

Save the Children Norway, Cambodia

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A new beginning

**Children, primary schools and social change
in post-conflict Preah Vihear Province - Cambodia**



**An evaluation of the project
Public Education for Disadvantaged Children in Preah Vihear Province,
implemented by Save the Children Norway Cambodia
with support from the Japan Social Development Fund**

by

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Executive Summary

Save the Children Norway - Cambodia (SCN-CO) has successfully implemented the Public Education for Disadvantaged Children in Preah Vihear Province, with funding from the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF), since September 2003. SCN-CO previously implemented a JSDF-funded project in the reintegration areas of Siem Reap Province with similar objectives of increasing access to primary schooling and of improving the quality of management and teaching and learning occurring in them. The Siem Reap intervention followed their ground-breaking work in Otdar Meanchey immediately after the collapse of the final remnants of the Khmer Rouge in 1998.

Process of carrying out the evaluation

A team of five people carried out the evaluation between July and November 2005. Preliminary activities included a four day reconnaissance visit to Preah Vihear in late July by the team leader and two subsequent meetings between team members to discuss the evaluation process and draft sets of questions which could be used to collect evidence. The team leader also circulated questionnaires to knowledgeable individuals in the MoEYS and non-government agencies asking them to choose topics from a list (or nominate their own topics) which they believed would be most important to highlight in the evaluation. The schedule for the major field visit was finalized in early October and the visit took place between 31st October and 12th November, 2005. Team members visited the Provincial Education Office (PEO), the seven District Education Offices (DEOs) and 29 of the 154 schools in the province during ten days of field work. They collected data by observation and by structured and semi-structured interviews with officials at POE/DOE level and with small groups of stakeholders at school and community level. The evaluation team presented tentative findings at a morning meeting with stakeholders at the PEO in Tbeng Meanchey on 12th November. Team members subsequently discussed and revised a full draft of the report on 6 December which was then presented to SCN-CO on 12th December 2005. Further minor modifications were made following a discussion on the draft in January 2006 before finalization.

Findings of the evaluation

Major achievements

Amongst many significant achievements in 27 months of work in Preah Vihear, project partners have been successful in

- creating schools which children are happy to attend and community members consider are serving their needs well
- raising morale, productivity and levels of professional competence amongst administrative and teaching staff in education offices and schools
- introducing strategies which have successfully made use of local resources and developed the confidence and capacities of people within the province
- building on the initial willingness of local stakeholders to work on practical activities related to improving school environments to an involvement on other levels and feelings of ownership over project results
- transforming thinking amongst education officials and school staff about school accountability by adding a horizontal dimension (community accountability) to what had previously been primarily a vertical one (the Ministry chain of command)

- demonstrating again, as in the case of the earlier JSDF-funded project in Siem Reap, how a major donor, a technically competent and locally experienced NGO and government officials can form a highly effective and accountable alliance for work in public education

Results

SCN-CO has applied many of the lessons learned from their earlier work in reintegration areas to produce remarkable results in very short time in one of the most remote provinces in Cambodia. As a result of the work in the project the evaluation team found clear evidence of :

- large increases in the participation, retention and progress of children in primary schools because of school construction, improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and community support for schools ; at the end of academic year 2004-2005, key indicators had reached 85.74% (enrolment), 79% (promotion) and 4.18% (drop out)
- significant improvements in teacher performance and morale
- innovative, inclusive, child friendly and child-centred approaches to teaching and learning
- major improvements in administrative efficiency and the quality of management at all levels of the public education system
- a functioning, supportive system of management of public education in Preah Vihear in which staff at each level of management and/or coordination have direct knowledge, through regular contact, about the institutions and personnel for whom they are responsible and through systematic practices of planning and reporting (province to district, district to cluster and school, cluster to school)
- strong participation by community members in activities to support schools and teachers
- recognition by community members of linkages between children's school learning and the quality of home life (life skills)
- demonstrations of commitment by education officials, School Head Teachers and teaching staff to investigate and be responsive to the needs and aspirations of children and their families from the villages served by schools

Innovations

SCN-CO project staff and their MoEYS counterparts in Preah Vihear have piloted a number of innovations which have already proved of interest to education officials and school staff from other provinces in Cambodia. Amongst these are :

- a major extension of the school mapping strategy to include a wide range of socio-economic data to help schools and school staff better understand the problems and needs of the communities they serve
- bringing well qualified mentors (District Facilitators) into Preah Vihear from outside the province to provide continuous, on-the-job training for education officials at District level
- approaching primary education holistically with a strong life skills foundation
- encouraging teacher reflection and self-evaluation as quality improvement mechanisms
- working with teachers to help them develop more integrated programs, highlighting child-to-child and independent learning activities both inside and outside the classroom
- introducing alternative approaches to the rigid grade separation model of multi-grade teaching previously in use
- assisting isolated and under-qualified teachers improve teaching skills through teacher-to-teacher support from mobile teacher teams
- streamlining reporting procedures from school to District and District to Province
- increasing the frequency and depth of visits from DEO personnel to schools
- promoting exchanges of good management practice at District level with the DEO acting in the role of coordinator and moderator

- identifying, utilizing and documenting how the natural environment can be used as a resource for teaching and learning
- identifying and engaging local resource people in the school's instructional program
- promoting community support in isolated areas for school infrastructure development and teacher support.

Further improvements and consolidation

The project is a complex response to a complex situation and the many challenges presented by Preah Vihear. Inevitably there are some areas in which further time and thought will be required to produce the impacts which everyone wants to see. SCN-CO has already begun to work directly on many of these issues with their school, district and provincial level partners but there are others that can only be addressed at a national level by the MoEYS. Areas and issues which require further work include :

- strategies such as mini-schools and annexe schools in isolated areas where populations are low - it is unlikely that all children will be able to attend complete primary schools from the age of six, although participation from Grade 3 or 4 level may be achievable with some provision for support through, for example, scholarships
- strategies to support the access of graduates of primary school who wish to continue to Lower Secondary Education - this may involve scholarships or in-kind assistance with accommodation, food and materials
- placing textbooks and teacher manuals in all schools, especially in upper primary grades
- helping teachers use the new, light and readily portable furniture more effectively, especially in very large Grade 1 classrooms
- helping teachers broaden their repertoire of highly motivating, child-centred activities which can be used in independent, small group work to reinforce learning (for example, the use of simple learning games)
- broadening the use of life skills approaches from the current strong focus on agriculture/horticulture
- addressing issues of language and cultural difference, (especially in early primary grades) and the development of supplementary curricula and materials more broadly
- clarifying SCN's position on working with ethnic minority children and languages from a rights-based perspective
- sustaining support networks developed between DEOs and schools
- supporting pre-service teacher education at Preah Vihear TTC, especially in its coverage of strategies such as multi-grade teaching and teaching in bi-lingual or bi-cultural contexts; supporting the TTC's annual cohorts of newly graduated teachers as they venture into extremely challenging, and often unfamiliar, working environments
- promoting decision-making, choice-taking and priority setting by community members in planning for the use of available resources, in addition to centrally, mediated interventions
- strengthening long-term community belief in the utility of formal education through concrete demonstrations of the social and economic benefits which flow from it and of the contributions an informed citizenry can make to building a more equitable society

Additional issues which SCN-CO can urge the MoEYS to address

- reforming the pay and conditions of neophyte teachers to boost and maintain morale in very challenging working environments
- ensuring the timely payment of base salary and allowances to teachers
- improving the delivery of PAP funds to schools for day to day operations and special purposes such as school improvement planning meetings and Thursday technical meetings (trainers and participants)

- making more effective use of MoEYS ' Chapter 11 funds available for travel and sustenance for education officials to visit schools
- ensuring adequate supplies of textbooks and teacher manuals to the province, especially for the upper primary grades
- maintaining the current numbers of student teachers annually entering the PTTC to meet the current surge of enrolment and assisting in local recruitment of candidates from communes and districts where shortages are most acute
- ensuring that MoEYS staff in management positions are provided with proper formal letters of appointment and delegations appropriate to their positions
- reviewing salary levels of DEO staff in school-support roles, especially in remote areas
- prioritizing the appointment of women to positions within DEOs and school leadership

Issues of maintenance and prospects for sustainability of project impacts

It is important to note that the dramatic achievements of the project have taken place around an extensive construction program and with a high level of technical input. SCN-CO has used resources very effectively to galvanize local energy and enthusiasm in the same way they did earlier in under-served areas of Siem Reap. Under the project Preah Vihear has experienced an unlikely celebrity for its recent achievements in education, hosting visits by Ministry parties from all over Cambodia, even from Phnom Penh. Driving out of the province into Siem Reap, for example, one can see primary schools in Svay Leu District which have begun to adopt the school environment improvements and the blue sign boards with EFA slogans painted on them which have become so familiar in Preah Vihear over the past two years. As the end date for activities under the JSDF grant nears, however, everyone concerned with the project is conscious that December 2005 marks only the end of the beginning.

On the day the evaluation team concluded its field visit in November SCN-CO announced their intention to sign an agreement for four years further work in Preah Vihear Province. At meetings in Tbeng Meanchey on 12 November the Provincial Governor and education officials greatly welcomed this news. SCN-CO's ongoing commitment will be critical in sustaining the impact of the work which has taken place so far. But everyone should recognize that many of the biggest challenges lie ahead.

This is particularly the case in the DEOs where staff have experienced full-time mentoring for two years. Planning, reporting, monitoring and record keeping structures and systems are demonstrably in place but must be considered fragile, particularly if current low levels of salary are maintained and no government funds are available for travel within the District. Further support, both financial and technical, will clearly be required, especially if the MoEYS continues to have difficulty delivering PAP and other funding in full and on time.

Even though the evaluation team observed morale amongst teachers, especially young teachers, to be at surprisingly high levels, it should also be considered fragile. Perhaps nothing could have a more serious impact on rates of student participation, promotion and drop out, and on quality in general, than a turn around in teacher morale. It would be a familiar downward spiral - frustration, demoralization, a loss of child friendliness and professional commitment, reductions in instructional time, absenteeism, the need to form larger classes and so on.

For Preah Vihear to simply maintain the improvements made during 2004-2005 during the next four years of reduced support will itself be a major achievement. The evaluation team members saw targets in school plans such as 100% enrolment and zero rates of drop out. Such targets could be counterproductive, especially if schools feel pressured to return figures that show continued progress when they are already achieving very good results. A recently produced ADB document giving background information on primary education in Preah Vihear and five other remote provinces

estimated repetition was typically about 20% and drop out 10-12% - in Preah Vihear, according to current Ministry and project statistics it is now at 19% and 4.18% respectively.

It is very likely that there will be some falling away of interest as the impact of the new buildings fades and the reality of working in an under-resourced system in a very poor part of the country re-asserts itself. Even external factors, such as one or two bad seasons and poor rice harvests, could produce a sharp increase in drop out rates, irrespective of the performance of schools and the public education system. The rapid expansion of Lower Secondary education, now being planned by the government for remote areas, will also bring pressures of its own, especially if some of the best teachers are drawn out of primary schools into re-training courses and redeployment. The reform of the national curriculum and the shift to standards-based teaching and learning will add pressure of its own. In this context the decision by SCN-CO to continue a technical assistance role in the province is a critical and reassuring one. SCN-CO staff will have a major role in maintaining momentum and enthusiasm and helping schools be realistic about what they can do in what still is a very challenging educational context.

Broad implications for Cambodian primary education from Preah Vihear

Many of the innovations described above have potential for broad application in Cambodian primary schools. Others are of particular relevance to small schools in rural and remote areas. The following table classifies the innovations into these two categories (of broad relevance and of specific relevance to isolated schools) and offers a comment about each.

1. Of broad relevance to all schools	
Intervention	Comment
1.1 Approaching primary education holistically with a strong life skills foundation	Project demonstrates how life skills approaches can be integrated into the school program, rather than added on, to increase the relevance of primary education and the interest of children and parents
1.2 Encouraging teacher reflection and self-evaluation as quality improvement mechanisms	Project offers an alternative to current practices which rely on external assessments of erratic quality by infrequent inspection visits as a quality monitoring device; also offers a methodology by which isolated teachers can work systematically on developing skills in the absence of support. Such a component could also be considered for inclusion in the pre-service teacher education course, perhaps in the form of Participatory Action Research
1.3 Assisting isolated and under-qualified teachers improve teaching skills through teacher-to-teacher support from mobile teacher teams	Project offers a practical, relevant alternative to external inspection and provides support for isolated teachers, hitherto absent; peer support can also be more responsive and less directive and is likely to be far more cost effective than external inspection
1.4 Streamlining reporting procedures from school to District and District to Province	Project offers a clear and practical model which could rationalize a system characterized by the poor organization, use and retention of data. It enables Districts to offer effective support to schools on the basis of evidence of need. It could also provide a solid foundation for building a system of school performance appraisal which the MoEYS has stated is a policy target.
1.5 Promoting the concept of District Working Groups	DEO staff are moving towards being generalists and working together as a group to support education activities in the district rather than operating along departmental lines
1.6 Promoting exchanges of good management practice at District level	A practical school-helping-school process which will be a vital part of a more formal and comprehensive school appraisal process towards which the MoEYS is working (this activity is usually conducted at Cluster level in less remote, more populous Districts)
1.7 Extending school mapping activities to include a wide range of socio-economic data to help schools better understand the	An activity which offers many possibilities for integration within primary in-service and teacher in-service training activities; the expanded mapping activities give school staff insights into the communities in which they are working and promotes the ideas that

communities they serve	(i) schools serve a local community (rather than the reverse) and (ii) schools should be responsive to local socio-economic and environmental conditions in designing their instructional programs.
1.8 Conducting training using participatory methodology: clear, practical tasks for participants both in and after the workshop; documentation based on workshop outcomes	Training methodology demonstrates learner-centred approach, consistent with that advocated for teaching-learning in school; workshop and follow up activities for participants involve practical applications of key ideas and content; formal documentation is prepared after (not before) the workshop demonstrating that workshops are dynamic, not simply knowledge transfer exercises.

2. Of specific relevance to isolated schools	
Intervention	Comment
2.1 Using external mentors (<u>but selected from within MoEYS ranks</u>) to provide continuous, on-the-job training for MoEYS officials at District level in Preah Vihear	Addresses the immediate need for experienced, well trained and qualified staff in areas in which human resources are limited; offers continuous on-the-job training and a way of following up formal training inputs in the work place and demonstrating accountable and transparent practices in the workplace, especially in relation to financial management
2.2 Mobilization of communities around the construction of mini-schools and community-supported volunteer teachers	The strategy of working with communities to build mini-schools in underserved areas as a catalyst for mobilization continues to be effective and the level of community interest is reinforced when permanent schools can subsequently be constructed. Teachers move from volunteer to contract status and there is now the prospect of newly graduated, fully trained teachers staffing these schools.
2.3 Maintaining incomplete schools (Grades 1-2 or 1-3) in some very small communities	It may not be possible to offer complete primary schooling to all children living in very small and/or isolated communities; there may be a case for establishing/maintaining some incomplete schools to Grade 3 level with older children being able to ride bicycles greater distances to continue to Grades 4, 5 and 6 at another, larger village.
2.4 New approaches to multi-grade teaching	The project has introduced new approaches to multi-grade teaching which emphasize the potential benefits, rather than the difficulties, of teaching in such classrooms. Focuses include child-to-child support, independent learning activities and more integrated daily programs.
2.5 Assisting isolated and under-qualified teachers improve skills through teacher-to-teacher support from mobile teams	See general comments above. In isolated areas the cost (in money and time) of supervisory visits will always be an inhibiting factor so teacher-to-teacher support, using the best local practitioners available, offers a practical alternative.
2.6 Increasing the frequency and depth of visits from DEO personnel to schools	Contacts between DEO and remote schools are necessary for DEO to build realistic pictures of their situation; they also play a vital role in maintaining teacher morale and in demonstrating commitment to parents/community (<u>but are very sensitive to vagueries of funding</u>).
2.7 Identifying and engaging local resource people in the school's instructional program	This is a key strategy in building the relationship between schools and communities, especially in ethnic minority areas. It demonstrates schools' sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity and that the education system values non-mainstream knowledge, skills, artistic expression and belief systems.
2.8 Promoting community support for infrastructure development and teacher support in isolated schools with potential for dissemination of good ideas through additions to the menus of school improvement planning in remote schools	In an under-resourced system, community contributions continue to be essential and there are a range of high value activities they can organize, especially in connection with the improvement of the school environment (Culture Centres, outside learning areas, <i>natural libraries</i> and <i>human libraries</i>), the instructional program of the school and the living conditions and general well-being of teachers.

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Note

The Report structure follows the Terms of Reference for the Evaluation with the minor modification that two of the sub-sections in Part 5 (Findings) have been dropped and content included in other, closely related sections

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BOX 1

Beng

Pahudia cochinchinensis



This tree is known in Khmer as Beng. It is something of a metaphor for the SCN-CO/JSDF project.

It is a slow growing species whose attractive, finely grained wood is highly sought after for fine furniture making. It grows in the forests which were estimated to still have covered some 46% of Cambodia up until the late 1980s. Intensive timber cutting in the 1990s saw the area of forest cover further reduced. Even under a logging ban the FAO estimates Cambodia's forest cover to have been further depleted by 29% between 2000-2005. Beng trees have largely disappeared as a natural resource as a result.

The recently retired Director of the DEO in Koulen District of Preah Vihear Province, Mr. Yim Sareth, is a man dedicated to education and interested in conserving Cambodia's natural resources. He is one of the few people in the province able to propagate Beng trees from seed and has developed a small nursery at the Koulen Primary School. Beng seedlings have been planted around the school and the adjacent District Office. Some seedlings have also been taken to outlying schools in the District.

