligible scholarship candidates who are actually from the communes that have been designated by the Ministry as 'high priority' due to severe teacher shortages.

Grants are also used to support children's councils which operate in 95 secondary schools and 178 primary schools. An impressive 8,039 students serve on these councils leading such activities as library readership, life skills and outdoor gardens. IBEC assisted primary and secondary schools with histories of high dropout to set up girls' counseling networks, with a service population of over 14,000 girls. The networks include 1,530 peer counselors who provide immediate support to classmates who are absent for long periods and may be considering dropping out, and have been successful in encouraging 1,196 girls who appeared to have dropped out to return to school. Other activities supported by grants include child-to-child help networks, health referrals coordination for 16 physically challenged children with local service providers, and the completion of 12 model libraries. IBEC's construction team reported that they had nearly completed all planned infrastructure upgrades for the year including repairs to 60 classrooms, 24 libraries, seven science labs, and six IT labs as well as the construction of 85 new toilets, 67 water tanks, 68 water systems, and nine wells.

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

[www.ibec.worlded.org](http://www.ibec.worlded.org)

## Educational Outreach through Radio and Other Media



High Level of Student Engagement: Students in a Listening Dialogue Group Give Feedback

IBEC partner Equal Access Cambodia (EAC) continued to implement all of its planned activities, assisting IBEC to deliver information and news related to the project's interventions. EAC organizes the implementation of the life skills radio program known as *We Can Do It*, and community engagement activities. Some of the key activities completed this quarter include creating content for the radio program production and broadcasting, providing monitoring data for the Listening and Dialogue students clubs. At the beginning of the quarter, EAC 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 in to earlier broadcasts.

EAC has completed planning to localize its operation, and has completed handing over all activities to a new organization called Media One. Media One will receive a short-term contract from World Education next quarter, following approval from USAID, to continue monitoring and follow-up activities until the end of the school year.



Comic books: Thinking about Careers (I), Life skills made fun with Coco and Yoyo! (r)

### Outreach through Comic Books

As part of IBEC outreach activities, EAC has been producing a series of comic books, each of which cover a topic explored in the *We Can Do It* youth radio program, focusing on key messages from the episodes. The books include interactive exercises which are designed to engage, entertain and educate youth about the life skills that are discussed in the radio programs. This quarter, two comic books were completed, covering the topics of career planning and life skills. A total over 2000 copies have reached 101 schools across Kampong Cham, Siem Reap and Kratie.



Winner of Student Reporter Contest confidently expresses his thoughts about winning!

The third student reporter contest focused on the monologue technique. Students were asked to choose a topic and then work collaboratively to produce their own content. They produced monologues and conducted interviews with stakeholders, such as school directors, teachers, classmates and other students, and listening club members. The winner was a lower secondary student from Hun Sen Peus II High School.

## Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

A key event during the quarter was the completion of the fourth and final School Management and Leadership Training Course (SMLTC) workshop that took place in all provinces. The workshops were attended by school administrators from across the IBEC target schools, bringing focus to matters pertinent to the improvement of the management and oversight of the various investments made at their respective schools. The seminars included discussions on topics such as the importance of a "school vision," how to engage the local community, and practicing creative problem solving. The workshop held this quarter was attended by 342 school administrators. In order to maximize the sustainability of this capacity-building activity, the workshop was delivered by 31 Ministry trainers recruited from Provincial and District Offices of Education. The core trainers attended a three day Training of Trainers (ToT) meeting in Siem Reap Province in order to prepare for the main workshop. The ToT included a visit to some model schools in Siem Reap in order to better see management concepts in actual practice. Participation in all four workshops will lead to the eventual certification of participants, based on a review of their participation in the workshops and assigned task work that is to be completed when administrators return to their schools.



Core Trainers and DPOs work in small groups on a planning activity during the SMLTC Workshop 4 in Siem Reap.

IBEC continued work to build the capacity of School Support Committees to increase their involvement in education. The purpose of this outreach is to help SSCs better reflect on promoting educational access and quality in their schools. Staff in the provinces held reflection workshops with 284 SSCs in February, and collected performance data to assess the impact of the committees. SSCs comprise members of the local community who come together to support and assist in the planning of certain school activities, such as scholarship distribution and life skills instruction. IBEC also held an orientation workshop for SSCs on 'reading accountability' in an effort to support early grading reading themes, keeping in line with the recently disseminated USAID Education Strategy. 88 SSCs attended the workshop which discussed methods to increase parental involvement in reading support for children, monitoring of remedial classes, and helping schools to organize child-to-child support activities.

