In reflection, Year 4 has proved another success as the project continued to demonstrate a very high standard with the achievement of 91% of its performance standards across all technical components.

With the beginning of the new school year in October, IBEC has now launched into its 5th and final year of implementation. Going forward, IBEC will be culminating 4 years of hard work into this final year to ensure the sustainability of all project outcomes.

In all, IBEC has identified over 25 exit strategies for different activities to ensure that as the project reaches a conclusion, as many activities as possible will continue beyond 2014.
IBEC has provided assistance to 5,542 vulnerable children in primary and secondary school (3,251 girls) as well as 120 locally recruited teachers at PTTC level who will return to their home communes to help address teacher shortages there.

The project noted several impressive results including an 85% completion rate at Grade 9 among vulnerable children receiving scholarship support as well as improvements in Gender Parity Index (GPI) for Enrolment in 74% of the secondary schools receiving scholarship support. This compares favorably with national rates in which the completion rate at Grade 9 is only 47%.

Although dropout levels at secondary school level remained stubbornly resistant to change, the project was able to report that dropout had dropped from baseline levels among 65% of supported primary schools. Similarly, schools reported that grade repetition had decreased from baseline in 59% of primary schools and 70% of secondary schools. These very positive bottom line changes in school efficiency are among the project’s most important achievements.

The project also oversaw significant investments in school infrastructure, especially for water and sanitation, including the:

- Construction of 237 new toilets
- Repair of 474 toilets (711 since start-up)
- Repair of 85 classrooms (832 since start-up)
- Construction of 108 new wash stations (240 since start-up).

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

Project personnel were able to achieve all of the performance standards relating to local NGO and government capacity building and advocacy for sustainability during the year. Key achievements included the accreditation of a second local partner, Buddhism for Social Development Action, by the Committee for Cooperation in Cambodia.

Also, 16 commune councils began supporting local schools with commune investment funds, as part of a matching fund approach. This was a major step forward in terms of creating institutional habits of support for local schools by local governments.

**Component 2 : More Equitable School Access**

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**Extending Access to WASH:** Students cool down after playtime with a wash station provided through an IBEC school grant in Kampong Cham province (left).
Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

Improving school governance is essential to improving the quality of education. In Cambodia, school directors are most often former teachers who have never had the opportunity to pursue further leadership or management training. This means that many Cambodian schools lack clear leadership, vision, and management.

Since 2010, IBEC has been working with school directors, local communities, and local government officers to improve the skills of school leaders through a School Management and Leadership Training course (SMLT). The training course focuses on working with school leaders to create a vision for their school with the participation of all stakeholders.

Mr. Nim Sothea was a participant and Core Trainer of the SMLT course. In his role as Deputy Director for the District Office of Education in Kampong Cham province, he works closely with the schools in his district. Through the support of the IBEC project, Sothea has enhanced his own capacity as a leader, and is now able to better support the school administrators he works with. At the SMLT course certificate awarding ceremony, Sothea expressed, “as a leader we need to have a vision, and from this a plan of action to achieve our vision.”

One of the most important things he learned in the course, aside from leadership training, was the importance of human rights, especially child rights. Sothea strongly feels that “children are the future of Cambodia, and [he is] committed through [his] work for [his] district to ensure their health and success.”

Alongside Sothea, 552 others successfully completed the SMLT course and now possess the capacity to implement a strong vision to lead their schools and improve upon the quality of education for Cambodia’s youth.

Component I: Improved Educational Relevance

Work Force Development through Life Skills Education:

Following the successful piloting of the life skills framework and manuals in Year 3, the project has focused on assisting the Ministry to rollout the framework in more schools on an incremental basis in Year 4. A key element of this strategy has been the identification of Demonstration Sites in new provinces (Kampong Thom, Svay Rieng, and Prey Veng), which can act as a catalyst for incremental expansion to surrounding schools in the future, using the Beacon School approach. A total of 30 Demonstration Sites were identified in these provinces at the beginning of Year 4 and have been implementing life skills curricula based on the pilot completed in Year 3, with modifications based on the lessons learned.

Important outcomes achieved by the Component during the year include the approval of 22 (out of 30) life skills manuals by the Ministry as well as positive attitudinal survey results among students in which 83% of those sampled indicated increased satisfaction with the learning environments since the introduction of life skills programming. At the same time, 65% of schools demonstrated more relevant education as measured by a standardized instrument designed for the purpose.
Component I: Improved Educational Relevance

Life skills such as frog raising (pictured below) greatly benefit children as they learn practical skills and knowledge that can be used both within the classroom and at home. Once harvested, these frogs will provide an avenue of sustainable funding for the school.

**Hopping into Life Skills:** Frogs raised through IBEC’s Life Skills will provide a sustainable income stream for schools once harvested (below).

Life skills such as frog raising (pictured below) greatly benefit children as they learn practical skills and knowledge that can be used both within the classroom and at home. Once harvested, these frogs will provide an avenue of sustainable funding for the school.

**Teacher Education:**
With a focus on teacher education issues, IBEC carried out various activities to support teachers and build their capacity to deliver quality instruction and interventions during Year 4. A total of 940 teachers (357 women) at secondary level received training in Life Skills education while another 645 primary school teachers received training in Child Friendly School concepts.

Furthermore, the project put significant emphasis on assessing the impact of these trainings by observing teachers conducting lessons and assessing student performance. In this respect, 80% of observed secondary school teachers demonstrated satisfactory performance in the instruction of life skills while 75% of students demonstrated adequate mastery of life skills concepts.

In terms of competence in using Child Friendly School learning principles, 89% of observed primary school teachers demonstrated satisfactory performance or better while 86% of secondary school teachers observed did so.

The project has also made excellent progress in terms of promoting improved reading environments in target schools through its close cooperation with the Total Reading Approach for Children Project (TRAC). Recent surveys reported that all sampled schools are implementing at least one activity channel to promote enhanced reading environments and that 87% are implementing three activity channels or more, leading to enhanced reading scores in over two-thirds of sampled schools.

**Educational Innovation for Science & Technology:**
The project was able to complete two out of the three planned ICT labs during the year and is on track to achieve the end-of-project goal of 25 or 26 constructed labs. These labs provide services to over 37,000 students, helping them to acquire basic computer literacy skills as well as understanding of how to use computers in their regular subjects. Lab surveys have indicated high levels of administration and management as well as excellent access by enrolled students. The introduction of ICT is a major transformation from the usual ‘talk and chalk’ method of science instruction seen in Cambodia before the implementation of the project.

Finally, project work fairs organized by the sub-component were well attended during the year and have become an event that generates great excitement and expectation among participating schools.

**37,000 students gain access to ICT:** Students learn to use a computer in a Thin Client ICT Lab (right).