The Beng seedlings do not have showy flowers, they grow slowly and require regular watering. They do not cost much to maintain but they offer no prospects of an immediate financial reward. Their real value is intrinsic and potential. Whether it will be realized in the future will depend mainly on the continuing investment of local energy and care.

1. Introduction to Preah Vihear and the project

Preah Vihear is a Province in northern Cambodia, bordering Thailand and Laos. The provincial centre, Tbeng Meanchey, is 294 km from Phnom Penh by road. Preah Vihear, with its neighbour Otdar Meanchey, were the last two provinces to be reintegrated into Cambodia following the national elections of 1993 and 1998. During rainy seasons until 2003, when the main southern access road from Kompong Thom became passable with difficulty, Preah Vihear was inaccessible except by helicopter or small, fixed wing aircraft. There was considerably more movement across international borders with Thailand and Lao than there was with the rest of Cambodia. This is still the case for some villages on the Mekong River bordering Laos visited during the evaluation,

Preah Vihear has an important cultural and historical place in the minds of Cambodians. This is primarily because the 12th century temple of Preah Vihear lies within the province. Alongside the better known and more frequently visited national heritage sites around Siem Reap, Preah Vihear features prominently in national iconography. It became a cause celebre when Cambodia and Thailand contested ownership of the site at the World Court in 1962. Despite the World Court finding in favour of Cambodia, the site continues to act as a flashpoint for Cambodia-Thai relations with claims and counter claims about border "violations" still frequently traded backwards and forwards.¹

The Province was an insecure and contested area from the late 1960s until the late 1990s. Residual Khmer Rouge elements were active for twenty years after 1979 and there was a high level of general banditry. Tbeng Meanchey and the major district centres such as Chaom Ksan and Kulen were the only secure settlements for much of this period. The Province was also heavily mined and major mine clearing operations are still in progress. Demining selected school sites is an important initial step in any school construction activity. Only since 2000 has stability returned to rural Preah Vihear and participation of children in primary education throughout the province become a possibility.

Preah Vihear is divided into seven districts and 49 communes with 208 villages. The population of Preah Vihear is now estimated to be 136 190 with a school age population of around 50 000. Ethnic minorities make up a significant proportion of the population with the principal groups being Kouy and Lao. Minority villages have historically been ethnically homogeneous, although there is an increasing rate of mixing, especially with the out settlement of Khmer out along the main provincial roads.

There are 154 Primary Schools, eight Lower Secondary Schools and one Upper Secondary School in the province. Primary Schools are grouped into twenty-three Clusters. Of 154 primary There are 29 annexe schools listed (schools administered by a Director in another school). Opportunities for higher education in Preah Vihear are limited although there is a Provincial Teacher Training Centre (PTTC) for the preparation of primary school teachers with an anticipated enrolment 2005-2006 of 90 student teachers. There are 697 primary school teachers in the province (including 212 women) and 171 (including 45 women) at Lower Secondary School (LSS) and Upper Secondary School (USS) levels. An additional 38 non-permanent teachers, including 29 in remote areas, were employed in 2004-2005. Nineteen of these were Contract Teachers paid by the State. The provincial allocation for Contract Teachers for 2005-2006 was not known at the time of the evaluation. There are fourteen teaching and seven non-teaching staff at the PTTC including a Director. A new TTC building is under construction and expected to be ready for use in January 2006. Non-teaching support staff at POEs and DOEs number 85. Women are severely under-represented on the staff of DEOs (one out of 46) and in the ranks of School Directors or Teachers-In-Charge (11 out of 173, most of whom are in charge of Pre-Schools). The evaluation team met one woman School Director during the field visit.²

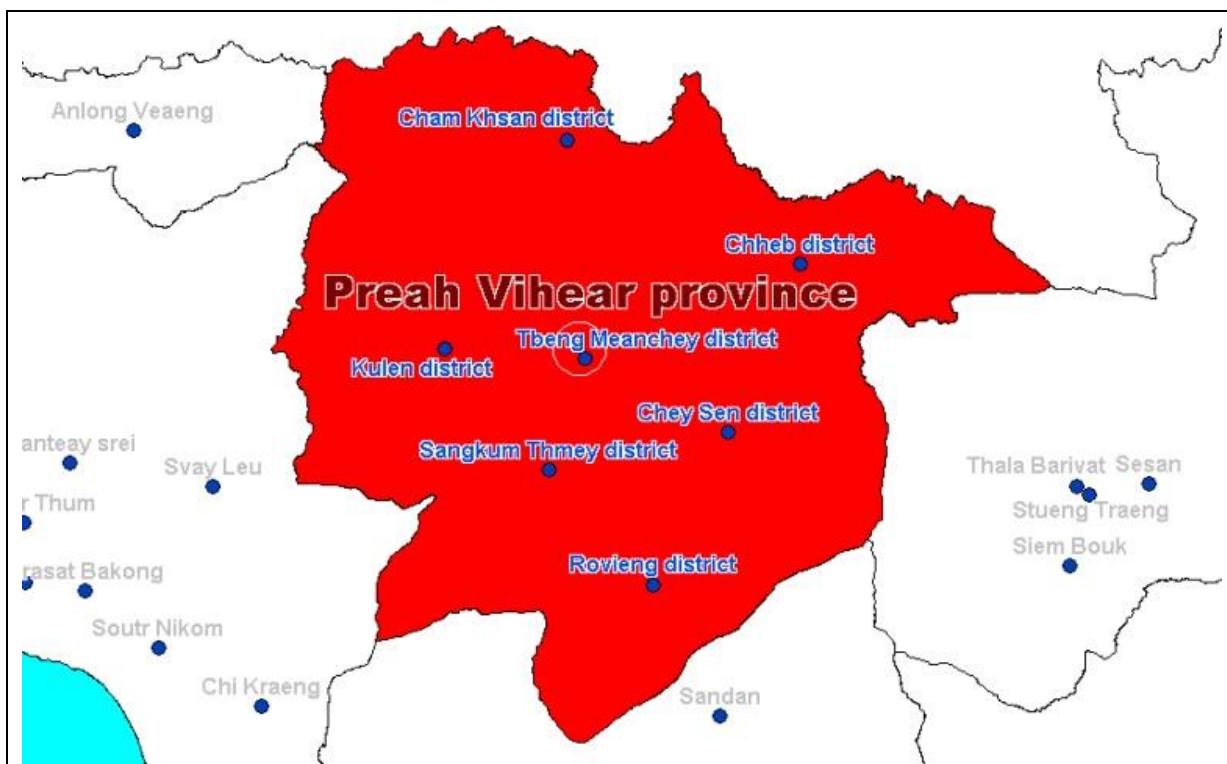
¹ On Preah Vihear case 1962 see, for example, David Chandler, The Tragedy of Cambodian History : Politics, War and Revolution since 1945, Silkworm Books, 1991, pp.98-99,

² Figures from MoEYS, Education Statistics and Indicators 2004/2005, Preah Vihear Province, May 2005

Cambodia showing location of Preah Vihear Province



Preah Vihear Province and Districts



Isolation, distance and consequent limited opportunities for participation in the cash economy mean that poverty is widespread and many families live a subsistence lifestyle. Such factors obviously contribute to the levels of educational indicators in Preah Vihear relative to national norms. The following two tables make the comparison with national figures and also provides figures for other, comparable, remote provinces in Cambodia. Table 1a presents figures for academic year 2002--03 (beginning of the project) and Table 1b for academic year 2004-2005 (end of the project).

Table 1a Comparisons of some education indicators between remote provinces in Cambodia 2002-2003 [Preah Vihear; Ratanakiri; Mondulokiri; Stung Treng; Otdar Meanchey and Koh Kong]

Indicator	National	PV	RTK	MON	Sst	OMC	KK
Primary enrolment		27 518	15 465	6 496	18 573	32 109	26 114
Number of Primary Schools	5 915	125	117	48	120	115	89
Primary Schools with Gr. 1-6	3 518	37	18	8	31	33	28
Over age enrolment (Primary Schools)	24.6%	24.6%	25.2%	21.0%	23.4%	27.3%	16.6%
Net Admission Rate (all schools)	78.1%	57.6%	43.4%	58.3%	64.8%	73.6%	69.2%
Net enrolment ratio (Primary)	88.9	77.8	54.6	70.7	83.3	77.4	78.9
Pupil Teacher Ratio (Primary)	56.7	42.7	66.9	43.9	40.1	88.0	76.6
Pupil Class Ratio (Primary)	45.9	37.4	37.4	35.9	33.3	42.8	43.0
% Repeaters (Primary)	10.2%	18.0%	11.6%	15.0%	19.0%	12.2%	11.5%
Survival rate Grades 1-5							
Primary Teachers	48 433	645	231	148	463	365	341
% female teachers (Primary)	40.2 %	26.2 %	26.4 %	25.0 %	33.9 %	13.2 %	25.2 %
# and % of teachers with primary level education (Primary)	3 558	287	107	67	197	234	36
% schools w/o water (Primary)	59.3 %	88.8 %	88.0 %	87.5 %	66.7 %	75.7 %	77.5 %

Source : MoEYS (EMIS), *Education statistics and indicators 2002-2003*, May 2003

Table 1b Comparisons of some education indicators between remote provinces in Cambodia 2004-2005 [Preah Vihear; Ratanakiri; Mondulokiri; Stung Treng; Otdar Meanchey and Koh Kong]

Indicator	National	PV	RTK	MON	Sst	OMC	KK
Primary enrolment		33 725	18 465	8 466	19 634	35 729	27 183
Number of Primary Schools	6 180	154	126	61	125	138	88
Primary Schools with Gr. 1-6	4 246	59	24	14	52	66	40
Over age enrolment (Primary Schools)	23.3 %	32.2%	21.1%	26.3%	15.5%	34.4%	15.6%
Net Admission Rate (all schools)	81.0 %	77.9%	48.3%	70.3%	83.4%	84.6%	75.1%
Net enrolment ratio (Primary)	91.9	85.6	63.5	79.4	89.8	88.2	81.9
Pupil Teacher Ratio (Primary)	53.5	48.4	55.8	44.1	39.3	64.6	71.9
Pupil Class Ratio (Primary)	43.5	37.1	36.6	32.9	29.3	39.0	64.6
% Repeaters (Primary)	13.9 %	18.8%	16.4%	17.6%	19.9%	15.1%	14.4%
Survival rate Grades 1-5	58.92	46.25	30.41	30.69	42.46	50.75	44.77
Primary Teachers	50 140	697	331	192	500	553	378
% female teachers (Primary)	41.2 %	30.4%	29.3%	29.7%	38.6%	17.0%	24.6%
# and % of teachers with primary level education (Primary)	3 404	254	122	62	153	265	37
% schools w/o water (Primary)	43.2 %	68.2%	79.4%	80.3%	56.8%	68.1%	72.7%

Source : MoEYS (EMIS), *Education statistics and indicators 2004-2005*, May 2005

Variations within the province are consistent with situations in other remote areas where there are major differences between provincial and district towns and other areas. The Districts of Tbeng Meanchey and Rovieng are significantly larger than the others in terms of student numbers and in the

percentage of complete primary schools. The Districts of Chheb, Chey Sen and Sangkum Thmei are recognized as being particularly remote and, as in Koulen and Choam Ksan, the proportion of incomplete schools still exceeds 50%, with Chheb the highest at over 80%.

Table 2 Comparisons of selected indicators by District, Preah Vihear Province 2004-2005
(Chey Sen, Chheb, Choam Ksan, Koulen, Rovieng, Sangkum Thmei, Tbeng Meanchey)

Indicator	Prov	Ch. S	Chheb	Ch Ks	Koulen	Rov	S Thm	Tb M
Primary School Enrolment	33 725	4 138	3 657	4 317	4 382	7 727	3 656	5 848
Number of Primary Schools	154	16	23	22	21	38	20	14
Primary schools with Gr. 1-6	59	6	4	8	8	16	7	10
Over age enrolment (Primary)	32.2	32.9	37.5	37.0	31.3	33.3	30.1	25.6
Net Admission Rate	77.9	80.8	63.9	67.7	87.5	95.0	63.4	76.2
Net enrolment ratio (Primary)	85.6	84.8	79.8	90.3	93.8	96.1	80.6	75.2
Pupil Teacher Ratio (Primary)	48.4	59.1	51.5	54.6	62.6	41.3	50.8	39.5
Pupil Class Ratio (Primary)	37.1	39.8	33.9	36.3	39.1	35.0	39.3	38.5
% Repeaters (Primary)	18.8 %	18.2 %	38.8 %	13.4 %	16.9 %	19.5 %	16.2 %	13.0 %
Survival rate Grades 1-5	46.25	39.13	41.59	73.89	34.65	45.47	30.45	58.10
Primary Teachers	697	70	71	79	70	187	72	148
% female teachers (Primary)	30.4%	14.3%	15.5%	34.2%	24.3%	36.9%	11.1%	47.3%
# and % of teachers with only primary education (Primary)	254 36.44%	32 45.7%	38 53.5%	34 43.0%	20 28.6%	77 41.2%	20 27.8%	33 22.3%
% Prim. Schools w/o water	68.2 %	68.8 %	87.0%	63.6%	61.9%	71.1%	75.0%	35.7%

Source : MoEYS, Education Statistics & Indicators 2004-2005 - Preah Vihear Province, May 2005

The isolation of the province throughout the 1980's and 1990's meant that the education system and its institutions had to operate with a high degree of self-sufficiency. Few education officials and teachers were transferred into or out of the province during this period. New primary teachers are selected from the annual PTTC cohort of graduates. All those from the province accepted for training as secondary school teachers had to go away to study although many of them return to Preah Vihear and work there on graduation. Many of the LSS and USS teachers working in the province come from other areas in Cambodia.

Self-sufficiency can be a two edged sword. While it can build strength through mobilizing local resources to overcome problems and achieve modest results, it can also result in managers choosing to direct available resources into supporting prestige or visible activities in population centres (such as the provincial capital and some district centres). The SCN-CO-JSDF project, with its clear focus on providing support for improving access and quality in all schools and all education offices in all Districts marked an important break with the past. In particular, the project offered an opportunity for education officials, teachers and communities in previously under-served areas to see a quick return on their investment of labour, energy and professional commitment. The following table shows how trends have been established in all districts of the province.

Table 3 Selected comparative indicators for Districts of Preah Vihear 2000-2001 to 2004-2005

District	Indicator	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005
Chey Sen	Enrolment	2 664	3 059	3 281	3 722	4 138
	NER	77.2	80.4	74.5	78.8	84.8
	Repetition	36.5 %	30.4 %	24.7 %	19.9 %	18.2 %
Chheb	Enrolment	1 600	2 812	2 939	3 065	3 657
	NER	45.9	60.3	76.7	76.9	79.8
	Repetition	48.9 %	36.9 %	41.0 %	33.4 %	38.8 %
Choam Ksan	Enrolment	2 617	2 792	3 130	3 658	4 317

	NER	82.2	83.7	66.6	77.8	90.3
	Repetition	42.8 %	3.2 %	7.7 %	9.9 %	13.4 %
Koulen	Enrolment	2 612	3 055	3 525	3 933	4 382
	NER	78.3	91.4	81.1	92.5	93.8
	Repetition	30.5 %	7.7 %	5.3 %	10.9 %	16.9 %
Rovieng	Enrolment	5 126	5 806	6 429	7 330	7 727
	NER	80.5	80.8	94.7	97.2	96.1
	Repetition	34.4 %	23.1 %	21.7 %	19.9 %	19.5 %
Sangkum Thmei	Enrolment	2 739	3 065	2 892	3 370	3 656
	NER	71.5	76.8	66.1	74.6	80.6
	Repetition	27.3 %	17.5 %	15.7 %	13.6 %	16.2 %
Tbeng Meanchey	Enrolment	4 340	5 070	5 322	5 428	5848
	NER	79.5	80.5	94.4	75.2	75.2
	Repetition	22.2 %	12.5 %	12.4 %	7.7 %	13.0 %
Province	Enrolment	21 698	25 659	27 518	30 506	33 725
	NER	75.1	79.5	77.8	82.6	85.6
	Repetition	32.9 %	18.7 %	18.0 %	16.0 %	18.8 %

Working in communities with histories of fear, suspicion, poverty and isolation

The SCN-CO project is complex and multi-faceted, as would be expected of any educational intervention in a province like Preah Vihear. The province is characterized by geographical remoteness, cultural diversity and a turbulent history which has left a legacy of distrust in public institutions and any outside agency. The total population of Preah Vihear is relatively small by Cambodian provincial standards with people scattered over a wide area. They include extended family groups who have deliberately sought isolation for reasons of security. Some of these groups have been out of touch with formal education for periods of up to thirty-five years³. One of the challenges faced by the project has been to convince them of the benefits of participation in formal education for their children beyond an achievement of rudimentary numeracy and literacy.

The effect of all these problems typical of a post conflict society is to induce what Meas Nee has referred to as a “numbness” and what Keo Sarath, in a paper on the Preah Vihear project, describes as “hopelessness”. Nee writes :

*War makes people hopeless. Minds are paralyzed and it is difficult to think of the future. It seems impossible to initiate new ideas. We need to know this and to know that people will eventually pass beyond that stage. ... Where community development has worked well the thing that has happened is not the projects. It is the people of the community moving together to support each other.*⁴

Sarath agrees :

*Fighting for life is the daily basis priority. Losing senses of futures, identity, interdependent, mind used and communication. Becoming stress, anger, aggressive. violence and other negative aspect in regarding social and economical issues.*⁵ [sic]

Such conditions are rarely factored into discussions about improving education quality and efficiency or curriculum reform at national level. But they meant that externally-driven attempts to redevelop schooling in the early 2000's in many post conflict areas (also commonly referred to in Cambodia as *reintegration* or *reconciliation* areas) had limited impact. A fresh approach was needed which offered a dramatic break with the past and which was built on local people doing something rather than in having things done to them. The SCN-CO/JSDf project has provided this break.

