

ESCUP: Educational Support for Children in Under Served Populations

Background

Although the right to a basic education is guaranteed to every Cambodian child in the country's constitution, there continues to be a considerable gap between official policy and reality. Major access impediments to a quality basic education continue to exist throughout the country but particularly in remote areas. The causality underlying this situation can best be understood as a complex interaction between supply and demand-side factors that include teacher shortages, low educational relevance, restrictive access due to direct and indirect costs, and the perceived low value of education by community members, among other factors.

The ESCUP Program is an initiative designed to address many of the problems outlined above by increasing access to and quality of basic education to underserved areas, particularly those that are located in remote localities. Funding for the program is provided by the American Institutes for Research and EQUIP 1 under a cooperative agreement with USAID. ESCUP began in April 2005 and is expected to operate until March 2007.



Program Goal

The overall goal of ESCUP is to increase access to a basic education of quality by underserved groups including the (i) poorest of the poor, (ii) disabled children, (iii) girls and (iv) minority groups. A related goal is to promote children's rights through the Child Friendly School approach that has been developed by MoEYS over the years.

Program partners

The ESCUP Program is an initiative of 3 agencies (World Education, Kampuchean Action for Primary Education, and CARE) and the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. Key government departments within the Ministry with which the program will work most closely include the Primary Education Dept, the Teacher Training Dept, the Secondary Education Dept, and the National EFA Secretariat. The program also envisions close cooperation with Provincial and District Offices of Education, local school and community committees, and Commune EFA Commissions at Local level.

Relationship to Ministry Policy Framework

ESCUP is in essence an extension of the Child Friendly School Initiative that has been supported over the last 5 years by MoEYS. The program does not have its own oversight committee but has been seated by the Ministry in the Child Friendly School Steering Committee. Organizing program oversight in this way helps to build on the policy framework for Child Friendly Schools established by the Ministry previously.

Target Areas and Groups

The program will be working in 3 provinces: Kampong Cham, Kratie, and Monduliri. ESCUP will support 8 clusters in Kampong Cham; 8 clusters in Kratie, and between 10 to 15 schools in Monduliri. Approximately 10 lower secondary schools will also be supported in proposed target areas as well. As suggested above, areas will be targeted based on their remoteness, poverty indexing, rates of dropout and participation, and prevalence of minority groups such as Chams and hill tribe groups. All interventions will be aimed at the formal basic education sector (Primary and Lower Secondary School).

Program Structure

ESCUP will have 3 sub-components to implement various interventions that promote access and quality. These sub-components include (i) Teacher Education; (ii) Educational Access and Quality; and (iii) School Community Partnerships.

Technical Approach

The program's technical approach builds on work done under the Child Friendly School Initiative supported by UNICEF/Sida and KAPE in collaboration with MoEYS as well as life skills programming supported by World Education, and the Highland Children's Education Program supported by CARE. The key principle in CFS programming is to avoid stand alone interventions but to approach school development holistically across multiple dimensions including teaching-learning environments, inclusion, health & nutrition, and parental engagement. The program's technical approach also includes (i) the use of cluster and secondary school grants as a means of resourcing schools, (ii) the use of activity menus in the development of school improvement plans, and (iii) utilization of local committees such as Local Cluster School Committees (LCSCs) and Local Scholarship Management Committees (LSMCs) to implement activities on the ground.

Specific Interventions

Interventions are broken up into 3 sectors: (i) Teacher Education; (ii) Access and Quality to Education; and (iii) School-Community Partnerships. Specific interventions coordinated by each section include:

Teacher Education

1. Fast Track Teacher Training (FTTT)
2. Community Teacher Support
3. Professional Teacher Support for Remote Teachers
4. School Readiness Program (SRP) National Workshops and Follow-up Support

Educational Access and Quality

5. Primary School Scholarships for Poor Children
6. Lower Secondary School Scholarships
7. Remediation
8. SRP School-based Support
9. Life Skills under MoEYS' Local Life Skills Program (LLSP)
10. Infra-structural Improvements
11. Physical Rehabilitation for Disabled Children
12. Child to Child Outreach

School Community Partnerships

13. Muslim-Highland Community Outreach (cultural sensitization, Khmer as a Supplementary Khmer Language / SKL, Highland Youth Clubs, etc)
14. Community Teacher Boards
15. Child Seeking Schools

Promoting Innovation

Although many of the interventions outlined above have been previously piloted under the Child Friendly School Initiative, some are new and seek to promote innovative solutions to persistent problems. This includes adapting the use of community teachers developed by HCEP in Ratanakiri Province to the state school system. ESCUP will assist communities with severe teacher shortages to recruit local teachers, train them, and remunerate them in accordance with Ministry guidelines for the payment of contract teachers. In parallel with this intervention, ESCUP will work with the Teacher Training Dept to recruit candidates locally for entry to Teacher Training Colleges. These candidates will receive scholarships during their tenure at TTCs and eventually replace community teachers at the end of their 2-year training.



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