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CAMBODIA

CASE STUDY

High Student Engagement in Life



Eatana takes notes in one of her life skills classes (above) Classmates take care of the bio-garden as part of the life skills support efforts organized by the student Council (below)

The IBEC Project seeks to promote better educated youth with increased access to a quality and relevant basic education through an approach that emphasizes holistic programming, stakeholder-driven development, and improved educational relevance and management. To learn more, visit

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Telling Our Story

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Heng Ratana is 15 years old. She lives in Puth Thea, a small village in Oreang Ov District of Kampong Cham. Besides being a sister to 3 siblings and student in Grade 7 of Chhak High school, she is also the head of 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 decided on which topics were relevant in the schools. *'We chose 'me and My Future', 'Environmental Issues,' 'Drug Abuse Prevention,' 'The World Of Work' and 'Safe Migration.'* Ratana learns about three topics in Grade 7. *'One day I learn about Environment, other days about saving and spending and Drug Abuse.*

Ratana is 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 schools 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. *'I have told my mother that she should not drink alcohol but she didn't drink anyway', she tells with a laugh.*

'Drinking alcohol before you are 16 causes your brain-damage; you will lose your memory.' Ratana's understanding about life skills as a concept is very practical. She tells us that with topics such as Khmer language and Mathematics she can pursue a future education to become a teacher but with thing she learns in life skills she immediately can gain profit. *'If I learn how to work in a bio-garden, I can grow more fruit and I can sell that on the market.'* The teachers ask the council to help with preparation of the lesson as well. Ratana gives an example in which she had to cut dustbins from paper for the teacher, enabling him to explain the idea and benefits of separating garbage. When we asked her what life skill topic she wants to learn next year, she tells that Safe Migration is very important because everybody should learn about this before you move to another place to learn about the law.

Finally, Ratana gives us a tour through some of the livelihood topics. We walk past the frogs and fish, who have already eaten and stop in the bio-garden to water the plants. Ratana and her friends seem very knowledgeable about these topics. Their tasks and responsibility create a commitment, which is meant to increase the effect of learning. IBEC involves counterparts from the Ministry in the evaluation activities to show these effects and advocate student involvement in other areas as well.