³ See references in Report to JSDf No. 6, p. 8 about the discovery of "hidden people" during field work in the project and also SCN-CO Annual Report 2004, p. 16-18

⁴ Meas Nee and Joan Healy, *Towards Restoring Life in Cambodian Villages*, Phnom Penh, 1995

⁵ Keo Sarath, "Education for Social Change : How to bring hope to hopeless people", Phnom Penh, Presentation, Phnom Penh, November 2005

The process which SCN-CO staff have used is described by Sarath as to begin by working together with local people on simple, practical things

Do concrete actions in real life situation in particular topic, places and people. ... create feeling of empathy, caring for and support ... hid/put aside problems, worried, difficulty and any negative feeling ... filling gap or bridging/link between real life issues to work issues (not principles/theories) ... Reflect, gradually, the concrete actions into principles, guidelines, policies and other theories [sic].

These activities were often related to improving the local school environment such as constructing seats and shelters, marking out, preparing and planting gardens, building fences and paths. Ostensibly, these activities have very little to do with education but they do involve project staff and local community people working directly together on something concrete. As Meas Nee explains

The people in the village do not learn from theory, they learn from experience. Experience gets refined and in the end they have their own theory. The simplest thing that can be clearly seen comes first. ... The first thing is to make relationships, not to make projects. The major goal of the redevelopment of the community is to help village people to regain dignity and unity.⁶

It is also important to state, however, that working in this way may not always fit easily into the short time frames and results driven designs often adopted for international development assistance projects. Meas Nee observes :

We need to find ways to restore the confidence and trust of individual people, of families, and of whole communities. This is done in the same way that any relationships are made. Slowly.

The JSDF/SCN-CO project, however, had a time frame of only 27 months and was extremely ambitious. This is a point that will be returned to a number of times in the Report because of the influence it exerted over the way the project has been implemented, many of its results and the challenge of maintenance which the SCN follow up activity now faces. SCN-CO does not usually conceive of its interventions following such tight timelines and has always set out aims in terms of values as well as physically quantifiable results.

SCN-CO brought to the project some fifteen years experience in basic education in partnership with the MoEYS, with a specific focus on activities in remote areas over the past eight years. During this period SCN-CO has developed and articulated a philosophical approach to its work based on international statements of rights and education to which the agency is committed (and to which the Cambodian government is a signatory). Its approach is also informed by the experiences of many of its staff as participants in the turbulent events of recent Cambodian history. Finally SCN has also sought to incorporate enduring Buddhist principles to provide an ethical foundation for action based on Cambodian values and beliefs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Agreement on Education for All are formal, international instruments but the principles of *vipasana*, *karuna* and *meta* are core values from Cambodia's Buddhist religious tradition which provide an ethical foundation to support child friendly and inclusive education.⁷

The SCN-CO approach can be (somewhat crudely) summarized as being comprehensive and one of gradualism. It is comprehensive in that the agency believes that any work it does in education should involve all stakeholders, at the local level (school staff, community, parents, children) and at various levels of authority within the formal education system (District, Province, National). It is gradualist in that, although long term aims and the big ideas that drive them are described, work goes ahead at the

⁶ Meas Nee, 1995, p. 45 and p. 46

⁷ Explicit references in project documentation to philosophical foundations are not often made in project documents but see Report to JSDF No. 8, p. 3 on *Vipasana* (self-awareness, assessment), *Karuna* (loving kindness) and *Meta* (empathy). Many of the earlier Reports talk about teachers developing an increased empathy for the children and replacing chastisement and corporal punishment with caring behaviours.

level with which stakeholders can manage (and for which they already have most of the resources) and the emphasis is on planning and doing tasks which can be managed successfully. Small successes engender confidence and momentum which can then be built upon to move on to more ambitious tasks. Project staff talk about principles of *validity, feasibility and sustainability* in relation to this process;

*Whatever works start in school level, is firmly based on what is reasonable, can be used, are able to carry out or to be done and to keep in existence over a long period that others levels (DEO, PEO, MoEYS) are acceptable. Moreover the work will help school, DEO and PEO to achieve the guidelines of the MoEYS.*⁸

⁸ Internal SCN-CO summary document prepared for evaluation team and presented on 13 January 2006

2. Description of purpose and objectives of the evaluation

Main objective

The main objective of the evaluation is to appraise the progress, outcome and impact of the project according to the development objectives of the grant, to compare the designs of earlier evaluated Siem Reap project and the present project (to) highlight (a) convergence/replication aspect (b) new innovative aspects as presented in the present project

Specific objectives

1. To appraise the progress/outcomes of project activities against the specific objectives stated in components A.B.C of the grant proposal.
2. To assess the impact/effectiveness of project activities for the project beneficiaries, especially children and adolescents from ethnic minority groups.
3. To assess the change in classrooms in term of learning quality and behavior (teachers and children).
4. To identify and assess levels of community participation and/or contributions in all areas of the project objectives.
5. To appraise serious constraints under which the project has been implemented.
6. To assess potentials in the project designs for implementation in other disadvantage provinces.
7. To assess strength/weakness of (a) the project designs (b) the project implementation.
8. To make a tentative assessment and report of the project cost effectiveness, and the management and utilization of project resources.
9. To identify key points related to overall project strengths and weaknesses, and produce appropriate and realistic recommendations which are relevant to the local context and the development strategies of the Ministry of Education.
10. To assess the appropriateness and feasibility of the continuation of the project after the end of the project JSDF grant period. Considering the limitation of funding after the grant period, indicate which project activities should have priority for further continuation.

Source : Terms of Reference for Evaluation ..., SCN-CO, 2005

3. Description of the scope of the evaluation and limitations

Scope

Before the field visits in November took place, evaluation team members met to discuss the project and read SCN-CO and other related documents. The team leader made a four day reconnaissance to Preah Vihear in late July which was very useful both in seeing project sites, meeting people directly involved in implementation and some of the stakeholders in DEOs, schools and villages and in preparing materials for the long visit in November. Having traveled between four of the seven districts along rural roads helped draw up a realistic schedule for the field visit (see Attachments 2 and 4).

In consultation with the project manager the evaluation team leader decided to plan the November field visit to cover all seven districts of the province, each DEO and a variety of schools (larger, town schools, Cluster Core Schools, smaller rural Satellite Schools and very remote Annexe Schools). Evaluation team members agreed upon a combination of techniques to gather evidence of the impact of the project. These were : rapid appraisal through observations using checklists (at DEO, school and classroom levels - see below); observations of classroom teaching and learning and interviews with small groups of stakeholders. The aim was to achieve broad coverage but try to carry out site visits in reasonable depth and talk directly with as many stakeholder groups as possible. The stakeholder groups identified for direct discussions were PEO officials, PTTC staff, DEO officials (all seven DEOs), School Directors, Teachers (State certified teachers, Contract Teachers, women teachers), children, community representatives from School Support Committees and other community members, including women. The process by which this was done is described in greater detail in the following section (on methodology and process).

The evaluation team scheduled a presentation in Tbeng Meanchey at the conclusion of the field visit to present tentative findings and conclusions. This was to ensure that local stakeholders had an opportunity to respond to the evaluators' general impressions and working hypotheses and ensure that the team did not leave Preah Vihear under any major misapprehensions.

Limitations

Dealing with symptoms or root causes, duration of commitment

It was clear to the evaluation team, from a reading of project documents, and a brief reconnaissance visit, that any full investigation of all the educational challenges confronting project staff would require lengthy fieldwork and considerable linguistic and anthropological, as well as educational, expertise.

A project of this kind cannot be effective if it relies on a superficial analysis which focuses on identifying deficits and then prescribes short term remedies such as greater regulation, capacity building through short formal training courses, performance-based and/or redeployment incentives for staff and exhortations to the community to do more to support schools and teachers. Such interventions will only treat symptoms. Their inputs are usually physical or financial fixes which lend themselves to ready quantification, their impacts are usually short-term and output-based. There is rarely any interest in a longer term commitment or follow up assessment. Donors and implementers, having been party to a "conspiracy of success", then move on to fresh fields. The real problems, however, remain rooted deeply in dysfunctional cultures of management and practice, vested interest, community alienation, suspicion and distrust. They soon re-emerge when the pilots are over or intensive monitoring is completed. They can only begin to be understood when attention is paid to

local history, local experiences of education and the impact, or reasons for the lack of impact, of other recent interventions.

Despite working closely with and through local educational officials, managers and teachers, SCN-CO has maintained a strong, full-time presence throughout the province during the project. This is especially important at District level and echoes the experience in the MoEYS' EQIP project from 1999-2004. When VSO Volunteers were posted to work with District Animators from DEOs in Kandal, Takeo and Kampot Provinces. What is distinctive about Preah Vihear is that the deployment of Cambodian mentors, seconded from various backgrounds in the MoEYS, represents the first major long term commitment of Ministry personnel to assist development in provinces other than their own. It is a strategy which offers an alternative to highly centralized, short formal training courses which are further weakened by being delivered by inexperienced trainers through extended cascade structures.

SCN-CO has clearly opted for an approach based on investigating, understanding and responding to underlying causes. The agency has also been clear that it intends to maintain its support after the end of support under JSDF funding. This evaluation, and the report, attempts to evaluate the project in the light of this long term commitment, treating the work done under the JSDF grant as the first step in a much longer process.

2. Evaluating a complex project, limitations of time and resources

In almost all external, final evaluations of projects like Preah Vihear there are limits on time which can be spent in the field in observation and validation activities. Choices have to be made about which components of the project should be investigated in depth, which should be evident through observation, which are not of such great interest. Such choices were made in this evaluation, with input from SCN and from responses to a survey of a sample of Ministry and NGO informants.

The evaluation team has not investigated construction activities in any depth other than to see that buildings exist, are of good quality, are properly equipped and that there was community participation in monitoring the construction process. The evaluation team visited all of the seven DEOs constructed under the project and 10 of the 28 schools.

The evaluation team was also not able to investigate fully every activity written up in Project Quarterly Reports, although they were of interest and significance. Amongst these were the system of self-assessment of teachers, children's out of school study clubs, children's self-learning plans, the documentation, storage and use of model lesson plans by teachers and the documentation of independent research by children placed in school or classroom libraries.

3. Finding experienced, qualified and independent Cambodian evaluators

Cambodians with experience and insight into all the areas covered by an evaluation like this, the ability to analyze and write up data in English and the time to do so are difficult to find. The Preah Vihear evaluation team was fortunate to identify two Ministry staff with expertise in the areas of curriculum, teaching and learning and in management and administration and at District level. Due to time and language constraints, however, much of the business of the evaluation relied heavily on processes designed and data collected, analyzed and interpreted by the non-Cambodian team leader.

4. Project materials available only in Khmer

Even with considerable in-country experience, some oral Khmer language facility and with well-informed, plain speaking Cambodian team members, it has been difficult for the non-Cambodian

evaluator to deal with the volume of support materials produced during the project. Drafts or translations in English are not available so non-Khmer readers, working with translators, are restricted to looking at the process by which the materials have been produced, the logic of their overall structure, the clarity with which they present ideas and perhaps choosing one or two sections in each one that are of particular significance or interest for translation. The fact that versions are not prepared in English certainly gives the project staff more time to get on with their work but it also means that they cannot receive any feedback from non-Khmer-speaking educators and the impact of their work is not felt as widely as it otherwise might be.

4. Explanation of methods used to gather, analyze and present information

Documents studied and reconnaissance visit

Before traveling to Preah Vihear in November, evaluation team members met to discuss the project with SCN-CO staff and read project documentation. The most immediately useful materials were the quarterly project progress reports to JSDF (eight reports from August-September 2003 to September 2005). Evaluations of previous SCN-CO programs in Otdar Meanchey and Siem Reap helped locate the Preah Vihear project in relation to the past work of the SCN-CO education staff and identify lessons learned and applied. Team members were already familiar with MoEYS policy documents such as the ESP, ESSP and the National Plan for EFA but it the most recent versions (ESP and ESSP 2006-2010) contained several new or changed policies that were of particular relevance to Preah Vihear. Annual compilations of education statistics and indicators by the EMIS section of the Department of Planning, MoEYS, at national and provincial level, informed historical and comparative analyses of and between Preah Vihear and other remote provinces.

Data documented by project staff using digital media

SCN-CO Project staff members have become skilled in the use of digital media (photographs and video) to document key events in the project. These images, especially the videos, greatly enrich any text-based description of project activities, as well as providing verification. SCN-CO staff are planning to compile a CD-ROM on the project which will contain the text of this external evaluation, a set of short video clips illustrating some of the activities highlighted in the report and a photographic archive of the 154 primary schools in the province showing changes in their physical appearance over the 27 months of the project.

Organization of field visits, data collection instruments and process

During the field phase of the evaluation, team members sought to minimize the amount of time spent in large, formal meetings. Such gatherings are often unproductive as participants look to authority figures present to provide most of the answers. Different members of the team took responsibility for carrying out interviews with smaller groups of stakeholders in each site. One team member thus built up a knowledge of DEO practices, personnel and procedures across the province, another talked primarily with teachers, another with community representatives from School Support Committees and community members in general and two others with children. Team members compared their findings at the end of each day and wrote up individual summaries at the mid point and on the second last day of the evaluation.

The team tried to follow a routine in school visits. While one member carried out a school walk, the main group attended a large, formal meeting. The School Director and Chair of the School Support Committee were invited to make **brief** presentations on the school, usually involving statistics and some articulation of achievements and issues. Evaluators would then move to observe one lesson each, at different grade levels, carrying out quick classroom checks as well as lesson observations. Following classroom observations evaluators conducted interviews, in the form of informal discussions where possible, with groups of teachers, children and community members. School Directors would be interviewed at the same time or subsequently. Arrangements rarely worked out exactly as planned and evaluators had to be flexible.

When talking with teachers, children and community members, evaluators tried to organize discussions with small groups (5-8 people). Evaluators had detailed sets of questions for reference but began with very general questions designed to get informants talking. Interesting points raised could then be followed up opportunistically. Towards the end of the interview, evaluators scanned the list of questions and their notes on responses, noted gaps and asked specific questions to elicit any missing information. The process was intended to move group meetings away from a tight question-and-answer format and make discussions more natural.

During the first week of the field visit, three school visits were arranged on most days, two in the morning and one in the afternoon. During the first morning in each District, one member of the team stayed on at the DEO to carry out observations and conduct meetings with DEO staff. In the afternoon this member rejoined the team and took part in the school visit. When the team split into two sub-teams in the second week in the field in order to cover the four more remote Districts, each team member had to cover more stakeholder groups and schools were covered more slowly.

Table 4 : Site visits undertaken in Preah Vihear, 31/10 - 12/11/05

Date	PEO	DEOs	Schools in the Districts of	Other
311005			Rovieng (5)	
011105	PEO, TTC	Tbeng Meanchey		
021105			Tbeng Meanchey (3)	
031105		Koulen	Koulen (5)	
041105		Rovieng	Rovieng (3)	
051105			Rovineg (2)	Village meeting
061105			Team meeting in Rovieng	Writing day
071105		Chey Sen	Chey San (3) Chaom Ksan (2)	
081105		Choam Ksan	Chey Sen (1) Chaom Ksan (1)	
091105		Sangkum Thmei	Chheb (1) Sangkum Thmei (2)	
101105			Chheb (2) Sangkum Thmei (1)	Lao School
111105		Chheb	Chheb-Chey Sen-Rovieng /Sangkum Thmei	
121105	PEO			

Table 5 : Interviews and observations in Preah Vihear, 31/10 - 12/11/05

Date	PEO	DEOs	Schools	Directors	Teachers*	Lessons	Children*	Comm.*	Other
311005		-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Week 1									
011105	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	PTTC
021105	-	-	4	2	5	5	3	3	-
031105	-	1	5	4	4	-	4	4	-
041105	-	1	3	3	2	5	6	3	-
051105	-	-	2	2	2	5	3	3	-
061105	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Week 2									
07-081105	-	2	6	5	4	6	3	7	-
09-101105	-	1	6	4	2	1	4		
111105	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
121105	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Governor
TOTALS	2	7	31	20	19	22	23	24	

* Interviews usually conducted with small groups

Data analysis and interpretation; presentation of findings to stakeholders

Each evaluator was responsible for compiling summaries of the information from interviews. Simple tallying of responses was enough for some questions, others required a listing of responses, rating them for frequency and producing a list from the most common to individual responses.

The evaluation team met twice during the field visit to share analyses and impressions. Members first met on Sunday 6th November, after the first week, to table compiled data and working drafts summarizing their ideas about project impact in their areas of responsibilities. They met again on Friday 11th November to report on the experiences of the second week and how they confirmed, added to or contradicted their interpretations of data after week one. At this second meeting evaluation team members also drafted and discussed the contributions they would make at the presentation meeting on the 12th November, the following day. The team leader gave a summary at his understanding of the overall findings of the team on the principal topics outlined in the Terms of Reference which he would present the following morning and invited responses from the team.

