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Improved Basic Education in Cambodia (IBEC) Project

USAID Assistant Administrator visits IBEC target school in Siem Reap

On 14 July 2012, IBEC Project Staff accompanied a delegation led by USAID Assistant Administrator for Asia, Nisha Desal Biswal, on a visit to a target school in Siem Reap Province. The event at H.S. Prasath Bakorng High School was attended by a diverse group of representatives associated with the school, such as the school director and teachers, the director of the Provincial Office of Education, the local commune chief and the school Student Council officers.

Bakorng High School began as a lower secondary school (Grades 7-9) in 1985, later becoming a full-fledged secondary school (Grades 7-12) in 1992. Located in a rural area within Siem Reap Province of Cambodia, Bakorng has over 1600 students (53% girls) and 90 teachers (52% female). Having received significant investment from USAID in recent years, Bakorng has emerged an atypical Cambodian secondary school with amenities such as the IT lab and the Science lab.



Arrival of the visitor and was present school activities by the students council

The IBEC Project began at Bakorng in 2009. The school director, Mr. Sen Sam Nang, said that the project has affected many positive changes since, including improvements to school infrastructure, management and teaching quality. An important result, according to Mr. Sam Nang, is the reduction in dropout rates, saying, “Prior to 2009, the drop-out rate was very high, but now it relatively lower at about 14%.” He adds, “I am very proud that my school was able to host the USAID Assistant Administrator’s visit today. USAID’s assistance has increased our confidence and helped make many change in recent years. This visit has certainly motivated us to continue developing our school!” Collaborative leadership has historically been quite strong, with a very active community and strong student involvement in the management of the school. When the project first began programs at Bakorng, the school was classified as a Tier 2 school. By 2010, the school was upgraded to Tier 1 status, indicating that it had improved its performance substantially since joining the project.

Bakorng has as Student Council, as well as a number of active student clubs. This is relates directly to IBEC efforts to foster youth empowerment through these channels. The project has worked with

Bakorng to organize Subject Clubs, based on student interest and motivation, wherein such clubs would provide opportunities for special studies and projects, field trips, and exhibitions. The most popular clubs are the creative writing, history and English clubs, each of which elect its own officers, and have a small budget from the project for special activities.

Bakorng's Creative Writing Club members won first prize from among 30 other schools at the annual Project Work Fair organized by IBEC. Students compete for the title of 'Best Presentation' in each of



Computer learning activities

IBEC's three target provinces. The students are expected to work in a group in conducting research on a topic and then conveying the information to an audience using IT presentation tools.

Bakorng also has a School Newsletter Club, which is rather like a school newspaper. The students make use of the IT resources funded by USAID to produce a monthly newsletter, which is distributed through the library and classroom officers. The IT lab has served an important role in the school to promote "constructivist learning," where students "construct" or create their own knowledge based on the research that they do.

The students have received training in how to develop presentations using Open Office, as well as how to use publishing software for the design and layout of the school newsletter.

Mala is in Grade 11 and is the leader of Bakorng Writing Club. He says, "I am very glad to be able to talk about and display the achievements of our club to visitors from USAID. I want thank KAPE, World Education and USAID for their support to our writing club, as well as to clubs and students at other schools!"

Ms. Chhoeun Kim Hort, teacher at Bakorng, is the teacher-adviser of the Writing Club. She says, "I am very proud that my school receives support from IBEC because they consider of what my school can do. One of the important programs is the implementation of Life Skills which will help students improve their basic skills in their daily and future lives." She added that her students had changed attitudes, ways of communicating and interacting with the community, and finds that they have grown to be more understanding and helpful.

The day began with words of welcome to Ms. Biswal and USAID offered by the POE Director, School Principal, Teachers, Commune Chief, Students Council Officers and Project Staff. The group was then shown around the school premises, with special stops at the school library, IT Lab, as well as the bio garden, vegetable garden, fish pond and tree-planting sites. Members of the writing club took a moment to present to the delegation a summary of their



Student present the fish pond in their school

club activities and achievements. English Club members guided USAID visitors during this trip around the school, so that they could practice their conversational English! At the end of the visit, Ms. Biswal made a short address saying that she was very proud of what this school has achieved, making special note of the fact that the students were confident and presented themselves and their topics very well.



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