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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
- Supported 192 primary schools and 100 secondary schools across 3 provinces

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 and MEDIA ONE.

Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) Project

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IBEC Completes Three Years of Implementation

Project Overview

IBEC is an educational development project focusing on the formal education sector that began in October 2009 and just completed its third year of operation in September 2012. The project is currently USAID's largest education project in Cambodia. IBEC is a five-year project with funding of \$10 million and a projected completion date in September 2014. The project has established itself in three provinces including Kampong Cham, Siem Reap, and Kratie. The project has negotiated a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport that was signed by the Minister in early 2010. The development hypothesis underlying IBEC's technical approach is that in order to achieve access to a relevant basic education of quality, one has to simultaneously address a myriad of demand and supply side constraints in a way that both empowers local stakeholders and builds ownership. Therefore, IBEC has taken a holistic approach that is flexible enough to respond to evolving needs identified by stakeholders at the local level as well as the national policy context. IBEC brings new elements to the educational development model started under earlier programming including a major focus on life skills education at the secondary school level, creating the institutional context to support life skills education. The project also focuses on a number of cross-cutting development themes including local partnerships, gender equity, poverty reduction, and public private partnerships. In terms of programming structure, IBEC activities are divided into four technical components, which in turn are managed through multiple subcomponents.

A Successful Third Year

The implementation work plan for Year 3 included a total of 346 activities to be undertaken during the year. IBEC successfully achieved a high rate of 97% completion across the four components. At the beginning of the project, there were 76 lower secondary schools as well as 133 primary schools that started to receive assistance from the project. By the end of Year 3 implementation, the project was working in 100 secondary schools and 192 primary schools. After two years of preparation the Life Skills Implementation Pilot took off, making it the lead activity undertaken during year 3. The project passed its midway point during the year, a milestone that gave the project an opportunity to perform a mid-term review inviting critical stakeholders to the discussion and review process. The event was a success and included a speech by H.E. Sam Sreyrath, conveying a strong endorsement of IBEC's work.



Promoting reading and writing: Teachers convene for an orientation on how to improve pedagogy in basic literacy



From Brown Fields to Green Gardens: Prek Prosop High School in Kratie transforms its school outdoors environment to make for a pleasant experience. Solar panels can be seen on the roof on the left hand



IT Integration Projects: Members of a school student newsletter club attend a hands-on training session at their IT Lab to learn the basics of design and layout software.

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Notable Events during Year 3

Site exchanges remain relevant and effective devices for promoting changes in school practice. During Year 3, six exchange visits were organized for a total of 102 (17 women) school administrators, teachers, and community representatives to learn new experiences from more advanced schools. This included a visit to a school in Thailand, which was co-funded by another donor. Two visits were organized to Lamplimat School in Buriram Province of Thailand, which has a highly advanced and innovative educational program that relies on Public-Private support. School leaders also participated in four exchange visits within Cambodia.



Opportunities for Advance Learning through International Exchange: IBEC participants tune in to an outdoor session about Problem-based Learning in Thailand

But the end of March 2012 IBEC had crossed the project's halfway mark. World Education and IBEC partner KAPE organized an important Review that was held on 11 May 2012 in Siem Reap Province, drawing in a total of about 100 participants, including government counterparts, IBEC staff members, local partners, and school teachers and students, and community members. The conference allowed all parties to reflect on the achievements and challenges of the last two and a half years, and discussed feedback for the next years of the project. The Review Meeting was chaired by H.E Sam Serey Rath, Director General, Directorate of General Education, and Ms. Tara Milani, USAID OPHE Deputy Director.



Attendees at the mid-term review were given an opportunity to view posters, materials and documents in an exhibit organized by the IBEC team. An integral achievement on display was samples of the 30 life skills instruction manuals.