Some forty people attending the provincial level presentation by the evaluation team on 12th November were able to respond to the team's presentation, offer clarification, correction or record dissent. SCN-CO provincial project staff members, members of the education program from Phnom Penh and SCN's newly appointed Resident Representative, Mr. Knut Harald Ulland, also participated. Each of the five members of the evaluation team presented parts a summary of the evidence collected from observations at visit sites and interviews with stakeholders. SCN-CO staff and representatives from Provincial and District responded to the presentations with clarifications, explanations and further information. The participants then made recommendations to SCN-CO about priorities for further support after the current project finishes in December 2005. All were encouraged to hear that SCN-CO and the Provincial Education Office had reached agreement on an additional four year program of support. The Provincial Governor, H.E. Preap Tann, also welcomed the news of SCN-CO's further commitment at a brief meeting during the morning. At the end of the meeting the evaluation team leader made a brief summary of the major findings of the evaluation which the team believed would be of most interest to the MoEYS in the further development of policy on basic education, particularly in remote provinces.

Seeking other views

Before the field visit to Preah Vihear in November the evaluation team also undertook a rapid survey amongst prominent individuals within the MoEYS and members of the NGO community in Phnom Penh to gauge levels of interest in components of the project. The results of the survey were useful in compiling the final report and in highlighting some of the innovations in the project of most interest to a wider audience.

Drafting the final text of the evaluation report

On return to Phnom Penh the team leader took responsibility for producing a draft of the whole report. Members of the team met on 6 December to discuss the draft text. Members generally agreed on the content of the report although some minor changes were made to reflect differences in the strength of opinion amongst the team.

The final draft was submitted to SCN-CO on 12 December.

5. Findings about impact and effectiveness

5.1 Impact of the project according to the development objectives

Development objective 1

Increase access to school Grades 1-6 for disadvantaged children

Enrolment rate increased from 50 to 75 %

Promotion rate increased from 65% to 85% in all 7 Districts with equal participation of disadvantaged children

Introductory comment

This development objective is a core commitment in policy documents on education produced by the Royal Government of Cambodia and Ministry of Education Youth and Sports in recent years (the ESP and ESSP) and reflects Cambodia's international commitments under the Convention on Child Rights and the Agreement on Education for All. The Preah Vihear project specifically targets many of the examples of disadvantage given in the ESP-ESSP and EFA including families and children who are very poor, from ethnic minorities, are disabled or come from border and/or reintegration areas. The general issue of girls' participation is also targeted. Indeed gender, disability and the participation of ethnic minorities are all identified as "cross-cutting" issues in ESP-ESSP documentation.

Like other remote provinces in Cambodia Preah Vihear had been lagging well behind the national trend showing improvements in indicators since 2001. This was an obvious reason for the JSDF to support SCN-CO in continuing the work it had done in similarly neglected areas of the neighbouring provinces of Otdar Meanchey and Siem Reap.

SCN-CO staff and counterparts quickly discovered on commencing work in the project that many figures were not reliable and one of the first tasks was a major re-collection of statistics and a re-drawing of project baselines using the revised data.⁹ The result of these activities was the replacement of the original baseline figures from September 2002 with an amended set of statistics collected in September-October 2003. One of the main differences in the two sets of figures was that enrolments in remote districts, especially Chheb and Chey Sen, had been overstated. The task took some time because of the difficulty in accessing some of the "hidden" villages identified during the collections.

Participation, retention/progression and drop out

Project quarterly reports to JSDF show at least steady and, at times, dramatic increases in all indicators related to participation, retention and progression. These developments are summarized in Table 5, below. It should be noted that the increases cannot be attributed exclusively to the JSDF-SCN-CO intervention as there has also been considerable activity in school building by other organizations such as the ADB-MoEYS, the Japanese NGO Rural Assistance and Development (RAD) and SEILA. As has been noted in Quarterly Reports the project has exceeded targets for

⁹ See Reports to JSDF No 1, p. 2 and No. 2, pp. 1-2

enrolment (75%) but has not, despite consistent increases, reached the (very high) target for promotion (85%) set out in the original proposal.

Table 6 *Movement in key indicators over the course of the project, 2003-2005*

Report	Time	Total Children	Total Enrolled	Percentage Enrolled	% Drop out	% Promoted
No. 1	Aug-Sep 2003	42 848	25 043	58.0 %	-	-
No. 2	Oct-Dec 2003	44 545	29 997	67.0 %	6.44 %	72.0 %
No. 3	Jan-Mar 2004	45 443	32 642	71.0 %	6.44 %	73.0 %
No. 4	Apr-Jun 2004	45 443	32 642	71.71 %	3.43 %	76.58 %
No. 5	Jul-Sep 2004	45 443	32 642	71.71 %	3.90 %	76.59 %
No. 6	Jan-Dec 2004	49 119	37 846	77.0 %	3.90 %	79.36 %
No. 7	Jan-Mar 2005	49 119	37 930	77.22 %	2.54 %	75.86 %
No. 8	Apr-Jun 2005	49 119	37 930	77.22%	3.64 %	78.64 %
No. 9	Jul-Dec 2005	49 119	37 930	77.22%	4.18%	79.30

Source : SCN-CO Reports to JSDF, September 2003 to December 2005

Both education and project staff should be realistic about the difficulty of maintaining some of these very impressive levels of achievement. The figure for drop-out across project schools of 4.18% given in JSDF Report 9 of December 2005 is well below national averages and way below rates in comparably remote provinces. It is highly unlikely that this figure will be maintained. No doubt it reflects the very high levels of enthusiasm associated with the extension of education facilities into areas which historically been under-served or unserved. In this respect it is consistent with the observations and comments made on previous SCN-CO interventions in reintegration areas of Otdar Meanchey and Siem Reap. The test of the sustainability of project impact in the medium term is not so much whether such levels can be maintained or improved upon but that they can be held at levels somewhere around the national average. To do so would show families see continuing and concrete benefits from education and are prepared to go on making sacrifices to keep their children at school.

Members of the evaluation team visited sites in the province where classes are conducted in make-shift shelters and in mini-schools, some of which are beginning to deteriorate. The temporary classrooms often housed upper primary classes for which a rapidly expanding demand can be expected (see paragraph below). There is still a need for further construction in Preah Vihear before all basic needs for school facilities are met. Most schools which have received new buildings under the project are already operating on a two shift system because of high demand and added grades. It is also common to find the school office in these buildings having a library in one corner and an accommodation area for single teachers in another. Many of the older schools which have not yet been renovated or replaced have no office facilities and the Directors operate from their brief cases.

In a number of areas where new schools had been built evaluation team members noted very large differences in numbers enrolled between Grade 1 for the new school year of 2005-2006 and upper primary classes. For example, in the Phnom Penh Cluster in Koulén District, cluster wide enrolment in Grade 6 was 58 students while enrolment in Grade 1 was 618. A similar 10:1 relationship was noted in several other schools. There probably are special factors contributing to this surge, such as a high enrolment of over-age students taking place in areas newly served by schools.¹⁰ Even so there are clear implications for staffing in a province already short of teachers in many schools. At the very least it means that numbers of entrants at the Provincial TTC should be maintained at current levels for some years yet and that there may be a need to increase quotas, particularly if significant numbers of primary teachers in Preah Vihear apply for re-training so that they can teach at Lower Secondary level. The opening of the new TTC facility in 2006 is timely as is the willingness of the

¹⁰ Over-age enrolment was identified in the recent World Bank study on basic education as one of the main characteristics of increasing primary school enrolment (World Bank, 2004, pp. 6, 14)

MoEYS to consider making special allocations of places at PTTCs, over and above regular quotas, for entrants from chronically under served communes. SCN's decision to extend its technical assistance to the PTTC from 2006 is also opportune.

Collection and use of statistics

Directors of all schools visited during the evaluation were able to report figures relating to enrolment, retention and promotion and answer basic questions about trends in these indicators over time. Nearly all schools had prepared statistical tables on large white boards fixed to the walls summarizing this information. Core Schools had prepared similar boards summarizing information for schools in their Cluster and each DEO for all the schools in their District. DOE staff confirmed that Directors' understanding of collection and return of statistics had improved over the period of the project and were able to give specific examples of cases of Directors who had improved dramatically. DOE officials expressed confidence in the accuracy of the statistics they collected and sent in to the POE. There were no reports of cases in which statistics were thought to have been manipulated (for example, to produce additional PAP income) or made up. Classroom observations found that the numbers present in the class matched the figures for the class shown in the corner of the blackboard.

With the assistance of District Facilitators, each of the DEOs had also produced and printed A4 triple-fold information brochures. These leaflets included a map showing the locations of all schools and sets of tables presenting statistical information about progress in the district.

Table 7, below, extracts figures from the MoEYS' EMIS annually published Education Statistics and Indicators for the last five academic years to show the impact of the project in the province. Notable are the continually rising participation (when it has been stable or falling in much of Cambodia for the past two years),¹¹ a rising number of primary schools, with a spike in 2003-04, marked increases in the number of schools with water, the maintenance of a high level of over age enrolment and a steadily increasing enrolment ratio. There was a marked reduction in the repetition rate with the change of government policy in 2001 but this has been maintenance since then despite increasing participation. Primary Teacher numbers are increasing, as is their level of qualification, and a small trend in increasing the proportion of women teachers has begun.

Table 7 Trends in key education indicators in Preah Vihear Province 2000-01 to 2004-05

Indicator	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	EMIS Table
Primary School Enrolment	21 698	25 659	27 518	30 506	33 725	S 3
Number of Primary Schools	106	123	125	148	154	S 3
Primary schools with Gr. 1-6	22	36	37	43	59	S 6
% Prim. Schools w/o water	87.7 %	88.6 %	88.8 %	85.8%	68.2%	I 3
Over age enrolment (Primary)	17.3 %	24.0 %	24.6%	29.2 %	32.2 %	I 9
Net Admission Rate	55.9 %	67 %	57.6 %	66.3 %	77.9 %	I 10
Net enrolment ratio (Primary)	75.1	79.5	77.8	82.6	85.6	I 11
Pupil Teacher Ratio (Primary)	41.6	47.5	42.7	45.7	48.4	I 7
Pupil Class Ratio (Primary)	38.1	37.1	37.4	38.0	37.1	I 7
% Repeaters (Primary)	32.9 %	18.7 %	18 %	16.0%	18.8%	I 9
Survival rate Grades 1-5	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	46.25	
Number of Primary Teachers	522/145F	540/149 F	645/169 F	667/191F	697/212F	3
% female teachers (Primary)	27.9%	27.3%	26.2%	28.6%	30.4%	I 7
% of primary educated teachers	60.34%	54.4%	44.50%	48.9%	36.44%	S 18/19/22
Contract Teachers	8	31	0	38	19	S17
Teachers w/o pedagog. training	27	42	40	35	13	

Source : MoEYS, Education Statistics & Indicators 2000/2001-2004/2005

¹¹ Primary Enrolments in Cambodia : 2000/01 - **2 408 109**; 2001/02 - **2 705 453**; 2002/03 - **2 747 411**; 2003/04 - **2 747 080** and 2004/05 - **2 682 129**

Development objective 2

Improve quality of education with children as active learners

***85% of teachers demonstrate improved teaching skills, according to agreed quality standards
85% of children know how to develop and use an individual learning plan starting in Grade 2 and
demonstrate application of life-skills starting Grade 4***

Measuring teacher quality improvement

Project staff adopted teacher self-assessment as a way of measuring improvements in teacher quality. Teachers were introduced to the concept of self-assessment as part of a project workshop and then the ideas were revisited over the course of the project. The outcomes of the workshop were documented and distributed to teachers as also were two editions of a small booklet summarizing the proficiencies, topics, components and the rating scales used. The teachers rated themselves on topics such as their knowledge of the entry levels of children (what children already know about lesson topics) and then into elements of lesson planning such as writing objectives, the content of the lesson, the main learning activities for children and so on. Each of these topics was in turn subdivided into three sub-components of knowledge, skills and values. The teachers assessed their level of competency on each of these components on a scale which had three levels (*satisfactory, average and needing to improve*). Each level of the scale had a description of performance at that level to assist teachers make their assessment.

The impression on reading the booklet is that, as an introduction to self-assessment, it is far too complicated. SCN project staff agreed and said that they had prepared the booklet to give everyone a big picture of what self-assessment involved but that they concentrated initially on only one of the topics, that of planning and writing learning activities for children. Teachers were however, asked to rate themselves on all proficiencies and topics and these self-assessments were collected by school, by district and then compiled at provincial level to give an overall indication of teacher competency within the province. During the project teachers were asked to rate themselves several times and the movements of their assessments over time was used as a way of showing progress towards the project indicator of 85% teachers showing improved teaching skills.

Project staff explained to the evaluation team that teachers initially took the whole exercise lightly and rated themselves average or satisfactory on all of the proficiencies and topics without much reflection. They based their assessments of whether they had "done" those topics before in Ministry pre-service or in-service training programs. As the project continued and more time was spent looking at the booklet in detail teachers began to recognize that there was a gap between "knowing" something and actively practicing it in classroom teaching. Ratings were revised and became more conservative. The project consultant responsible for the activity explained that its main purpose was to encourage teachers to begin to look and talk critically about their teaching. He also believed it could promote teacher-helping-teacher activities which was the most likely way of providing practical and cost effective support for teachers in remote and isolated schools.

Table 8 *Progress of teachers determined by self-assessment on 3 proficiencies*

Report No.	Timing	No. of teachers	Progress on A	Progress on B	Progress on C	Progress on all proficiencies
No. 1	Aug-Sep 2003	745				149
No. 2	Oct-Dec 2003	745				149
No. 3	Jan-Mar 2004	773	266	178	234	71
No. 4	Apr-Jun 2004	783	273	211	234	143

No. 5	Jul-Sep 2004	786	278	264	251	143
No. 6	Oct-Dec 2004	786	315	353	260	146
No. 7	Jan-Mar 2005	786	315	353	260	146
No. 8	Apr-Jun 2005	736	337	338	228	137
No. 9	Jul-Sep 2005	673	205	274	173	111

A = Proficiency on foundation for developing learning/teaching activities

B = Proficiency on preparing learning sequences

C = Proficiency on learning/teaching skills (facilitation skills)

In the terms defined by project staff it can be seen that teachers themselves consider they are improving their skills although it is difficult to translate the outcomes of the self-assessment exercise into the specifics of the indicator (*85% of teachers demonstrate improved teaching skills...*). The evaluation team decided to adopt a different framework to assess lessons they observed with the aim of providing a check by triangulation on the self-assessment data. Although the sample of lessons observed was very small, they were not selected by the schools and the results were positive and indicated that improvements had taken place (see the extended discussion, pp. 52-53, below).

Methodology of teacher training and production of support materials

SCN staff carried out a large program of formal training with education officials, teachers, communities and others (including local authorities and local staff of other government departments) as a key strategy in trying to achieve project goals. Based on their earlier experiences in Siem Reap and Otdar Meanchey, SCN staff adopted a workshop methodology which emphasized local participation in design, learning activities involving practical tasks during the workshop and planning of follow up activities for participants. After each workshop SCN-CO staff compiled a document which included the outcomes of the discussions from the training activities and distributed it to all education staff in the province.

The first step in the training process is a "Design" phase in which SCN-CO Facilitators worked with education officials, teachers and other stakeholders to draft a plan for a general workshop. As well as building local ownership this also serves as a training of trainers exercise. The second step is the "Follow up Workshop" in which there is general participation. These are generally held at Cluster level although it can be offered in schools in very isolated areas. The Follow up Workshop introduces main ideas and content, then poses questions or sets practical tasks which provide participants with opportunities to apply and test understanding. The tasks in the workshop lead to subsequent activities at school level. The most impressive example of this process seen during the evaluation was the training workshop on Education For All. After introducing participants to the concept of EFA, Facilitators talked about the roles schools could play in leading activities at local level to make EFA a reality. These activities included organizing small groups of teachers, children and community members to collect population and socio-economic data in a systematic way, family by family, in school catchment areas. As part of the workshop program, such groups were formed and carried out some data collection. This data was then compiled and presented in the form of simple statistical tables or graphs and then written up in a form which could be shared with others (such as on a flip chart). Subsequently, SCN-CO staff wrote up the proceedings of the workshops for publication in the form of an illustrated booklet.¹² Thirteen thousand copies were printed for distribution to all participants in Preah Vihear and beyond.

The products of this particular workshop were on view during the November field visits by the evaluation group in schools, the seven DEOs and the PEO. In schools evaluators saw the population maps, the yellow family information booklets (containing data collected by the survey groups) and the flipcharts on which the compiled data was written up using graphs and charts. At the DEOs evaluators saw sets of folders with information compiled school by school (drawing on the family data

¹² SCN, Leadership and Management of School, SCN, 2004

collected by schools). The PEO had organized an installation at the entrance to the main building consisting of a complete collection of each set of District sets folders arranged around a large map showing all the schools in the province.

It is important to note the main differences between this way of working and the methodology which has been used in the MoEYS for many years (for example in the national Primary and Secondary Principals Training Program (PSPTP), 2003-2005¹³). The first of these differences is that the Ministry uses a "knowledge transfer" model in which training courses follow closely an official document, drafted, edited, approved and authorized (stamped) before the training takes place. Although these documents can contain exercises or tasks, these are usually desk activities and are designed to test participants' literal understanding of the content of the document, not the general concepts or ideas behind that content. A second major difference is that the training content is basically fixed by the document, there is very little room for participants to introduce their own experiences or ideas except insofar as they reinforce the content of the document. The methodology used by SCN is far more open and inclusive. The workshop process encourages participants to construct knowledge for themselves and develop their skills through their own efforts on tasks, both in the workshop and following it.

