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**PROJECT
NEWSLETTER**

**IBEC AT A
GLANCE**

- M-Learning arrives at a State School-a Cambodia first!
- Nearly 40,000 Cambodia students now have access to IT facilities as a result of USAID.
- After a significant expansion, 11,479 children now receive school breakfast each morning through School Breakfast Program (SBP).

**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 and MEDIA ONE.

Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) Project

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IBEC Begins 4th Year

Consolidation and Sustainability

With the commencement of the 13th Quarter, IBEC officially began its 4th year of operations. The next two years of project implementation will be characterized by consolidation and renewed emphasis on sustainability. For the first time this quarter, Cycle I schools will no longer be receiving direct grant assistance from the project but rather all support will now be channeled through commune councils. Channeling funds in this way will hopefully instill habits of continuous institutional support for the formal education system. Other major changes occurring this year included the localization of project management with national staff fully taking over the positions of Chief of Party and financial oversight. In addition, the functions of two partner agencies were localized, thereby phasing out their assistance (Buddhist Social Development Association and Economic Development Association). At the same time, a new partner, Volunteers Serving Overseas (VSO), joined the project to assist in the implementation of English language instruction activities at primary and secondary school, which is part of an MoEYS initiative to increase the profile of English language learning in preparation for ASEAN integration in 2015.

School Meals Expand

This year, there has been a significant expansion in the number of children receiving take home rations (THR) and those participating in School Breakfast Program (SBP). There are now a total of 11,479 children (5,564 girls) who are receiving school breakfasts each morning while the number of children getting THR has increased to 3,613 (1,913 girls). Implementation of this activity continues to coordinate well with efforts by the Royal Cambodian Government to issue poverty cards to the most vulnerable families in a given commune. The poverty cards are an important and impartial means to address the needs of the poorest families in target communes.



Breakfast Time: Children in poor community sharing food as a part of the school breakfast program (above)

USAID Visit: USAID Officer participates in scholarship distribution at the beginning of the school year (bottom-left)

USAID (Phnom Penh/OPHE) Visit:

On 17-19 October, Mr. Heng Sieng, Phnom Penh/OPHE, visited Prek Prasab Upper Secondary School in Kratie Province and Tuol Kpos LSS, Kor USS, and Lvear USS in Kampong Cham Province. The visit was mainly to observe school activities since the start of the new school year but also partly to monitor project implementation. During the visit, USAID observers had the opportunity to interact directly with program beneficiaries and stakeholders in order to understand more clearly their needs and how these needs are being addressed by the project. While in Kampong Cham Province, visitors also had a chance to participate in a scholarship distribution at Tuol Kpos Lower Secondary School and Lvear USS.



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Component I: Local NGO and Government Capacity Building & Advocacy

Capacity Building Activities:

As capacity-building support for local partners began reaching a conclusion with the accreditation of KAPE last year and the imminent accreditation of BSDA, the Component has increasingly shifted its focus to working with communes. Capacity-building support during the quarter emphasized the administration of matching grants to Cycle I schools in order to instill institutional habits of support for formerly project-mediated activities. Matching grants are so far being provided by the project to 16 communes based on a 25% match from the communes (e.g., for each \$100 provided by the project, the communes will match \$25). The Component also continued to work with other government stakeholders including the Consultative Group, which met on 29 December 2012 for its regular quarterly meeting and Provincial Working Groups in the three provinces. Finally, the Component provided training to the managers and selected teachers in 25 Beacon Schools in designing brochures for their schools to highlight areas of strength where they can be a 'beacon' to other local schools. Participants were trained to develop brochure templates during the workshop, which they saved and took back to their own schools where they will continue the process.

Radio and Other Programming:

At the beginning of this reporting period, MEDIA One 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 and recommendation from CAG members. MEDIA One used the feedback to determine audience preferences and to make changes if the audience felt that particular styles, formats or characters in the program were not attractive or presented unclear information. Early in the quarter, a new set of six life skills radio program topics were discussed and recommended by the IBEC team, and the first radio program addressing these topics was broadcast on 16 December 2012 on a nationwide Bayon radio station, FM 95MHz, in Phnom Penh, followed by one repeat broadcast of the program weekly. This same sequence (a new program broadcast, followed by one week of re-run) was followed for all subsequent broadcasts.

Group leaders completing feedback forms on radio programming (right-top). A District Integration Workshop in Kratie (right-bottom).



Case Study: Good Trainers = Good Training

This may sound obvious, but with a life skills program as diverse as the IBEC life skills curriculum, it is important to select appropriate trainers for all 30 topics in the menu.

IBEC has experienced trainers for practical livelihoods topics such as rice growing, bio garden, and more. Experienced trainers are also available when training on Sewing, World of Work, Saving and Spending, and other Economical topics. During the last year however, the project has extended the cooperation with the Ministry of Education and GIZ-Access To Justice for Women project (GIZ-ATJW).