Case Study: A Recommendation from a Life Skills Teacher



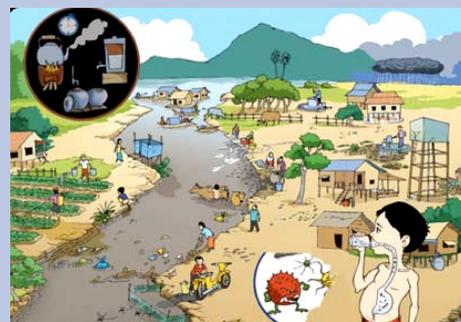
Mr. Hong uses a learning slide to engage the students more effectively.

Chhak High School is a school in the rural area of Oreang Ov District, Kampong Cham, which has worked with IBEC since the beginning of the project. Mr. Thuch Seng Hong is a teacher at Chhak who undertakes a Grade 7 life skills class pertaining to local environmental issues. Mr. Hong is a teacher who showed great potential during a monitoring program, excelling in pedagogical strategies. Mr. Hong recognizes the need for in-class participation during lessons, supplemented by practical experience where they can apply what they have learned. He says, "This is a good strategy because children are naturally very active and need to be given an opportunity to

be active. The class is designed in a way that requires students to practice sharing new ideas, working on case studies in groups of six, after which they present on their issue or topic." He further explained the importance of this subject, saying, "There is a need for students to learn about waste management. By acquiring related skills, they are able to transfer them to their homes. They are able to practice further with their family." Whereas the school does have a few dustbins across its small campus, Mr. Hong acknowledges that it is not always easy to change behavior, especially those habits that affect the environment. Humbly, he adds, "In fact, I have learned some new things myself!"

To support life skills teachers, IBEC has provided schools with an array of materials, such as posters, slides and manuals, which are meant to

supplement teaching methods. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate their use two hours every week. As is the case with most life skills teachers, Mr. Hong also teaches another subject, Khmer language. The didactical strategies he picks up through the life skills teacher training are certainly applicable to other subjects. Mr. Hong now espouses the idea that guiding students to apply theory and knowledge to daily situations increases the effectiveness and relevance of the subject matter. He believes that life skills education can result in positive changes for his students, in terms of a better future and career, but cautions, "It is important that, if we decide to put life skills in the state curriculum, to find an appropriate balance in teaching hours with the other integral subjects, such as Khmer and Math." IBEC is eager to document such feedback from the field, with an aim compile them in the final report that will be submitted to the Ministry.



Students at Chhak High School have learned about ecology, water cycle, waster and management through learning slides

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www.ibec.worlded.org

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

The IBEC Project involves a new innovation in USAID programming in the education sector, which is the establishment of a component dedicated exclusively to building the capacity of civil society organizations involved in education and local government. The component focuses on a number of local organizations including Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), Women and Children's Rights Development (WCRD), Economic Development Association (EDA), Buddhist Social Development Association (BSDA) and NGO Education Partnership (NEP). The project works closely with local government including Provincial Working Groups (PWGs) who help project staff oversee the project, as well as the Commune EFA Committees (CEFACs), which are responsible for working with schools to promote access to education. IBEC also works with counterparts at the national level who sit on the Consultative Group, which is an interdepartmental body charged with overseeing the project from a national perspective and ensuring liaison with senior management in the Ministry. The project has a mandate to promote sustainability of project inputs through building institutional capacity as well as the dissemination of best practices.

Year 3 was a highly intensive period of activities as a number of local partners, along with over a hundred schools, were scheduled to be phased out by the end of the year. The accreditation process for two of IBEC's partners initiated in Year 2 culminated with the successful accreditation by one partner (KAPE) this year, and the accreditation of BSDA projected for Year 4. Accreditation was provided through the NGO Good Practices Program operated by the Committee for Cooperation in Cambodia (CCC). With respect to capacity-building efforts in local commune councils, an assessment found that 86% of all councils that received support over the last three years from the project have achieved strong performance scores. This indicates that they are ready to administer the matching grants program, which was developed to be a bridge towards complete independence as the project phases out from Cycle 1 schools. IBEC aims to ensure a sustainable exit strategy that will rely on building the capacity of commune councils and Commune EFA Committees to be able to continue support to target schools. As a result, there are now 16 communes that have developed their own Commune Education Plan, which is an important step to seeking ministry funding for schools.