Life skills as part of a holistic approach to education

In almost all interviews informants mentioned Life Skills as one of the main changes which had occurred under the project. For most informants this meant the preparation and use of school gardens and for some it meant activities related to animal raising. Gardening activities included flower gardens, vegetable gardening, gardens in which pharmaceutical plants were grown and the propagation and growing of trees. All children took part in garden preparation and maintenance activities with the younger ones looking after flower gardens and simple vegetable crops such as *trachuon* (morning glory) and older ones growing a wider range of vegetables. All vegetables were grown using natural fertilizer (mainly cow dung and compost) and mechanical methods of pest control - many hand picking - with no pesticides. Most schools visited had vegetable gardens although a number had yet to prepare and plant them for the 2005-2006 school year.

The evaluation team noted two particular strengths of the life skills activities in schools. The first, related to pedagogy, was that teachers had understood and were able to articulate how life skills approaches could be integrated into the study of all subjects and at all grade levels in primary education. This is a concept which has been the subject of much debate at the theoretical level in the MoEYS in Phnom Penh since the late 1990's. It has also been widely misunderstood in the field, including within the PEO in Preah Vihear.¹⁴ Misunderstanding seems to stem from an overwhelming inclination to compartmentalize the curriculum and an inability to see that there are many ways of reaching learning objectives. Such critics also see education as a zero-sum game in which taking the children out of the classroom away from textbooks and pencil and paper exercises is time lost on real (textbook and pencil and paper) learning. Teachers interviewed during the evaluation were very clear about the idea of integrating life skills activities into the general curriculum (although no one spoke about it in exactly those terms). They were able to give examples of how, for example, vegetable gardens could be used as a resource for teaching and learning in Khmer language and mathematics as well as for more obvious topics in social studies and science (biology).

The second strength of the approach to life skills taken in the project was the way in which all education officials, teachers, community members and children spoke clearly about the application of school learning at home. Vegetable gardens were the most common example of this. Although the project can only make guesstimates of the percentage of children who cultivated home gardens there is no doubt that teachers, children and community members saw this as a common practice. This is a

¹³ MoEYS, Primary and Secondary Principals Training Program, Vols. 1- 4, TTD, Phnom Penh, 2004

¹⁴ See, for example, George Taylor, " Provincial and District Functional Analysis Preah Vihear Province 9th-10th August 2004".

very significant outcome because it provides concrete evidence to parents that children do benefit from the time they spend at school, not only because they learn about doing new things but that they are motivated to apply their learning.

Children were very positive about the life skills approach and said that it added to their enjoyment of school. They also commented on the way they were able to link the learning they did at school with practice at home, especially in the preparation of vegetable gardens, the use of organic fertilizers and compost and the contributions of vegetables to the family diet. Community members interviewed during the evaluation were unanimous in their support for the integration of agricultural activities into the school curriculum. Like the children they also stressed the importance of linking learning at school with useful activities at home and said that home vegetable gardens could also generate small amounts of income as well as improve the family diets.

Table 9 Participation in life skills activities during 27 months of project

Report	Timing	School children participating	Teachers participating	Out of school children	General popn participating	Villages participating
No. 1	Aug-Sep 2003	-	-	-	-	-
No. 2	Oct-Dec 2003	877*	26*	-	-	-
No. 3	Jan-Mar 2004	13 004	359	302	862	33
No. 4	Apr-Jun 2004	13 004	359	5 012	9 451	81
No. 5	Jul-Sep 2004	13 004	359	7 948	11 726	88
No. 6	Oct-Dec 2004	18 289	658	7 948	11 726	88
No. 7	Jan-Mar 2005	13 970	628	10 524	15 657	90
No. 8	Apr-Jun 2005	15 975	598	13 392	48 451	139
No. 9	Jul-Sep 2005	13 970	628	10 524	15 657	90

* Information received from 3 out of 7 Districts

Source : SCN-CO Reports to JSDF, September 2003 to December 2005

As the project continued, initial resistance in some quarters gave way to a growing understanding of the concept of curriculum integration and a recognition that practical tasks involving, for example, the measurement of length in the school vegetable garden, are effective learning activities. The overwhelmingly supportive responses of teachers, children and community members probably also contributed to this change of mind.

The use of strategies such as curriculum integration and alternatives to textbook-based and classroom-based teaching is consistent with the recently approved National Curriculum Development Policy of the MoEYS.¹⁵ The approaches also sit well with the new emphasis on Curriculum Standards and explicit student learning outcomes within the Ministry's Department of Pedagogical Research.¹⁶ In fact, teachers who have experience with integrating life skills approaches into the general instructional program are likely to find the concept of Curriculum Standards less intimidating than teachers who have stuck closely to textbook content.

Evaluation team members saw chicken coops at various schools. Chicken and pig raising and fish ponds were also mentioned as school activities by some teachers but it appears that horticulture/agriculture is the primary focus for life skills activities for students. This marks a clear shift in emphasis from practice in the Siem Reap project in 2003 when pilot activities involving extending credit to teachers and children to purchase animals and various farming materials had been

¹⁵ MoEYS, *National Curriculum Development Policy 2005-2009*, Phnom Penh, 2005

¹⁶ See MoEYS, "Curriculum Standards and Development", Pedagogical Research Department, MoEYS, n.d. This leaflet includes a section on Life Skills alongside summary descriptions of Curriculum Standards and the Basic Education Curriculum. Two of the three photographs included in this leaflet show primary school students engaged in vegetable gardening activities.

organized. There was no talk of income generation from student's life skills activities at schools in Preah Vihear where the emphasis has been squarely on the educational outcomes.¹⁷

Over the next four years one of the focuses for SCN-CO's continuing technical support will be to help teachers improve their ability to incorporate life skills approaches into the everyday teaching program for children in all grades. At present, and for very good reasons, there has been a strong emphasis on the highly visible, practical activity of agriculture and this has proved an effective vehicle to introduce the concept. SCN-CO technical advisers could help teachers explore ways of broadening the approach by building up their repertoire of teaching ideas. A small school shop operated by students at Phnom Dek Primary School was a good example of a simple activity which provided opportunities to practice calculation skills but which could also be extended to investigate basic economic concepts. Some other possibilities are the use of common, commercial products for discussion and analysis as language activities (texts on labels, logos, designs) and also in various ways in mathematics (patterns, number, shapes, capacity, mass, conservation). Writing letters, filling forms, applying for things ... even in such small ways can the practical benefits of literacy be underlined. Visits to workplaces and visits from various workers are also highly productive and teachers and children could carry out informal audits of the knowledge, skills and values required to perform a job well. Outcomes of life skills activities have already been perceived by parents as evidence that it is useful to send children to school and it is a strategy that should continue to be pursued.¹⁸

Development objective 3

Improve efficiency of public education and promote community participation

85% of schools and all DEOs and PEO carry out satisfactory planning, data collection, and monitoring and evaluation and supervision procedures

85% of schools have involved and responsible School Development Committees (SDC)

Capacity building in District Offices of Education (DEOs)

The project in Preah Vihear differed from many of SCN-CO's earlier interventions in Cambodia in that agreements were signed between SCN-CO and the seven DEOs rather than with the PEO. In previous projects SCN-CO had signed provincial level agreements in which significant numbers of PEO staff had been paid to work in various ways with project interventions¹⁹. In Preah Vihear no such incentives were paid as the focus shifted to the seven DEOs. These DEOs became the principal targets for SCN-CO's capacity building and system strengthening activities. Project staff did work extensively with PEO staff over the two years, indeed the main project office was located in the PEO compound, but there was a stronger presence outside Tbeng Meanchey. The key resource people introduced by the project were brought in at District level. They were the seven District Facilitators, **Ministry staff** from outside Preah Vihear with records as effective trainers, seconded to the project for two years.

Introducing full-time technical support at District level had earlier been attempted in the Educational Quality Improvement Project (EQIP) run by the MoEYS under a World Bank loan in Kandal, Takeo and Kampot Provinces from 1999-2004. In EQIP the technical support was offered by external advisers (volunteers placed in provinces by the British NGO Volunteer Service Abroad [VSO]) and one Ministry official appointed from each of the DEOs in the project target areas. Although the VSOs

¹⁷ See discussion in *Schools of Hope*, pp. 27-30

¹⁸ The production of handicrafts exhibiting them in other schools mentioned in Project report # 9, although not seen in the evaluation, is another possible direction for activities in life skills and Culture Centres (p. 9)

¹⁹ See, for example, the description and discussion in Geeves, *Global evaluation*, 2001, p. 33-34

did offer formal training, most of their capacity building work was done on-the-job in the manner of a mentor. The Ministry staff members, called Animators, were more or less seconded to EQIP and paid by the project. Although EQIP was not continued beyond 2004 the role of Animators, and the support received from VSO and other EQIP technical staff, was generally seen as one of the most successful interventions of the project.²⁰ It met a request which had been made frequently in the past that technical support at the national level be complimented by appointing resource people in provinces and districts. The suggestion by MoEYS Secretary of State Im Sethy of introducing District Facilitators into Preah Vihear combined two elements of the EQIP approach. It provided each DEO in Preah Vihear with a mentor who was both external (and thus without local baggage and obligations) and who had a thorough working knowledge of MoEYS structures and systems. It also set an important precedent because, for many years prior to 2003, there had been very strong resistance from within the Ministry to allowing competent staff who worked at provincial level or below to do any substantial work outside their province of origin.

The policy environment in which the project developed is one in which decentralization is very much the watchword. Decentralization is a key strategy of the RGC, one of the pillars of the "Rectangular Strategy". It has also been at the forefront of the MoEYS's package of education reforms which were introduced nationally from 2001. The current ESP 2006-2010 repeatedly refers to decentralization and delegation from the national to provincial levels, from provincial to district and from district to school.²¹ The ultimate aim is to "... create a climate in which government and communities are prepared to hold School Directors and teachers accountable". For Preah Vihear to be able to participate in the national drive towards decentralization it was clear that capacity building at District level was crucial. For example, the decentralization of education funding through the establishment of Budget Management Centres (BMCs) at District level and in Teacher Training Centres through the country, completed in most provinces of Cambodia, has yet to begin in Preah Vihear where the only BMC is in the PEO.

The evaluation team visited all DEOs in the province, observing their state of organization, interviewing staff and directly checking much of the documentation they maintained. There is little doubt that these offices and the work of the staff has undergone a total transformation because of support from the project. Provision of seven spacious, well furnished DEO buildings was an important step. Just as important, however, is the way in which the offices are organized, statistical data is presented, and information can be retrieved - clearly the result of inputs of District Facilitators and the ongoing efforts of DEO staff. Progress was rapid, by the time MoEYS consultant, Pat Hiddlestone, visited in 2004, about a year after the project started, the POE was recommending moving to set up BMCs in all of the DEOs and the Koulen DEO Director was quoted as suggesting that computer and email facilities be established using solar power²². Her report, an inquiry into the functions of District Offices across the country, includes some recommendations on the future role of DEOs which are relevant to the work of SCN-CO and which are revisited later in the report.

The District Facilitators

The use of District Facilitators in the role of **mentors** is a new approach to capacity building in Cambodia where short, discrete training courses have been the norm. There are many factors which have contributed to the popularity of such training courses, some of which stem from the requirements of donors and others which reflect the priorities of government ministries, especially national level staff who are usually involved in delivering large scale training programs and managing

²⁰ See Geeves et al, EQIP Evaluation, 2002, pp. 65-73

²¹ See, for example, ESP 2006-2010, pp. 16, 23, 30

²² MoEYS [Pat Hiddlestone], Enhancing Education Decentralization : District Education Office, Functional Analysis, September 2004. pp. 13, 14, and for recommendation, see p. 20- Hiddlestone visited Koulen and Choam Ksan DEOs. Interestingly she makes no mention of the presence of the District Facilitators or the SCN-JSDF support in general.

the substantial budgets which they attract. Poorly prepared trainers, highly didactic delivery, superficial and repetitive training curricula and materials and the absence of practice and follow up have all contributed to disappointing results. Direct training, however, is still inescapable in Cambodia where the use of distance learning methods (using print-based materials, radio, TV or internet) for professional development has so far proved even less successful. The mentoring approach is thus a highly significant innovation.

The results of any mentoring will depend on the quality of the mentors and their acceptance by those with whom they are working. There are two ways in which mentors often prove ineffective. The first is when they are unable to communicate effectively with their trainees because of language, cultural or personal limitations and are unable to establish the necessary trust and confidence. The second occurs when mentors develop such a sense of personal responsibility for the outcome of their placement that they end up doing the job in place of the person(s) who they are supposed to be training. The SCN-CO District Facilitators appear to have avoided both these pitfalls. The relationships between all District Facilitators and their partner DEO Directors and staff appeared to be positive and comfortable. Most Facilitators completed the initial year of the project in one District and then moved to another District for the second year. This may have helped reduce any tendency towards dependency as well as providing exposure for all parties to different personal styles and local circumstances.

DEO staff spoke confidently about their practice to members of the evaluation team during visits to their offices. They were able to refer to large display boards around the office with up to date statistical and other planning data in answering questions. They were also able to locate and retrieve official circulars and correspondence from national and provincial levels and their own financial management records, planning documents and minutes of meetings in response to questions. Copies of school level planning documents and other administrative returns were well organized and stored.

SCN-CO provided all Districts with a lap top computer under project funds and District Facilitators had used these to produce a coloured A4 leaflet for each District in the province setting out information on basic education statistics and indicators. These leaflets were often used as part of the background briefing for the evaluation team and it was evident that most members of the DEO staff were well aware of both current levels and recent trends.

DEO staff and several of the Facilitators spoke during the visit of their belief that SCN-CO should continue to support DEOs through a mentoring arrangement when the current project is completed. When evaluation team members asked whether part-time support (through, for example, sharing one Facilitator between two or three Districts) would be sufficient, all parties said that it would not.

Reporting procedures school to District and District to Province

All DEO staff and School Directors agreed that the streamlined reporting procedures introduced by the project had greatly assisted the collection and flow of information from school to DEO. These procedures included new forms for the collection and summarizing of student statistics which were bound into a book. School statistics were derived from attendance rolls and from the EFA statistics collected by teacher-student-community teams as part of each school's EFA activities (see below, pp. 50-51). The use of EFA data meant that, for the first time, accurate statistics were able to be returned to the DEOs. Each monthly return could be completed and then torn out leaving a counterfoil in the booklet to be retained at school level. None of the seven DEOs yet possess a computer so all calculations are done by hand and hard copies must be kept.

DEOs consolidate returns for forwarding to the Province. DEOs maintained a chrono (folder/ring binder) for each school in the District in which returns could be filed progressively. At the DEO there was a duplicate set of folders, arranged by District, with one folder for each of the 154 primary schools in the Province. The collection of folders was housed in a purpose built display area in the

foyer area of one of the PEO buildings underneath a large map of the province on which the locations of all schools were plotted.

The overall impression was that the new record keeping procedures, especially on education statistics and indicators, had helped MoEYS offices and staff in Preah Vihear demonstrate that they were now functioning as parts of an integrated system. Information being collected at the local level was accurate and data from schools was being received, compiled and safely stored at District level.

DEO support to schools through regular visits and meetings

SCN-CO support has enabled DEO staff to make regular visits to schools. Staff told the evaluation team that they were visiting most schools at least once per month and this was confirmed by interviews with Directors and teachers. Regular visits to schools, particularly isolated schools, was identified in Fayaud's 2003 study as an important factor in maintaining teacher morale.²³ The rotation of the venue for monthly meetings of School Directors between schools in the District helped DEO staff maintain first hand contact with schools. Participation by DEO staff in delivering training workshops at Cluster level or in isolated schools organized under the project had the same effect.

DEO staff said that they rode their own motorbikes and purchase their own fuel for school visits when they are not involved in SCN-CO supported activities. Theoretically they are entitled to receive the MoEYS daily sustenance allowance but evaluation team members found that no travel funds were available within the Province except for PEO staff, a common situation across the country. This problem was frequently mentioned by informants to the evaluation at DEO level and has obvious implications for the sustainability of project impacts.

The successful management practice of holding monthly meetings of School Directors and DEO staff also raises concerns about sustainability. Moving the venue of the meeting from school to school within the district means costs are shared more equitably, but costs are still being met by the individuals involved. In some ways these meetings are a local alternative to the monthly meetings of School Directors which take place at Cluster level in more populous districts. In regular Clusters, however, distances between schools are much shorter and some supporting funds are theoretically available through PAP.

School management - planning

Directors of all schools visited were able to show school planning documents. There were four main types of plans. Firstly, there were the monthly work plans, secondly the schools' annual work plans and supporting budget for activities carried out under PAP funding, thirdly a school development plan and lastly a school master plan which set out ideas and targets for the period 2005-2010. The monthly work plans were drawn up by the School Director and were shared, discussed and reviewed at the monthly meetings coordinated by the DEO. The PAP plans and budgets were set out following the models adopted by the MoEYS. They were bound into a booklet with copies of other documents required for the DEO to approve the payment of PAP funds to schools. Attachments included records of attendance at planning meetings and minutes of those meetings. Evaluation team members also observed posters on the walls of school offices listing the names of the members of the School Support Committee. The school development plan were laid out following models now used by SCN-CO for some years and many schools wrote them up onto poster paper for display on the wall of the school office. Long term master plans were produced by SCN as templates and schools entered their own current statistics relating to key indicators and targets into boxes and spaces in the form to complete it.