When developing the life skills manuals on Drugs Abuse, Alcoholism Prevention, Gender Issues, and Personal Understanding, a lot of the content has been taken from the *Young People's Toolkit*.



Some of the pictures on gender used to elicit discussion among participants

This manual, developed by GIZ and the Ministry of Women's affairs, proved to be a great resource when creating the lessons used for the manuals. During this process, MoWA/GIZ and World Education worked together in monitoring the life skills implementation and reviewing the manuals according to the feedback from teachers and students. During the last quarter, as part of the exit strategy of life skills, a new teacher training cycle has been created together with our partners. GIZ and MoWA have provided trainers for the four topics in which they were involved.

Ms. Solinda Lok, Advisor-Gender, explains 'GIZ and MoWA have been involved in training for three new provinces. In the first day we participated in general topics, such as gender equity in teaching and learning, the second and third day of the training, we gave training on the 4 specific manuals'.

One of the main pillars in IBEC's life skills program is to provide equal education for boys and girls. In rural areas of Cambodia, strong traditional perceptions on tasks and responsibilities regarding gender remain, and so teachers and students need to understand the importance of equal opportunities in education. Ms. Lok describes the session, 'After a brainstorm about the meaning of gender equity and the importance of it, we used a training in which photos from situations in lessons were used to show good and bad examples of gender equality. Teachers were very involved in this.'

Ms. Lok appreciates the cooperation between World Education and GIZ/MoWA, saying that 'the open attitude towards improvement of training and teaching material is very positive. We are happy to be involved.' MoWA/GIZ and World Education are planning to cooperate in follow up training during the coming months, because especially in the Social Relevant Topics, more theoretical knowledge is needed. According to the trainers involved, teachers are enthusiastic about the participatory methods used in the training. 'Many of the games and exercises in the manuals were practiced during the training, which made it a lot of fun and more effective.'

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

www.ibec.worlded.org

Component 2: More Equitable School Access

Scholarships

Scholarship administration started in record time this year, due to the ability of the project to complete school improvement planning before the beginning of the academic year. In all, 172 schools provided scholarships to 3,938 children (2,147 girls) of whom 1,317 were new beneficiaries just starting Grade 4. In year 4, there were no new intakes for Grade 7 scholarship students at secondary school. The project, therefore, supported only scholarship students from previous intakes in Grades 8 and 9. The total number of beneficiaries at secondary school level this year is 1,604 of whom 69% were girls and 3% were of minority extraction. Altogether, 43 secondary schools are providing scholarship support to their students. Scholarship packages included two uniforms, 15 writing books, five blue pens, two red pens, and support for bicycle repairs as well.



Scholarship distribution at a Kratie Secondary School

Based on the new MEP, no new intakes of PTTC students will be occurring from this time onwards. Since the start up of IBEC, two PTTC scholarship cohorts have graduated including 120 PTTC students in 2011 and another 120 in 2012.

Thus, the graduated number of scholarship recipients is now nearly enough to replace temporary community teachers in all three provinces. In October and November 2012, IBEC disbursed stipends to 120 second year students recruited last year (51 Kg Cham, 21 Kratie and 48 Siem Reap).

Stakeholder-driven Discretionary School Grants

With Year 3 completed, 125 primary schools and 20 secondary schools from Kampong Cham and Kratie were phased out from the project. This mainly means that they will no longer be receiving grant funds directly from the project from this point onwards. Considerable effort has gone into preparing schools for this moment. Cycle 1 schools now negotiate their grants with local government who can receive matching funds from the project. Cycle 2 schools continued to receive direct grant support from the project. There are 67 Cycle 2 primary schools and 110 secondary schools (including 30 schools in the three new provinces).

As the school year began, Component personnel made contact with all primary schools about their shortfalls in teaching staff and corresponding needs for Community Teachers. All sites reported a total of 50 Community Teachers who had been fielded to address continuing teacher shortages. Measures to ensure sustainability of this intervention have slowly been taking effect. In this respect, Community Teacher numbers have dropped from 204 at the beginning of the project to 50 or a decrease of 75%. The project has also continued to assist all schools to animate interventions designed to attract students to school including library support, girls' counseling, children's councils, and child-to-child help networks.



Serving the Underserved: Community Teachers and their students at a Temporary School

The Component also began the final round of installation of WASH facilities (e.g., toilets, wells, washing stations, etc) as well as upgrading infrastructure to facilitate the emplacement of computer labs and Child Friendly School Classrooms. During the quarter 15 toilets were either repaired or built. The Component also completed the renovations of rooms that will house two computer labs as well as 35 classrooms. One school reported that its roof was in serious disrepair representing a serious danger to the students, requiring immediate project action. The Component hopes to complete all infrastructure upgrading during the next quarter with WASH emplacement continuing until the 15th quarter.