IBEC continued to promote key project messages this year through a wide range of media and forums, including three national seminars. Project activities and life skills advocacy discussions were disseminated through the broadcast of ten radio programs, developed with local partner Media One. The project also engaged with media such as audio guides and comic books distributed at target schools, as well as via the conventional channels of newsletters and website updates.

Community Outreach to Solve Teacher Shortages: IBEC staff meet with a family to encourage them to allow their son to apply for the PTTC Entrance Exam.



Every year many students apply to take this examination in order to join the teacher training centre. To help students from remote areas where there is a shortage of teachers, IBEC does outreach to these young people in remote areas to advocate for a possible career as a teacher, and provides free exam coaching in collaboration with PTTC professors. The Teacher Training Department has been very pleased with this support from IBEC and has asked other donors to please replicate it in other provinces.



KAPE Executive Director Mr. Sao Vanna at the CCC accreditation ceremony.

Component 2: More Equitable School Access

Component 2 focuses on a range of activities that promote sustained enrolment by all children, as well as transition from primary to secondary school. These activities include scholarships at all levels, establishing children's councils through which to mobilize children, infrastructure upgrades to enhance educational supply, water and sanitation facilities in schools, and establishing child-to-child help networks as an outreach effort to vulnerable groups such as minorities and the disabled. The Component has two subcomponents, a) *Scholarships*, for children in primary and secondary schools and for candidates studying at Provincial Teacher Training Colleges (who return to their communes of origin to address teacher shortages there), and b) *Discretionary stakeholder-driven grants*, which are funds largely programmed by stakeholders themselves in order to promote increased ownership of the intervention, e.g. schools create their own plans based on local needs assessments, choosing activities that best address those needs.

This year, scholarship administration started in record time thanks to the successful completion of school improvement planning ahead of the start of the school year. IBEC identified and supported 4,171 scholarship recipients at the primary level, 1,934 at the secondary school, and undertook an intake of 120 new locally recruited teachers who received scholarships to attend Provincial Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs). IBEC has been able to witness a high retention rate at schools through the scholarship program, with about 77% of the first group of secondary school scholars successfully graduating to Grade 9 this year.

The Component also oversaw significant investments in water and sanitation improvements and infrastructure that are now benefiting about 100,000 students and teachers across 216 schools. This includes the completion of 80 wells, 239 water tanks, 100 pumps, and 616 toilet blocks (423 repaired blocks and 193 new ones). IBEC also oversaw the implementation of a wide range of activities undertaken by schools themselves, involving a total of \$290,850 in discretionary grants provided by the project. Nearly 94% of the grants were disbursed and liquidated by schools through activities related to library development, remedial classes, life skills, counseling, school mapping, first aid kits. All activities are based on activity menus developed by IBEC which are designed to act as guides for school management personnel. Finally, IBEC continued to assist schools with identifying children in rural areas in need of health referrals for disabilities and serious health conditions. This year, IBEC helped to refer 86 children (24 girls) to health service providers in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Kampong Cham this year. The project advocates for free service from health service providers or pays with private funds provided by implementing partner and local NGO KAPE.

Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement



Making the Mark: A school director in Kratie Province makes a report during an SMLTC workshop on his completed task work.

A key capacity building initiative deemed essential to the success of the implementation of IBEC interventions, across all components, involved an increased competency of school managers. To this end, IBEC developed the School Management and Leadership Training Course (SMLTC), which was disseminated over four foundational workshops geared towards equipping school management personnel with the skills and

tools to implement programs at their schools effectively. The last two workshops were completed during Year 3, attended by 553 administrators in total (51 female). After satisfactory completion of course work and objective tasks that were assigned, SMLTC attendees will undergo an assessment in order to receive formal certification. The delivery of the workshops and follow-up work for task work were conducted by Core Trainers who were appointed by the Ministry and trained by IBEC. This arrangement is designed to encourage local capacity and ownership of the process by the government.

