A visit to two IBEC-supported schools (Peus II HS in Krouch Chma and the Demonstration School in Kampong Cham Town) on 16 June 2014 by H.E Dr. HANG CHOUN NARON, the new Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, was a key milestone event during this reporting period. The Minister and an entourage of national media outlets were accompanied by the US Embassy’s Charge d’Affaires and the Director of USAID.

Key Numbers

- There are still 688 students receiving scholarships at lower secondary school level.
- There are 285 girls’ counseling networks at secondary school level and 142 at primary school level.
- Girls’ counseling networks report that 47 girls who left school at secondary level and 85 girls at primary level returned to school as a result of the advocacy and support from these networks.
- Approximately 33,048 students received ICT education during 5 years of IBEC implementation.

A Milestone Event for IBEC: The new Minister of Education visits the IBEC-Support school with the Charge affaires of the US embassy and the USAID Mission Director.
**Press Release:** At the conclusion of a Ministerial visit by H.E. Hang Chuon Naron to an IBEC school on 16 June 2014, a press conference was organized in front of IBEC’s Demonstration School with several well-known TV channels and newspapers. In response to questions by reporters, the Minister expressed his enthusiasm for the achievements made at IBEC schools, saying all of these were part of the reform initiative that he is pushing forward and they validate its importance. The Minister also expressed his thanks to all development partners including USAID, Oaktree Foundation, World Education, KAPE, Flight Center, and Apple Corporation for their contribution to education in Cambodia. The reputation of IBEC’s programming is now in the national spotlight.

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

The component personnel continued to closely monitor the progress of matching grants provided to commune governments to forward on to schools. Approximately 98% of IBEC funds ($23,312) were reported completely disbursed during the quarter and all but seven communes had provided matching grant funds using their own resources. The remaining seven communes reported delays in receiving funds from the central government but made a commitment to disburse promised funds as soon as they arrived.

**Consultative Group Meeting:**

With intense planning for sustainability accelerating as the project reaches a conclusion at the end of the September 2014, the Consultative Group has increased the number of meetings with senior project staff to plan many events including a Ministerial visit to IBEC sites that also included the Charge d’Affaires from the US Embassy and the USAID Mission Director. These visits occurred successfully on 16 June with the visiting delegation expressing tremendous praise for the students at each school who led the visits. The students’ involvement and willingness to actively engage visitors demonstrated the confidence that the project has instilled in them. Subsequent meetings have also occurred with the CG to plan for a National Workshop on Educational Quality suggested by the Minister (after the school visits to IBEC sites). The workshop will be an excellent opportunity for IBEC to share its experience in promoting education quality with a large number of senior education officials from all provinces and departments who will be attending.
Component 2: More Equitable School Access

Student Council Assessment:

Field offices conducted an assessment of student councils in 35 primary schools and 43 secondary schools for a total of 78 schools. Schools were chosen randomly to construct the sample, which comprised approximately a quarter of all target schools. A standardized assessment tool developed by the project was used for the assessment. Overall, the assessment found that 76% of councils in primary schools and 81% of those in secondary schools scored ‘satisfactory’ or better. Among all schools, 73% demonstrated a score of satisfactory or better. In schools where councils were not functioning well, the problems generally stemmed from low interest from the school, inactivity, and poor understanding of the goals of having a council. While the project is very happy that about three-quarters of schools have functional councils, this information highlights remaining work to be done by Provincial Working Groups after project closure.

Bun Sopheaktra is a lower secondary school scholarship recipient now in Grade 9 at Toul Kpos Lower Secondary School in Prey Chor District, Kampong Cham Province. He has very delicate health and suffers from a very sensitive eye condition that makes his eyes tear. Sopheaktra has been receiving a scholarship through KAPE programming since he was in Grade 4, which is the only reason he is still in school. Under the IBEC Project, he received a bicycle, two uniforms, stationery, and tutoring money. With this support, he is able to get some extra support from his teachers in Math, Physics, and Khmer. Both of Sopheaktra’s parents went to work as construction laborers in Thailand forcing him and his sister to live with their aunt. Recently both his parents returned from Thailand but his mom is now pregnant and unable to work.

A big problem for Sopheaktra right now is his eye problem; because his parents are in debt, they cannot afford to provide any health care for this problem. His parents are now considering returning to Thailand again in order to pay their debts, leaving him and his sister with their aunt again. Sopheaktra also helps his parents to earn income in the rice fields and in nearby banana plantations during harvest time. Meeting with Sopheaktra, he said, “I really love learning and I will continue learning until I finish high school and my eye problem is not a barrier for my studying.” “It’s not hard work for me and I can earn some money for my family, and I will save some to buy glasses as they can help my eyes,” said Sopheaktra.

Component 3: Improved School Management & Community Engagement

During this quarter, the component team conducted final assessments on School Support Committees at secondary school level, of which there were 41 in Kampong Cham, 29 in Siem Reap and 19 in Kratie participating in the assessment based on a random sample. The content of the assessments focused on three different parts. First, the component team wanted to know how SSC Members were selected and whether the structure is displayed at the school. Second, information was sought in regard to whether committees had been involved in planning how the schools ought to be improved. The third part of the assessment focused on information management and administration by both schools and committees.
Component 4: Improved Educational Relevance

School Helping Families Activity:

The activity known as Schools Helping Families was developed as a sub-activity in IBEC to help school directors build relationships with communities by demonstrating the relevance of education to the income situation of vulnerable families. The activity helps scholarship recipients receiving life skills education in their schools to link what they learn to income needs in the family. The project provides a small grant to the family of about $50 as part of the scholarship assistance provided. This activity is implemented by three local partners including Women and Children Rights Development (WCRD) (90 families), Economic Development Association (EDA) (100 families) and Buddhism for Social Development Action (BSDA) (40 families). KAPE is providing direct support to an additional 30 families in Siem Reap, as there are no local partners there.

Linking Education with Income Generation: A vulnerable student who received a grant to help her family raise chickens in exchange for her continued enrollment feeds her chickens during a monitoring visit in Siem Reap.

A key event during the quarter involved an assessment of life skills instruction and learning using a randomized sample of 38 teachers across four provinces. The assessment was undertaken by project staff in collaboration with counterparts from VOD and DCD. The evaluation team reported that 66% of those observed received a score of ‘good,’ 29% received a score of ‘satisfactory,’ and 5% a score indicating that they ‘need improvement.’ Overall, 95% of those observed demonstrated a score of satisfactory or better. The evaluation also looked both at attitudes towards life skills and actual competency among students. Overall, about 85% of students demonstrated satisfactory competency and attitudes with the highest frequencies occurring in Kratie and Kampong Cham (95% and 91%, respectively) and the lowest frequency occurring in Kampong Thom (72%).

The IT team administered attitudinal questionnaires as it does every year to a sample of 386 students in 18 schools to determine rates of access to computer labs provided by the US Government and changes in attitude about school as a result of this access. Based on survey results, rates of access appear to be high with 98% of students reporting at least one hour of access to the lab per week and 30% reporting two hours of access. Most students reported that this was the first time that they had ever accessed a computer facility (73%) indicating that the project is reaching its target audience, especially in rural areas where solar powered labs can have a great impact. Most students (73%) indicated that they were ‘very satisfied’ with the lab service provided but 15% indicated that their level of understanding of IT was still low.

Improved Access to IT Education:

IBEC PARTNERS IBEC is funded by the American people through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). IBEC is implemented by World Education, Inc. in 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, EDA and MEDIA One.