Ensuring Children's Safety: The project repairs roof of a school in Siem Reap

Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

As Year 4 implementation began, Component 3 personnel began the process of consolidating the achievements of the last three years. The key achievement of these three years was the completion of the School Leadership & Management Training Course (SMLTC) for school administrators in target schools and districts. Activities during the 13th quarter focused on providing a catch-up training to those administrators who did not attend all SMLTC workshops due to personnel movements within the education system. In this respect, it should be noted that some 56 school directors were transferred to their schools only after the completion of SMLTC Workshops 1 and 2.

Province	School Administrators Receiving Materials for SMLTC Workshops 1 & 2					
	Men	%	Women	%	Total	%
Kg Cham	25	86	4	14	29	100
Kratie	1	33	2	67	3	100
Siem Reap	20	83	4	17	24	100
Total	46	82	10	18	56	100

In order to receive MoEYS-IBEC certification, course participants must have completed all four SMLTC workshops. After these individuals complete the catch-up course work and task work for SMLTC Workshops 1 and 2 (and associated task work), it should be possible to certify them along with other school administrators who have already successfully completed SMLTC workshops 1 to 4. Preparations for the SMLTC catch-up course were fully completed during the quarter. In addition, Component personnel also focused on capacity-building for commune council members and those in School Support Committees. These capacity-building activities focused particularly strongly on preparing for new elections for SSCs in all target schools in Year 5 (2013-14 academic year).

Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

Life Skills Education:

After a successful pilot during implementation in Years 2 and 3, IBEC is now promoting the introduction of life skills education on a broader scale. Since the beginning of the project, MoEYS has been involved in all phases of life skills education. After the life skills evaluation workshop in September 2012, MoEYS has expressed an interest in introducing the IBEC life skills education curriculum to other provinces as well. Together with VOD, DCD and the General Directorate of Education, it has been agreed that IBEC will assist MoEYS in expanding life skills education to three more provinces, namely Kampong Thom, Svay Rieng and Prey Veng. This expansion will be undertaken in a way that builds the capacity of MoEYS to incrementally expand life skills education, thereby contributing to a gradual exit strategy for the project as it winds down over the next two years. During the quarter, the Component Team successfully identified 30 schools (to stand as *demonstration sites*) in the three new provinces for expanded life skills education while revising manuals at Ministerial level in Phnom Penh (undertaken by the Textbook Review Committee in MoEYS) and continuing implementation of life skills in 45 primary schools and 96 secondary schools in the original provinces. Innovative methods of training utilizing video feedback sessions and case studies were used for refresher trainings in which 461 teachers from Kampong Cham, Kratie, and Siem Reap participated.



Revised Life Skills Manuals being reviewed by Ministry



M-learning comes to IBEC

IBEC also began working closely with a new project funded under the *All Children Reading* initiative. This project, known as *Total Reading Approach for Children (TRAC)*, will increase the sophistication and depth of IBEC's work on early grade reading and will also introduce *M-learning* to project schools. This collaboration with TRAC is highly strategic because it will further promote the new *USAID Education Strategy* focus on reading as well as support the focus on technology and social media under *USAID Forward* Activities.

M-Learning Arrives at a State School – Another First: IBEC Students learn how to use mobile learning devices (smartphones & tablets) in the library at a project school

Teacher Education:

Teacher education activities during the quarter focused primarily on the provision of refresher courses and reflection workshops, strengthening teacher mentoring activities by working with Technical Support Groups in each school and cluster, and the procurement of additional materials for Subject Classrooms in 20 Beacon Schools. During the course of the quarter, the Component provided reflection workshops to 101 primary school teachers and their mentors as well as 187 secondary school teachers and TSG members. In order to further strengthen the utilization of science labs, the project also provided a reflection meeting to 27 school directors about ways in which they can improve access to the science facilities provided by IBEC since start-up. Schools also began the implementation of Subject Clubs, as they do each year in order to provide more specialized opportunities for student learning in particular subject areas in which they might have a special interest. There are now 40 secondary schools implementing 93 Subject Club activities across multiple topical areas such as History, Science, and Creative Writing. Finally, the Component received its first report from VSO for the implementation of English Language curriculum development at primary and secondary school level. In this respect, VSO reported training 242 teachers and 56 POE/DOE staff using the English trainers from the PTTCs supported by VSO and Peace Corps.

IT Access:

This year, the IT section plans to establish two computer labs, completing all lab emplacements for the project. Nevertheless, the project will still be able to make its quota of 26 labs of planned labs has decreased from three to two in order to accommodate funding of a grant to VSO for English within a margin of 10% (i.e., only 25 labs will have been built by the end of this year). One new lab will be emplaced in Kampong Cham while another will be organized in Siem Reap Province.

The project estimates that nearly 40,000 Cambodian students will now have access to IT facilities as a result of USAID inputs.