²³ MoEYS [Patrick Fayaud], *Remote Schools Teacher Development Report*, 30 May 2003, p. 28-29

Table 10 Selected indicators on school planning and facilities development during project

Report	Timing	Action plan	School map	School Fence	Flower gardens	Play grounds	Vegetable garden	EFA network
No. 1	Aug-Sep 2003	41	46	22	0	3	3	42
No. 2	Oct-Dec 2003	77	92	40	15	10	15	73
No. 3	Jan-Mar 2004	100	106	36	49	6	54	119
No. 4	Apr-Jun 2004	126	138	65	53	58	73	124
No. 5	Jul-Sep 2004	126	140	150	115	65	64	133
No. 6	Oct-Dec 2004	127	145	65	69	75	75	136
No. 7	Jan-Mar 2005	127	145	67	69	78	75	138
No. 8	Apr-Jun 2005	127	154	69	72	85	75	145
No. 9	Jul-Dec 2005	127	154	69	72	85	75	145

Source : SCN-CO Reports to JSDF, September 2003 to December 2005

At meetings with community representatives, members of the evaluation team found that there had been broad involvement discussing these plans, certainly at the initial step. In some cases it appeared that the final versions were then written up by School Directors and that these final versions had not been the subject of further discussion. The general perspective of community members and teachers was, however, that planning had been consultative.

The evaluation team was impressed by the systematic nature of this work. Planning of this kind is relatively new in Cambodian schools as school operational funds have only been made available since the beginning of the Priority Action Program in 2001. Consultative school planning for the use of operational funds continues to be an important strategy in the Ministry's general move towards decentralization and for increasing the accountability of schools to the community. School plans and budgets require signatures of both School Director and a community representative, usually the Chair of the School Support Committee. The MoEYS has conceded in the past that many schools do not manage consultative planning very well.²⁴ Directors often simply write plans themselves or Provincial and District officials instruct schools what they should be doing and what to write up. Both practices undermine the Ministry's intention that local voices be heard in the planning process. In this context the results seen at school visited in Preah Vihear during the evaluation are positive.

On a cautionary note, evaluation team members found that some Directors were not clear about the reasons for the three longer term plans (annual workplan, PAP, school development plan and masterplan). While members agree that establishing a practice of planning, based on evidence and developed as a shared vision by all stakeholders, is very important, moving from very limited practice to working on a five year plan in the time taken so far does seem very ambitious. School Directors pointed out targets in the five year plans that evaluation team members felt were unrealistic in a public education institution in rural Cambodia (such as 100% enrolment and 0% drop out). The danger with setting such lofty aims is either that disenchantment will set in when they are found to be unattainable or attempts will be made to doctor data to pretend that they have been achieved. It would be unfortunate if this resulted in the worth of planning being questioned or its integrity being compromised.

The other feature of school improvement activities is that there is a definite "look" to most primary schools in Preah Vihear. At this stage in the rebuilding of an education system this is understandable. A greater degree of variety might be expected in the future if planning practices are genuinely local responses to local problems. While it is undoubtedly true that rural community members and education staff have little idea of the range of alternatives, the MoEYS has, since 2004, followed UNICEF-KAPE planning practice by experimenting with the use of a menu of activities to provide

²⁴ For example, Education Sector Performance Review, 2002, p. 18

some choice. This might be a useful approach in working with schools and communities in Preah Vihear to expand the pool of possibilities.

School Support Committees

Note : For an extended discussion of community participation, see Section 5.4, p. 59 ff, below.

An undoubted success of the project has been in the mobilization of community support for schools and the animation of School Support Committees. Interviews with the sample community groups established that a high level of cooperative work was going on. When community groups see their initial work on improving school grounds and raising the levels of children's participation followed by either a major construction activity and/or increased teacher numbers, teacher training activities, conspicuous changes in teaching and learning activities (such as using life skills approaches or organizing outside learning activities), the effect is profound. Especially areas which, for historical reasons, have had limited assistance in the past.

SCN-CO reports to JSDF document the growth in numbers of schools with functioning School Development Committees over the course of the project and these are summarized in the table below. The data shows that the project has met its target of 85% in this regard.

Table 11 *Progress on establishing functioning SSCs from Project Quarterly Reports*

Report	Timing	Total Schools	SDC with sufficient membership	Functioning SDC
No. 1	Aug-Sep 2003	129	83	18
No. 2	Oct-Dec 2003	152	105	63
No. 3	Jan-Mar 2004	153	138	108
No. 4	Apr-Jun 2004	153	138	108
No. 5	Jul-Sep 2004	153	138	108
No. 6	Oct-Dec 2004	153	138	108
No. 7	Jan-Mar 2005	154	150	108
No. 8	Apr-Jun 2005	154	154	134
No. 9	Jul-Dec 2005	154	154	134

Source : SCN-CO Reports to JSDF, September 2003 to December 2005

Section 5.2.1

Impact on beneficiaries - Children (especially children/adolescents from minority groups)

Inclusive and child friendly schools

Project staff, education officials and teachers tend to talk about project initiatives individually and rarely say how, as a whole, they help produce child friendly learning environments.²⁵ It was very clear to the evaluation team, however, that children were very happy to be at school. In the classroom, too, it was evident that children were enthusiastic learners, particularly enjoying group work activities and opportunities to complete tasks outside the classroom in *kiosks* or other outside learning areas. Teachers generally talked to children in a natural way and there were very few examples of the use of a special teachers' voice. Children were eager to answer teachers' questions and many hands usually shot up in response to any question.

There are a number of references in the Project Reports to a decline in the practice of corporal punishment in schools in Preah Vihear. Children confirmed this in the interviews carried out during the field visit in November 2004. There was only one reference by children in interviews to the use of physical punishment and that was a minor one. Although corporal punishment appears to have been eliminated, one group of children told evaluators that "fear of the teachers" was one of the reasons they believed that there were still a small number of children were still not attending school.

Disadvantaged groups (children with disabilities, ethnic minority children, girls, the very poor)

SCN has been able to use the process of collecting data during the EFA mapping activities, and the data itself, to identify disadvantaged children and monitor their participation in education with some precision (see Table 12, below). Schools visited by the evaluation team were aware of the importance attached by the project to actively supporting children from disadvantaged groups. Directors and teachers were all aware if there were, for example, ethnic minority or children with disabilities at their schools. Basic access had been a consideration during construction and school and toilets were all built with ramp access. Although evaluation team members did not meet any children in wheelchairs during school visits they did meet, or have pointed out, other children with disabilities. These were mainly physical disabilities, eye, ear or mobility problems caused by childhood polio, accidents or present at birth.

Directors and teachers reported that all children with disabilities were happy at school and keeping up with the curriculum. Directors and teachers were aware of basic classroom management strategies which would assist children with hearing and vision problems. Children, too, were sensitive to the needs of their peers with disabilities. At Saang Torsu Primary School in Chey Sen District a member of the evaluation team met fifteen year old Pannoeun, enrolled in Grade 6, who was working happily

²⁵ SCN is one of the partners in the MoEYS' national Child Friendly Schools Program along with UNICEF and other NGOs including KAPE and World Education. There are some differences in interpretation between implementing agencies about what constitutes child friendliness although the MoEYS currently appears to favour a lowest common denominator approach. SCN, for example, classifies all classes in schools to which it provides technical assistance as "child friendly" where as UNICEF and KAPE have used much more rigorous definitions and have tended not to use the term Child Friendly Schools nearly as freely.

with a group of five friends. Pannoeun had a significant degree of hearing loss and did not talk. Nevertheless, her teacher reported that she was making reasonable progress and was able to communicate well in writing. She seemed perfectly comfortable in the school environment with her classmates. The Director of Pra Mer School in Tbeng also reported a case of a child in Grade 3 with very limited hearing and who also did not speak, but was able to communicate in writing and was a regular attender.



Pannoeun (foreground) with Grade 6 classmates and teacher, Saang Torsu Primary School, Chey Sen District

At Putrea Primary School in Chey Sen evaluators met a teacher, Mr. Vor Vun, who had already been teaching for several years when he lost a leg in a mine accident in 1990. After treatment he had continued to teach and now had accumulated a total of over 20 years of teaching experience, creating a powerful role model for other disabled people in the locality and for children.



Vor Vun (left) with Bin Cheng (Director) and Ron Ram (Deputy Director), Putrea Primary School, Chey Sen District

Table 12 *Vulnerable children enrolled in schools in Preah Vihear*

Report No.	Timing	Ethnic minority	Disabled Children	Orphans	Domestic Viol. victim
No. 1	Aug-Sep 2003	-	-	-	-
No. 2	Oct-Dec 2003	-	-	-	-
No. 3	Jan-Mar 2004	2 252	244	651	87
No. 4	Apr-Jun 2004	2 581	288	1 347	158
No. 5	Jul-Sep 2004	1 956*	213*	899*	65*
No. 6	Oct-Dec 2004	3 115	288	1 377	187
No. 7	Jan-Mar 2005	3 115	288	1 377	67
No. 8	Apr-Jun 2005	3 115	288	1 377	67
No. 9	Jul-Dec 2005	3 115	288	1 377	67

* Incomplete figures

Source : SCN-CO Reports to JSDF, September 2003 to December 2005

Situation of girls

EMIS statistics show that, while girls are still under-represented in primary schools, the gap is closing. Although the disproportion is still greatest in upper primary grades, these are also the levels in which the biggest increases have taken place. Although the total numbers of children still fall away dramatically between Grades 1 and 6, the proportion of girls declines only slightly. In fact, the evaluation team visited many schools in which girls were over-represented in upper primary grades. Many of these girls were considerably overage - one small group of six Grade 6 girls interviewed in Chey Sen District's Saang Torsu Primary school revealed an average age of 15 and a maximum of 17 years. Even with scholarship assistance it seems unlikely that many of these girls will complete Lower Secondary Education to Grade 9 level, Cambodia's national target for EFA by 2015.

Table 13 *Number and percentage of girls by grade in Primary Schools in Preah Vihear 2000-2005*

EMIS	Gr 1-6	Gr 1	Gr 2	Gr 3	Gr 4	Gr 5	Gr 6
2004-05 Enrolled	33 725	11 607	7 380	5 187	4 149	3 143	2 259
Total Girls	16 160	5 598	3 461	2 477	2 074	1 499	1 051
Percentage of Girls	47.9 %	48.2 %	46.9 %	47.8 %	50.0 %	47.7 %	46.5 %
2003-04 Enrolled	30 506	11 687	6 248	4 778	3 816	2 463	1 514
Total Girls	14 476	5 507	2 897	2 365	1 822	1 173	712
Percentage of Girls	47.5 %	47.1 %	46.4 %	49.5 %	47.7 %	47.6 %	47.0 %
2002-03 Enrolled	27 518	10 356	6 334	4 816	2 916	1 774	1 322
Total Girls	12 954	4 841	3 026	2 297	1 393	835	562
Percentage of Girls	47.1 %	46.7 %	47.8 %	47.7 %	47.8 %	47.1 %	42.5 %
2001-02 Enrolled	21 698	10 980	6 495	3 498	2 049	1 556	1 081
Total Girls	10 093	5 205	2 959	1 634	968	719	474
Percentage of Girls	46.5 %	47.4 %	45.6 %	46.8 %	47.2 %	46.2 %	43.8 %
2000-01 Enrolled	21 698	10 360	4 834	2 577	1 894	1 284	749
Total Girls	10 093	4 802	2 257	1 265	878	564	327
Percentage of Girls	46.5 %	46.4 %	46.7 %	49.1 %	46.4 %	43.9 %	43.7 %

Source : MoEYS, *Education Statistics & Indicators 2000/2001-2004/2005*

Classroom observations revealed a tendency for teachers, especially male teachers, to direct their questions to boys. Boys also tended to be chosen as group leaders and as volunteers to demonstrate work on the blackboard. This is not to say that no girls were chosen for such roles, there was usually some representation of girls, but team members observed some bias in the classes visited.

Minority children and families and the involvement of minority communities

The main ethnic minorities in the province are the Kouy and the Lao. The evaluation team visited a number of schools in which there were large numbers of Kouy children, in some schools such as Pra Mer, they constituted the entire enrolment. Community members from Kouy speaking villages have been active in local schools in many of the ways described in this report under the section on community involvement (Section 5.4). Examples of this include the construction of Culture Centres and arranging exhibition of handicrafts, tools and implements, hunting equipment, and musical instruments. Project Reports also described other activities and roles in which community people have been involved. These include two Kouy learning and teaching centres, established to collect and store relevant cultural materials, one in Tbeng Meanchey and one in Rovieng District. Community members have also volunteered to work as tutors to students after hours to assist them in their study. The PEO has asked some of these tutors and volunteers to form a committee which has "major roles and responsibilities in collecting pictures, recording sound of Kouy language and filming people life style and living condition in order to develop textbook for Kouy ethnic minority education."²⁶ The evaluators were not able to follow up on these activities.

Members of the evaluation team also visited the village of Kompong Srolau in a part of Chheb District where the Mekong River forms an international border. Many of the people who live along this part of the river are bilingual and there is frequent intermarriage between ethnic Lao and Khmer. In the past, because this part of the District was so difficult to reach overland from the district centre (it was a six hour motorbike ride for the evaluation team) Cambodian nationals accessed Lao for most of their commercial and service needs. This included education. In the past two years, however, many children have begun to attend schools on the Cambodian side of the river and river communities are currently being targeted as a priority area for the deployment of new PTTC graduates into small schools which have relied on Contract and Volunteer teachers for many years.²⁷ A Lower Secondary School is under construction at Kompong Srolau and the Primary School Director is hopeful that it will soon be producing Grade 9 graduates who can enter the PTTC and return as primary teachers.



Lower Secondary School under construction at Kompong Srolau, Chheb District alongside the Primary School

Curriculum and materials development for ethnic minority children

This component of the project was one in which the targets set out in the project design document have not been achieved. There are a number of reasons for this. One is that these targets

²⁶ JSDF Report No. 7, p. 4

²⁷ JSDF Report No. 8, p. 2 and Report No. 9, p. 2

themselves were unrealistic. Another is that the time line for the project, 27 months, had the effect of excluding possibilities in the minds of SCN staff which had initially been considered in brief meetings with NGOs. These were CARE, which implements the Highland Children's Education project (HCEP) in six bi-lingual Community Primary Schools (non-government) in Ratanakiri Province and International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC) an NGO which has been active in running bi-lingual adult literacy programs and which has academic linguists in the field, including an office recently established in Preah Vihear. A third is that the project began at a time when the Pedagogical Research Department (PRD) of the MoEYS was still defining their position on how the national curriculum could be adapted or supplemented to address the rights and needs of ethnic minority children. PRD staff work under the constraint that there is little linguistic expertise available to them and they often have to seek clarification on technical issues from external sources.

The project proposal stated

... In order to reach ethnic minority children, instructional materials and educators need to be attuned to their particular social and geographical situation. This grant proposal looks to develop innovative methods and resources for teaching ethnic minorities in multi-grade environments ... This is a completely new challenge for this province.

and added that the project would be involved in

Exploring and developing methods to cater to the educational rights of ethnic minorities. This includes developing respect for and knowledge of the child's own culture and mother tongue (written if possible) as well as ensuring literacy in Khmer.²⁸

After local consultations and preliminary meetings with other NGOs and the MoEYS, project staff decided on their strategy. Project staff explained to the evaluation team that when they began work in Preah Vihear they found education officials, teachers and community members, known to be Kouy, reluctant to acknowledge the fact. Rather than begin work immediately on language, culture and schooling issues at a formal level, project staff chose instead to begin with mapping activities and other tasks which demonstrated an interest in, and respect for, cultural and language diversity. Project reports describe early activities such as working with local communities to build Cultural Centres and asking community members to collect traditional instruments, tools, weapons, traps and other artifacts to display in them. When built, Culture Centres were used as venues for meetings to plan further activities. These included arranging school and community tutoring for younger children who were struggling to understand school routines and lesson content and beginning to document cultural events, songs, stories, mainly using audio and video tape. Project staff reported that these initiatives helped bring about a significant change in the attitudes of many Kouy people towards their ethnicity, from being dismissive and defensive about it to becoming confident to talk about it and even to initiate discussions about it. The formation of a committee at provincial level on Kouy language and education (see below, p. 43) was seen as a recognition of this new status. All these developments, in relatively short time, preceded the development of materials for use in school, in partnership with the Pedagogical Research Department of the MoEYS, envisaged in the project design document.

The evaluation group visited schools in which there were many Kouy children, mainly in the Districts of Rovieng and Tbeng Meanchey. In some cases Kouy children comprised nearly all the children at the schools. Teachers in the schools gave consistent answers to questions from the evaluation team about language use. They said that children spoke Kouy at home, Khmer at school and that they didn't have much difficulty in learning Khmer through Grades 1, 2 and 3. They also said that children were able to continue to upper primary. It is not unusual in such situations to find teachers who speak mainstream languages playing down the difficulties minority children encounter at school when, in fact, the situation is not nearly as straightforward. It was interesting in this respect that children themselves told the evaluation team that one of the reasons they liked small group work was that it enabled them to translate for their classmates who did not understand clearly.

There are a number of questions arising here . . .

²⁸ Japan Social Development Fund Grant Proposal, p. 9 and p. 10

- Do children from Kouy communities speak Kouy at home or are their parents using a lot of Khmer ? Are they exposed to other Khmer speakers in their village (e.g. at the market) ?
- How do children who speak Kouy at home cope when they enter school ?
- If children are having to learn in Khmer in Grades 1-3, does this effect their cognitive development, slow their progress through school and set a weak foundation for later learning ?
- Do Kouy speaking teachers use the language in the classroom, particularly in lower grades ? Does this help children learn ? Does it set back Khmer language development ?