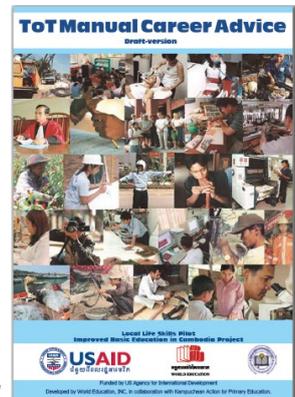
## Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

**Life Skills Framework** The life skills pilot entered its final stage of implementation during this quarter. In all, there are 97 secondary schools that have undertaken the implementation of life skills instruction. IBEC field offices reported that there are about 31,994 secondary school students (16,362 girls) who are participating in some kind of life skills education across the three target provinces. At the primary level, IBEC continued to orchestrate life skills activities as a step towards encouraging retention and subsequent transition to secondary school. Currently, there are about 8,449 primary school students participating in life skills classes, mainly at the Grade 5 and 6 levels where dropout levels tend to be the highest. A key intervention this quarter was the launch of a new career counseling life skills topic for students. The Vocational Orientation Department and IBEC have been in close cooperation to help schools establish a career counseling

system across 22 select schools, drawing links with some of the life skills topics such as the “World of Work.”

An assessment of the pilot that was conducted this quarter demonstrated extremely strong cooperation with MoEYS as well as high engagement from government counterparts appointed by the various departments. The assessment also focused on the aspects of the new life skills curricula, implementation framework, and teaching style. Given the fact that the Ministry is about to revise its life skills policy, IBEC’s life skills pilot assessment could not be more timely.

**Another First: Cambodia’s first school-based Career Counselor Manual. The VOD plans to revise the manual and print with a Ministry logo following approval.**



### CASE STUDY: Impressive Student Engagement in Life Skills



Ratana is 15 years old. She lives in a small village in Kampong Cham province, with her parents and three siblings. She is in Grade 7 and heads the Student Council. This organ in the school governance structure is very much involved in life skills education. With her council of 23 members, she participated in deciding which life skills topics were relevant at her school. They chose the topics: ‘Me and My Future,’ ‘Environmental Issues,’ ‘Drug Abuse Prevention,’ ‘The World of Work’ and ‘Safe Migration.’

Ratana’s understanding of life skills as a concept is very practical. She believes that with subjects such as Khmer language and Mathematics, she could pursue a future education to become a teacher. But she says, “If I learn how to work in a bio garden, I can grow more fruit and I can sell them at the market now!” Next year, Ratana wants to learn about ‘Safe Migration’ because she thinks it is important to stay informed about the legal matter involved in moving to another place of work.

Ratana was elected by her classmates to participate in the student council and explains that they have three meetings in a year with the whole student council, the school director and life skills teachers, while other meetings are with the special committees only. She is involved in the maintenance committee and the life skills committee. IBEC’s goal is to involve the student council in all parts of the education process. This could mean preparation of the lessons, maintenance of the material, and follow up on homework or outreach activities towards the community. Student tasks and responsibility create a level of commitment and ownership, which is meant to enhance the learning experience.



### Access to Information Technology



The 8 new IT labs slated for completion this year were successfully established in Kampong Cham and

Siem Reap Provinces. Two of these labs were constructed with the help of cost-share funds contributed by the Oaktree Foundation. The project has now set up a total of 148 work stations across 23 labs to date. Including those from the recently established labs, IBEC has trained a total of 79 teachers who are assigned to the IT labs by their respective schools. In addition to IT teachers, this quarter, the team trained 78 regular classroom teachers in the use of IT facilities to better help them make links between IT and the teaching-learning process in classrooms. So far, 351 classroom teachers have participated in various IT training programs.

IBEC continued efforts to promote the Project Method as a means to form links between classroom learning and Information Technology. As a result of these efforts, a large number of students are now doing research projects in their schools using this method and will present their research at a major fair that will be held in each province at the end of May 2012. IBEC also expanded the number of schools producing school newsletters to 12, a fourfold increase from last year’s number. The project team trained 22 teachers in using MS Publisher to develop newsletters as well as making layouts, journalistic principles, and links to civics involvement. Each school received a digital camera to facilitate efforts to include pictures in newsletter publications as well as an A3 color printer to print the newsletters.

### Teacher Education

Remote schools often suffer from the challenges of severe teacher shortages and the lack of assistance for special needs students. In response to these needs, IBEC has continued its capacity building efforts, providing refresher training to 113 community teachers who were recruited to fill the needs of schools across 3 provinces. The refresher training focused, in part, on finding problems and successes experienced by community teachers as well as upgrading new knowledge and skills for them on topics such as questioning skills, classroom management and learning game development. The IBEC team provided training to 129 new remedial teachers (35 females) across primary and secondary schools who began teaching in February. The remedial classes consist of student groupings of 20 students or less, of which 366 groups were started in February 2012. According to Field Office reports,

5,326 children with special learning needs (2,687 girls) are receiving this specialized support. IBEC staff also worked with schools to put in place special activities such as ‘reading corners’ and ‘child to child tutoring’ that will improve children’s reading and writing skills. Some of these plans for enhancing basic skills will be tested at the end of the academic year using the Ministry’s Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) that was developed for piloting the Grade 1 reading book. During the quarter, the IBEC team undertook a number of important surveys to assess the effectiveness of teacher training. In this respect, a survey of teachers at child-friendly primary and secondary schools found that 84% of teachers at the primary level and 83% at the secondary level, a majority of the teachers observed, performed at an acceptable standard.