In addition to strengthening the capacity of school management staff, IBEC focused on strengthening School Support Committees (SSCs) through a process of standardized assessment and need-based training. A total of 509 participants from across 284 SSCs have benefited from project workshops. Nearly 88% of SSCs now meet the minimum standards for operational performance. These committees help to administer many access-focused

interventions in schools, including an outreach program to vulnerable families, reading proficiency accountability, and improved school governance. A reflection workshop was conducted to review the roles and responsibilities of SSCs, share experiences, best practices, and practical lessons learned. IBEC has urged both communities and schools to address the issue of underrepresentation of woman on SSCs (making up only 9%), and will follow up on the matter over the next two years.

IBEC successfully administered the Schools Helping Families activity aimed to amplify the impact of life skills courses taken in school on the income potential of families with vulnerable children currently receiving scholarship benefits from the project. In fact, continued attendance at school is one of the key conditions for participating in this program. Local partners BSDA, WCRD and EDA assisted with follow up visits to families in order to document the



Making School More Relevant to Daily Life: A mother and her daughter in Kang Meas District, Kampong Cham raise chickens as an extension of life skills programming.

degree to which these inputs have an impact on income. This year, 260 families received continued assistance from the project in the form of small grants for local food production assistance and income enhancement activities aligned with the life skills programming at school.

Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

Component 4 is divided into three subcomponents, life skills development, educational innovation for science and technology, and teacher education, each of which develops and implements relevant interventions aimed at achieving improved quality of basic education. An important reason why students leave school after completing primary school is that secondary education has little relevance for the rural or urban poor. IBEC has responded to this by placing a significant focus on the development of life skills activities, ensuring they remain consistent with MoEYS policy as well as educationally relevant to target populations. The Life Skills Implementation Pilot was formally launched and the 30 manuals completed in Year 2 were printed and disseminated at the beginning of the school year. A total of 124,151 life skills manuals, posters, and learning slides were distributed to participating schools, following an extensive training of teachers who had volunteered to teach the life skills courses chosen by students. Impacts seemed very promising with 77% of sampled students reporting that educational service provision at their school was more relevant. Other activities complementary to life skills education were also successfully implemented including the dissemination of key life skills messaging via various media (refer to section under component 1), and the development of a manual on career counseling. The implementation of career counseling was a major milestone that involved successful collaboration between three Ministry departments, 22 schools, and hundreds of teachers, students, and student council members, who all helped to implement the intervention.

IBEC completed the installation of all planned labs, including 8 IT labs and 7 science labs. In addition to 22 new IT teachers, the component team also trained 78 more regular classroom teachers in the use of IT facilities to better help them make links between IT and the teaching-learning process in

classrooms. IBEC also continued its efforts to promote the Project Method as a means to form links between classroom learning and Information Technology, resulting in the Project Work Fair, where students make research project presentation using IT tools, and in the production of school newsletters using design and layout tools following training in journalistic principles and links to civic involvement. As for the science labs, surveys of the use of the labs have indicated that the project appears to have made some progress in increasing satisfaction levels among students with regards to hands-on science lessons.

The teacher training subcomponent was designed to facilitate a series of teacher training workshops in the target areas and organize numerous activities that support teachers at different levels, to build their capacity to deliver quality instruction and interventions. During Year 3, teachers at both the primary and secondary levels received training in Life Skills education and Child Friendly School concepts. The project put significant emphasis on assessing the impact of these trainings by observing teachers conducting lessons and assessing student performance. Life Skills education workshops not only provided teachers with content-specific training, but also included content on community engagement and teaching techniques. The component also worked to improve the reading environment and children's reading performance at schools through implementing a variety of pilot interventions, such as establishing literacy learning corners, reading stories in libraries and classrooms, and providing remedial instruction opportunities for struggling students.



Teachers receive training and go on to facilitate learning! Students in Kampong Cham carry out a science experiment in their new science lab.