Project staff looked into language use but mostly followed advice given them by teachers (including Kouy teachers), community leaders and members. A systematic language use survey was not done.

Any attempt to work with a minority language in a state education system must have the support of native speakers and their involvement in managing the intervention. SCN-CO has secured this in Preah Vihear through a provincial level committee²⁹ backed up by work with teachers and community members at local level. The main result of this work has been a translation of the MoEYS Grade 1 Khmer Language textbook. The draft copy presents the standard text on the left hand side of a divided page and a Kouy text version on the right hand side of the page. It is being used in three schools in the Province. JSDF Report 4 explains that the textbook is intended : ... *to support the national ethnic minority education committee for textbook development with Khmer script for Kouy minority. Textbook will be a bridge for Kouy children to be able to learn national curriculum textbooks.*



Teacher Kuth Muth helps Kouy students at Pra Mer Primary School read the Kouy language version of the Grade 1 Khmer Language Textbook

The alphabet used to write Kouy is identical to that used for writing Khmer. It is thus possible for teachers and students able to read Khmer to read the Kouy text. Members of the evaluation team tested this during a visit to Pra Mer School, one of the three pilot schools, which has 100% Kouy enrolment (both in terms of students and students speaking Kouy as a mother tongue). They found that a Khmer speaking Grade 1 Teacher and a number of Grade 4 Kouy students, who had never seen the book before, were both able to read the Kouy text .³⁰ A Kouy speaking Grade 1 teacher, who

²⁹ The members of the Provincial Ethnic Minority Education Development Committee (PEMEDC) were the Deputy Director of the PEO, an official from the Primary Office, the Directors of Rovieng and Tbeng Meanchey Districts, Directors of Pra Mer (Tbeng Meanchey District) and Svay Domnak (Rovieng District) Primary Schools, the Pra Mer Village Chief and SCN project staff. Meetings were held in both the PEO and in communities and often the community level meetings were held with Kouy community members.

³⁰ The teacher, Sean Sokung, was teaching Grade 1 and Grade 6 on a double shift basis. She wrote a letter to the SCN consultant responsible for the ethnic minority materials development about the textbook translation

had taken part in work on the translation, felt that it would be useful to have MoEYS textbooks translated into Kouy for all four subjects for each Grade 1, 2 and 3. The decision to use Khmer as the orthography for Kouy was a pragmatic one - it enabled project staff and Kouy speaking teachers and community members to get on with the written documentation of Kouy songs and stories without having to wait for an in-depth linguistic analysis. It also meant that reading and writing in Kouy reinforced grapho-phonetic skills used in reading and writing Khmer.³¹

But there are a number of questions about the focus on the translation of the textbook. Why translate a textbook into Kouy for use as an aide to teachers for children in Grade 1 (who, of course, cannot yet read it themselves) when Khmer speaking teachers would be unable to respond to any questions or add any further explanations in Kouy and Kouy speaking teachers would already be able to provide translations without such a resource. When asked about the aim of translating the book into Kouy, SCN-CO staff replied that it had been done as a transitional strategy, designed to facilitate the children's learning of Khmer language. Most bi-lingual programs in schools around the world are transitional in just this way with the intention of, at some stage, bridging children from learning the mother tongue and learning in the mother tongue, to learning another language and learning in another language. In Cambodia, too in the few areas where bi-lingual primary education is offered, parents and communities have been quite clear that they see high Khmer language skills as a principal outcome. There is a risk, however, that, in the absence of any other materials in Kouy, the work in Preah Vihear **could** be considered assimilationist in many countries where there is strong emphasis on the right of the child to education in the mother tongue. For an organization like SCN, which places great emphasis on its rights-based approach, this is obviously an important issue and one which needs to be carefully considered.

One of the problems for SCN-CO is that they are working at a time when the MoEYS is still clarifying its own policy on the use of ethnic minority languages in schools and bilingual and bicultural programs. There is a (sensible) acceptance that de facto oral bilingual teaching and learning is going on in lower primary classrooms in minority areas where teachers have minority language skills. The Pedagogical Research Department has taken a strong interest in the topic and has worked with NGOs in both formal and non-formal education settings to organize and learn from pilot programs. There is also now an acceptance of the principle of bilingualism in some Ministry documents but how that translates into "official" classroom practice is not clear. A further complication is that there is very little capacity within Cambodian central government or higher education institutions for academic linguistic analysis and that reliable technical advice is difficult to source.

The project proposal noted that this would be a particularly challenging component of project and one not encountered in Siem Reap. The document also said that although SCN-CO had not had much experience in this area there were a number of agencies in Cambodia which could assist them. It appears that SCN-CO did not follow up some early approaches and brief discussions they had with other organizations about this part of the program. If Kouy and Khmer are really phonologically so similar it would seem that there would be many opportunities for developing other resources in Kouy which would assist the children understand sound-symbol relationships and enhance their learning to read. For example, visits from project staff to the Highland Children's Education Project run by CARE in Ratanakiri, would have proved very informative and stimulating. Although the full bi-lingual approach taken in HCEP (which began working in non-Government schools) is probably not appropriate for government schools in Preah Vihear, the work of HCEP in community consultation and participation in bi-cultural curriculum development, teacher education and resource production would certainly have been of interest. HCEP, in turn, greatly benefited from the linguistic expertise of the NGO International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC) when they were beginning their operations. ICC now has an office in Preah Vihear and could be a useful source of advice on linguistic issues.

which was passed on to the evaluation group. Ms. Sokung had a high degree of rapport with her Grade 1 class and had picked up some functional Kouy which she was using with her students.

³¹ ICC also developed orthographies for the Tampuan and Kreung languages using Khmer script, with some additions, and these orthographies are used by CARE in the bilingual programs they are supporting in community primary schools.

Section 5.2.2

Impact on beneficiaries - Teachers

Improving the quality of learning and teaching is closely related to improving the quality of teaching and teachers. Teacher shortages are a fact of life in Cambodia's rural primary schools and have been getting worse due to a reduction of intakes to Teacher Training Centres. The continuing under-resourcing of the education system has resulted in teacher salaries falling behind advances in the private sector. More remote areas have also been seriously affected by the abandonment of the strategy of employing Contract Teachers for teaching posts which have proved difficult to fill with State teacher graduates from the PTTCs. Preah Vihear has been affected by these factors but, in recent years, has also benefited from other MoEYS' decisions. The first was the decision to reserve a high proportion of TTC places for remote provinces from the national quota of 3 000 (set by the Council of Ministers). The second has been the shift away from a strategy of offering incentives to trained teachers to voluntarily redeploy to under-served areas to focusing on the deployment of PTTC graduates into difficult schools. This has now been coupled with the targeting strategy of candidates for teacher education who come from the under-served areas. This means that, on graduation, they will be returning to work close to their family support networks and will be far more productive and stable than imported graduates. SCN-CO has been able, through its work in the project, assist the province develop its own strategies for matching teacher supply with demand and in supporting newly graduated teachers in their first schools.

The makeup of the teaching force in Preah Vihear Schools is unusual in that school staff often fall into two distinct groups. In the first group are older teachers, mostly appointed in the 1980's and early 1990's. They are a combination of Kru jat-tang, locally appointed as an emergency measure in the post war years and without pedagogical training, and others who completed most of the primary grades and then received a year or two of pedagogical training at Stung Treng TTC. The second group is comprised of young, recent graduates from the Preah Vihear PTTC. They have all completed high school to Grade 9 level and then studied for a further two years at the PTTC. Although there seems obvious potential for conflict between a younger, far better educated group and an older, conservative group, the evaluation team members found that working relationships in schools were friendly and constructive. Both groups, it seemed, recognized the mutual benefits which lay in sharing experiences and new ideas. The major problem was that School Directors, usually from the older group, were often unable to offer much in the way of professional support to younger colleagues teaching higher grades in those schools which were expanding and becoming complete primary schools.

Characteristics of the teaching force in Preah Vihear

Like many rural and remote areas of Cambodia, schools in Preah Vihear face serious issues of teacher shortage. The problem has been exacerbated by the recent dramatic growth in enrolment due to school construction and community mobilization. The province has been successful, however, in undertaking a rapid increase in the number of candidates recruited within the province for training at the PTTC. The PEO has also been successful in posting, and supporting, these local recruits in the challenging living and teaching conditions found in schools in remote sites in the province. This has been achieved under the MoEYS policy of allowing student teachers from remote areas to enter PTTCs with Grade 9 qualifications instead of Grade 12. There has also been a tightening of the requirement that only genuine residents of Preah Vihear be admitted, rather than candidates who merely claimed to be from the province when they were actually very recent arrivals from other

provinces,³² Many such students left soon after completing their teacher education studies and were lost to the province. The result is a teaching force in the province made up of a cohort of older, longer serving teachers, recruited in the 1980 and 1990s, with limited primary and teacher education backgrounds, and a rapidly expanding cohort of recent PTTC graduates.



New faces and old - two generations of teachers sitting in the shade of a kiosk at Tbeng II Primary School, Koulen District

This history raises a number of challenges for schools in the province. Firstly, there are the two groups described above. One with long experience but limited and/or very conservative teacher education and a second group with very limited experience but who are comparatively well educated. The second group has also recently completed formal teacher education courses and is familiar with concepts such as *child-centred learning*. A second issue, related to the first, arises from the rapid expansion of some formerly incomplete schools to cover Grades 1 to 6. This has meant that older School Directors in some schools find it difficult or impossible to provide support to teachers working in upper primary grades because the content of the curriculum goes beyond their own level of education. Even at Cluster level, because of the rapid expansion to full primary programs, there may be no older teachers with experience in teaching higher grades who can provide peer support for recent PTTC graduates. Schools are also often too remote and travel too expensive to expect regular support visits to teachers from provincial and district resource people using MoEYS Chapter 11 travel funds. The project has sought to address these challenges by emphasizing the importance of Thursday meetings and by trialing the strategy of *Mobile Teacher Training Teams* (see below, **Box 2**, p. 47).

Improving quality in primary schools in Cambodia

The pursuit of quality primary education has become an increasingly prominent item on the EFA agenda. It has also been highlighted in the ESP and ESSP policy and strategy documents produced by the MoEYS since 2001. In the current ESP 2006-2010 it appears as an issue on page 1. Much of

³² For a description of the policy of 9+2 and 12+2 standards of admission to PTTCs, issues of teacher supply and demand in rural and remote areas and the importance of local recruiting and the maintenance of local recruits in schools, see Geeves and Bredenberg, *Contract Teachers in Cambodia*, 2005.

the discussion about improvements in quality in Cambodian primary schools, in the absence of national testing and the inability to compare results over time, has taken place around improvements in proxy indicators such as PTR, promotion rates, the availability of textbooks and so on. One important recent study, by Marshall, which considered test results of Grade 4 pupils from schools in three provinces receiving EQIP quality improvement grants, did establish a significant link between investments in teacher training made with EQIP funds and the test results.

Advocates of child-centred learning argue that there is more to quality education than a kind of learning that produces good results in pencil and paper tests. The argument runs that child-centred approaches lead to higher quality educational programs than teacher centred approaches because they require children to be more active in learning. In a child-centred classroom children have more opportunity to use their imaginations and creativity, build on their experiences and develop social and team working skills to complete tasks, solve problems, make decisions and think critically.

There have been very few Cambodian studies of the performance of teachers in the classroom. Wheeler's 1998 study, which attempted to assess the results of the initial five years of the UNICEF Cluster Schools program, revealed little evidence of child-centred learning approaches being used by teachers in the classroom and little evidence of changed teaching behaviour as a result of the intervention. A study by World Education in 2002 established that teachers in schools receiving EQIP grants were organizing far more child-centred learning activities than observed by Wheeler but whether this was due to better qualified, new teachers entering the system or the technical inputs under EQIP was not clear. Marshall's subsequent research suggested that the EQIP inputs had had an impact. The evaluation of schools in Siem Reap documented in *Schools of Hope* in 2003 also included some classroom observations. Evaluators noted numerous examples of the application of child-centred techniques amongst teachers.

Child-centred learning has been Ministry policy since 1996 and most Ministry staff can offer definitions and examples. It is important in this respect to distinguish between assertions that teachers understand and use child-centred techniques which do not involve classroom observations (i.e. rely on interviews with or statements by teachers or demonstrations in seminars, workshops and model classrooms) and those which are based on observations of actual lessons in schools. There are three layers to be peeled away : (i) can a teacher explain what child-centred learning is ? (ii) can a teacher demonstrate in their teaching what child-centred learning is ? and (iii) does s/he, as a matter of daily practice, apply child-centred approaches in his/her everyday teaching ?

Teacher education activities in the JSDF/SCN-CO program have attempted to move teacher behaviour towards child-centredness but have avoided explicit use of the term "child-centred learning ". They have done this by highlighting the importance of child learning activities, using small cooperative learning groups, organizing opportunities for children to learn independently and the active role of children in all aspects of classroom management and routines. Some younger teachers described what was happening as "child-centred learning" and offered the standard definition that child-centred meant that "the children talk and do more than the teacher does" but this appears to have come from PTTC training rather than from involvement in training activities in the project.

Teacher professional development and support within the project (Training workshops, Self-assessment, Thursday training, Mobile Teams ...)

Project staff organized and conducted a sequence of training workshops for all teachers in the province over the 27 months of the project. Most of these workshops were held at Cluster level although, in some very remote areas they were conducted in individual schools. These workshops were typically for ten days. Teachers taught their own classes in the morning and attended the training sessions in the afternoon, thus minimizing disruption to the regular school timetable. All teachers interviewed were able to list the workshops they had attended, recall the topics and describe the main content (in general terms). The process used in designing the curriculum for these workshops, the learning-teaching methodology followed and the way in which they were documented

has been described earlier in this report (pp. 27-28). These can be summarized as being participatory, task-based, including follow up tasks carried out in the workplace and involving participants in *construction of knowledge* activities rather than as passive recipients in a *knowledge transfer* process.

Table 14 Participants in training workshops under the project 2003-2005

	Target	P # 1	SM 1	L # 1	P # 2	L # 2	SM 2	EDS1	IPM	EDS2
MoEYS		5	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	0
PEO	7	7	8	9	7	6	8	6	4	6
TTC	15	5	3	3	3	4	4	0		2
DEO	32	37	29	65	60	58	46	5	6	52
HT/AHT	131	137	123	134	131	85	144	335	12	140
M/g Teachers	32	35	0	561	32	425	0	0	29	680
Teachers 1-3	589	412	0		412		0	0		
Teachers 4-6	211	167	0		167		0	0		
Librarian	NI	31	0		31		0	0		
Dist Fac	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	0		0
Authority/people	0	0	56	524	0	303	54	0	11	7
Student 4-6	0	0	0	1 666	0	999	0	0	437	308
Total	791	843	230	2 973	854	1 891	267	348	502	1 195

P = Learning and Teaching/Pedagogy Workshop
 L = Life skills Workshop
 SM = School Management Workshop
 Data* = Education Data and Statistics Workshop

Source : JSDF Quarterly Reports

Project staff and Ministry staff also developed a number of strategies to provide ongoing professional support to teachers in Preah Vihear. One of these strategies, the use of Thursday pupil-free days for professional development activities, is used throughout Cambodia but the two other main strategies were new. These were the use of Mobile Teacher Support Teams and the use of teacher self-assessment.

Directors and teachers at the schools visited during the evaluation described various patterns of Thursday meetings. Some schools were able to hold meetings at the Cluster Core School four times a month, other teachers said they traveled to the Core School twice a month. Teachers said that Cluster and School Directors were responsible for planning and presenting the Thursday programs. One of the smaller SCN-CO training documents covered the proceedings of a workshop organized for School Directors on how to plan and conduct Thursday technical meetings. Little mention was made of Technical Grade Leaders in the discussions about the Thursday meetings. Teachers said that the Thursday sessions were generally useful, especially the newer teachers. At times of year when roads became impassable to bicycles, teachers reported that they often walked for between two and three hours to attend a Thursday meeting and then faced the same journey home. Given this level of teacher commitment it was disappointing to find that no schools visited during the evaluation were receiving allowances for materials and refreshments for Thursday meetings theoretically paid under PAP 2.

Teacher self-assessment is a new strategy attempted in the project as a way of meeting the challenges of isolation and the lack of funds available for visits from inspectors. It also offers a way in which teachers can become active in their own supervision and relieve hard pressed School Directors and District Office personnel of much of the load they currently are supposed to shoulder for pedagogical supervision. Teachers were introduced to the concept of self-assessment through project workshops. The particular knowledge, skills and values on which they were to assess themselves was also set out in a small booklet given to them. The booklet contained descriptors at three levels (*satisfactory, average and need to improve*). Project staff told evaluators that teachers initially treated the rating exercise very lightly, often assessing themselves as satisfactory without much reflection. As teachers attended other workshops and discussed self-assessment with their peers they became

progressively more interested in the idea and, in the second round of assessments, often reduced their rating from that originally given.

The data presented in the project reports to JSDF (in Tables 11a and 11b) is based on the teacher self assessments. The evaluation team was not able to investigate the validity of the process during the evaluation and chose instead to use another framework (the Four Techniques from the TGL package) in a triangulation approach. Teachers interviewed during the evaluation, interestingly, scarcely mentioned the self-assessment method although evaluation team members saw charts in some Cluster Core School offices which listed teacher names and the assessments they had given themselves.

This approach is worthy of further study and documentation by SCN personnel. If it proves effective it does offer an alternative to the current practice of visits by provincial inspectors and the involvement of DEO personnel in teacher training. The visits by Inspectors are expensive in an environment in which travel funds are scarce. They are also not very productive in terms of improving pedagogy as they are so infrequent and the interaction between inspectors and individual teachers is so limited. Greater use of teacher self-assessment, perhaps linked with other teacher-to-teacher support strategies such as joint participation in participatory action research or peer observation, could also ease workloads for DEOs. This problem was identified in a recent functional analysis of DEOs in Cambodia. It found DOE staff were spending most of their school visiting time in pedagogical supervision when their inputs were sorely needed on managerial and administrative issues.³³

The other new strategy being developed was that of forming and resourcing Mobile Teacher Support Teams. These six member teams have been set up in all Districts to travel to outlying schools in Clusters to provide in-class assistance to under-qualified or neophyte teachers (see Box 2, below)

BOX 2

Mobile Teacher Support Teams



Mr. Tes Soman and Ms. Prom Panna (pictured above) work as members of the six person mobile teacher team which the DEO has organized in Rovieng District. Both work in Robeab Primary School in the district town. They

³³ MoEYS [Pat Hiddlestone], Enhancing Education Decentralization : District Education Office, Functional Analysis, September 2004. p. 5

were selected for the Mobile Team by the DEO, in consultation with SCN-CO, and travel twice monthly to work with individual teachers in schools in three of the five School Clusters in the District.

SCN-CO provides funds for the two teachers to travel to work with other teachers. Travel is normally by motorbike taxi (motodup). The Mobile Teachers leave on Wednesday afternoon, work with the teachers during Thursdays, when there are no formal school classes, and sometimes stay on Friday morning to do some demonstration or team teaching. To ensure that their own classes do not suffer reduced instructional time they teach double shifts on Monday and Tuesday and then a normal Saturday shift.

The main support they offer to teachers is to assist with general planning and lesson planning. They also help by explaining and demonstrating approaches to teaching and learning which teachers say they do not understand or cannot apply. This can involve demonstration or team teaching. Mobile teachers sometimes work with Contract Teachers or older Kru Jat Thang who have had limited exposure to working with the 1996 national curriculum and textbooks and the general philosophy of child-centred learning which the Ministry advocates. They also work with teachers in higher grades who are recent graduates of PTTCs. Such teachers are often isolated within their schools and clusters where higher primary grades have only recently been introduced and where School Directors often have had no experience with upper primary curriculum and its content.

Both teachers said that they were asked to work as members of the Mobile Team. They were happy to do so as it is a responsible role and a way of extending their professional experience. The Mobile Team members make reports on their visits to their District Offices.

Mobile Teaching Teams have been organized on all Districts of Preah Vihear. A provincial level workshop was organized for all Mobile Team members in September 2005. Some 60 people participated including staff from the Provincial Inspectorate and the PTTC. (SCN is considering continuing to support these teams after the project concludes in December.)

Situation of women teachers and neophyte teachers

One of the SCN-CO District Facilitators was a woman, highly visible in her role as Facilitator in the Tbeng Meanchey District, but she was virtually alone in DEOs throughout the province. EMIS statistics for 2004-2005 show only one woman amongst the 46 staff of the DEOs in the province. This strongly suggests that some kind of convention or understanding is operating in this area. It does not provide a good model, although perhaps understandable in view of the dominance of males in all positions in the education system in remote areas. As one of the MoEYS' strategies is to increase both the proportion of women going into PTTCs and local recruitment, it is likely that there will be an increasing number of younger women working in remote schools. The appointment of women to DEOs should be a strong priority.

Table 15 Representation of women in schools and DEOs in Preah Vihear

District	DEO		Teachers		Non-teachers	
	Staff	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women
Chey Sen	7	0	84	14	11	1
Chheb	4	0	76	11	10	0
Choam Ksan	7	0	93	32	25	8
Koulén	6	0	87	22	10	0
Rovieng	9	1	225	87	40	7
Sangkum Thmei	6	0	85	11	13	0
Tbeng Meanchey	7	0	239	101	49	13
TOTAL	46	1	889	278	158	29

Source : MoEYS, Education Statistics & Indicators 2004-2005, May 2005

Although there are considerably fewer women than men in the workplaces and schools visited, the evaluation team met a number of happy, productive and capable women teachers. The representation of women in the teaching force is slowly rising (see Table 17 p. 26, above) but probably awaits increased levels of high school participation by girls in remote areas and targeted local recruitment policies before any major changes can be expected in the more remote schools. The evaluation team met only one woman School Director.

The main issue for women teachers in Preah Vihear, as for many men, is decent and safe accommodation. The team collected evidence and observed various ways in which women teachers dealt with this issue including living in a classroom, living in community-provided accommodation (usually of a rough construction without toilet facilities), staying with a family in the community and boarding with other, local teachers. The problem is more acute for teachers in their first year of teaching who currently are paid at 50% of the normal teaching salary in their first year and do not receive this money until the end of their first year of teaching.

The most fortunate teachers the evaluation team met were those at Preah Khleang, four of whom, men and women, were sharing a modern cement house, with attached toilet block, constructed by the ADB when the main classroom block was built..

As mentioned above, the MoEYS has now shifted away from redeployment towards a policy of requiring new graduates of PTTCs to begin teaching in under-served, usually remote and rural areas. Preah Vihear schools have begun to receive the benefits from this approach and the evaluation team met many young, enthusiastic teachers. Basic conditions of neophyte teachers, however, are in urgent need of reform. The MoEYS Congress recently approved an increase in the rate of pay from 50% of normal starting salary to 90% for teachers in their first year. But teachers still have to wait 12 months until they receive any salary. This means they depend on their families for financial support or on the kind of contributions of food, land, and shelter from communities which have been described in the Quarterly Reports from time to time. Even in receipt of full government salary teachers working outside their commune or district will need local support but it strips new teachers of dignity to be going into teaching posts without pay for a year. Fortunately most of them report that they begin to receive their remote or difficult areas teaching allowance of 50 000 or 60 000 riel per month (with only small unofficial deductions) during the first year of work and this provides some income. These inexperienced teachers are being expected to live and work in some of the most physically difficult and educationally complex environments in Cambodia and much greater care must be taken of them. They are a critical investment in the front line of Cambodia's progress towards EFA. Helping teachers receive their entitlements and improving their conditions is an important area for SCN to use its powers of leverage with the MoEYS.

Multi-grade teaching- Introducing new ideas/approaches

With the increase in the number of schools has also come an increase in the number of grades offered by many schools (see Table 16, below). This has enabled more children to continue their education reasonably close to their home and is one reason why numbers have increased and the drop out rate cut so impressively.

Adding grades does, however, place strains on schools and teachers. Schools where classrooms are limited add grades by teachers working two shifts, from 0700-1100 in the morning and then 1300-1700 in the afternoon, thus using classrooms for two classes a day. In schools where the numbers of children cannot justify two shifts, teachers organize multi-grade classes. Most of these classes are currently run at Grades 4-5-6 level although there are some schools with small enrolments which organize multi-grade classes at lower grade levels. The evaluation team visited one smaller school using multi-grade classes at Srer Thnong in Rovieng District. The visit was notable as the school demonstrated clearly the extent of the achievement of the SCN-CO project, the urgent need for further construction and the extremely challenging conditions under which many young teachers are currently working in the province (see Box 3, below)

Table 16 Numbers of Primary Schools by highest grade taught, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005

District	Gr. 1		Gr. 2		Gr. 3		Gr. 4		Gr. 5		Gr. 6	
	03-4	04-5	03-4	04-5	03-4	04-5	03-04	04-5	03-4	04-5	03-4	04-5
Chey Sen	1	0	3	2	1	2	4	2	2	4	5	6
Chheb	4	1	4	6	5	1	5	7	3	4	2	4
Choam Ksan	5	2	2	4	3	3	2	3	3	2	5	8
Koulen	8	6	0	4	0	2	1	0	3	1	5	8
Rovieng	9	5	3	6	5	2	4	5	5	4	12	16
Sangkum Thmei	6	4	6	7	1	1	0	1	0	0	7	7
Tbeng Meanchey	1	0	0	1	0	0	3	2	3	1	7	10
TOTAL	34	18	18	30	15	11	19	20	19	16	43	59

Source : MoEYS, Education Statistics & Indicators - Preah Vihear Province 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, May 2004 and May 2005

Members of the evaluation team were able to observe a handful of lessons taught by multi-grade teachers during the evaluation. In all cases classrooms were well managed and in a couple of cases, very well managed. The teaching methodology used did not follow the MoEYS model of arranging the room as though it had an invisible wall down the middle with children in one grade facing one way and the other grade facing in the opposite direction. Children sat as a whole class although each grade level sat together or on the left and right sides of the centre aisle. At Srer Thnoug mini school children in one of the multi-grade classes worked together on the same task and while in the other class children in Grades 1, 2 and 3 worked separately on discrete tasks. While the teacher taught one of the three grades the other two grades were given a separate task to do. This, it appeared, consisted mainly of copying from the textbook.

The materials produced by the project on multi-grade teaching introduce many ideas which will add depth to the original MoEYS multi-grade teaching guidelines produced in the 1990's. The SCN-CO materials talk about the need for planning of separate activities for each grade in the class and opportunities for independent work but they also discuss the potential of cross-age, cross-grade child-to-child tutoring which multi-grade classrooms open up. Most of the teachers interviewed during the evaluation had attended a workshop on multi-grade teaching as part of the technical input of the project team over the two years.

SCN project staff point out that multi-grade teaching skills are actually skills that many teachers in Cambodian classrooms should acquire (or may have already) because mixed age and mixed ability groups are found in nearly all Cambodian primary classrooms. Although this observation is quite true it is often extended in a way as to suggest that there is really very little difference between a standard, same grade class, and a multi-grade class. This really evades rather than deals with the issue which teachers say they find most difficult about working in a multi-grade class - having to meet the specific requirements of the curriculum (as presented in the textbooks) at two grade levels. While the strategy of planning tasks for independent work by small, mixed grade groups of children is a very useful one, and has been observably successful, the main issue seems to be how to cope with the demands of two sets of textbooks and two sets of content.

This may be one of the reasons why many schools and teachers appear to be avoiding multi-grade teaching situations, preferring instead, where possible, to teach two separate shifts. There may also be a financial issue involved as two shift teaching attracts a full second salary while multi-grade teaching attracts a premium of 60% on top of regular salary. Numbers of multi-grade teachers in Preah Vihear have been static during the last two years. In either case, after a very steep climb in the number of multi-grade classes early in the project the situation now appears to have stabilized (see Table 17, below). This was not what was anticipated in the Project Design or seemed likely following the outcomes and recommendations from the work in Siem Reap documented in *Schools of Hope*. It could be, however, that the real need for multi-grade classes will come later, during the next four

years of SCN support. Now that schools have been built to serve the larger communities, the next frontier are the smaller villages and pockets of population, such as those along the Mekong River in Chheb, in forested areas or other *hidden* locations, where numbers will be much smaller and multi-grade teaching will be the only way to offer full primary education. Most of these small communities will be simply too far away from the nearest centre with a large school for children to go there after completing Grade 2 or 3 and there will be no other option.

Table 17 *Multi-grade classes and teachers in Preah Vihear during the project*

Report No.	Timing	Multi-grade Classes	Children in Multi-grade classes	Pupil Teacher Ration
No. 1	Aug-Sep 2003	18*	291*	
No. 2	Oct-Dec 2003	45*	1 191*	
No. 3	Jan-Mar 2004	56	1 991	
No. 4	Apr-Jun 2004	56	2 125	38:1
No. 5	Jul-Sep 2004	56	2 131	38:1
No. 6	Oct-Dec 2004	56	2 131	38:1
No. 7	Jan-Mar 2005	53	1 610	31:1
No. 8	Apr-Jun 2005	52	1 905	36:1
No. 9	Jul-Dec 2005	52	1 905	36:1

Source : SCN-CO Reports to JSDF, September 2003 to December 2005

BOX 3

Srer Thnoug - the challenges of multi-grade teaching in a small rural school

Srer Thnoug is a two room mini-school in Rovieng District with a staff of three, a Director and two teachers. On the day of the visit the two young women teachers were working with two multi-grade classes, one of Grades 4 and 5 and the other with Grades 1, 2 and 3. The school had been operating in the wooden building for four to five years but had added another temporary teaching area as it had added grades. On-site interviews with parents confirmed that the school had rapidly added Grades in recent years and that this had been an important reason for increasing enrolment and reducing drop out.



The classroom being used for the Grade 4 and 5 class (pictured above) was a wooden hut with an earthen floor and the big heavy desks and attached benches found in most older Cambodian classrooms. There were gaps in the planking on the walls and a number of holes in the tiled roof. The teacher had succeeded in making a dark, drab room quite attractive with plants in plastic bottles slung from the rafters, posters on the walls and examples

of children's work. There were 23 Grade 4 and 5 students in the class, 13 boys and 10 girls. The teacher, Chen Sovanny, was beginning her second year of work in the classroom and was a graduate of Preah Vihear PTTC.



The second teaching area was a shelter with a plastic sheet roof and no walls (pictured below). Forty-nine children (Grade 1 - 24, Grade 2 - 15 and Grade 3 - 9) were crammed together on the heavy desks and benches. The teacher, Thy Dara, had graduated from the Preah Vihear TTC only a few months before. This was her first teaching position. Both she and her fellow teacher were boarding with the Director.

The Director was a Kru Jat-thang who had been teaching for many years but who had never had the opportunity for study at a Teacher Training Centre. He usually taught Grade 1 but had asked Teacher Dara to take them into her class on the morning of the visit.

Teacher supply and the role of the PTTC

One of the targets of the project was the recruitment of 190 new teachers, both qualified state teachers and contract teachers. While this objective has not been reached (see Table 18 below) and the issue of teacher shortage continues to be mentioned at every level, there are signs of improvement. Several policy changes at Ministry level have had an impact on the problem during the life of the project. The virtual abolition of the strategy of using Contract Teachers to cover gaps in teacher numbers in difficult-to-staff schools initially made the situation worse.³⁴ This is now beginning to be offset by the major success of increasing the allocation of places to remote provinces in the annual national quota for PTTC enrolment and enforcing requirements that entrants be bone fide residents of those provinces. It has been accompanied by a shift away from financial incentives for redeploying experienced teachers into remote areas (which had limited success) to a focus on deploying new PTTC graduates to difficult areas. The new approach appears to be working.³⁵

The MoEYS' strategy also prioritizes the local recruitment of women student teachers, important in remote areas because women are far more likely to return to their home communities, and stay there, after training, than are men. The evaluation team was particularly interested in the experiences of these younger, women teachers and met with a number of them during the field visits. Like their male counterparts they were enjoying their professional work. The biggest issue, for those working away from their home areas, was finding decent and safe accommodation. The possibilities ranged from purpose built teacher accommodation at Preah Khleang School to camping in a classroom, boarding

³⁴ From 2001-2002 to 2002-2003 to 2003-2004 Contract Teacher numbers nationally were slashed from 4 214 to 1 292 to 1 152 and in Preah Vihear from 31 to 0 and then back up again to 38.

³⁵ Genuine local recruitment for teacher education was one of the principal recommendations of the Schools of Hope evaluation of SCN-CO's project in Siem Reap in 2003 (see pp. 3, 20 and Recommendation 7, p. 37).

with Directors or boarding with members of the community. As the prospects of the government providing housing seems remote, even though it is mentioned in various planning documents, the local recruitment strategy does appear the most practical and sustainable. It is also, emphatically, what communities want as their experience is that teachers from other districts and provinces are frequently absent and rarely stay long.

Table 18 *Teacher numbers in Preah Vihear 2000/01-2004/05*

	Primary Teachers		Contract Teachers	No pedagogical training	PTTC enrolment	
	Total	Women			Total	Women
2000/01	522	145	8	27	97	21
2001/02	540	149	31	42	73	23
2002/03	645	169	0	40	60	28
2003/04	667	191	38	35	61	21
2004/05	697	212	19	13	90	16 + X*

Sources : MoEYS, *Education Statistics & Indicators 2000-01 to 2004-05* and interview at PTTC 12 Nov. 2005

* Numbers of women enrolled in first year for 2005-2006 not known at time of writing

Table 18 shows much improved intakes of student teachers into the PTTC in recent years, a steady decline in the number of teachers with no pedagogical training, a steady rise in the number of women teachers and the wild fluctuations around the use of Contract Teachers as Preah Vihear Province applied the new policy and then found it very difficult to keep schools open in their absence.

By helping the POE make representations at the national level on these issues SCN can assist Preah Vihear maintain and increase the number of state teachers working in provincial primary schools at a time when many pressures are building. The most pressing will be the continuing rise in student numbers in primary schools, particularly in historically under-served areas, (see p.25, above), and the planned expansion of Lower Secondary education attracting the best teachers from the primary system into re-training.³⁶

³⁶ Sixteen candidates from areas which are particularly remote and experience the most serious teacher shortages were given priority in the intake into the first year of teacher training at the PTTC in November 2005. In addition, 12 other teachers in very remote schools with histories of work as volunteers and Contract Teachers were offered the opportunity to undertake an examination for appointment as state teachers - 12 were successful (pers. comm. Keo Sarath/Kim Phearum, Phnom Penh, 13 January 2006).

Section 5.3

Changes in classrooms in terms of learning quality/behaviour (teachers, children)

Members of the evaluation team based their findings on the impacts of the project on learning and teaching on school and classroom observations, lesson observations and on interviews with Directors, teachers, children and community members. The overwhelming impression from school and classroom observations was that children were happy to be at school and were enjoying learning. That creating such an atmosphere at school contributes to the rate of participation and to effective learning is an obvious comment to make but one that is rarely factored into analyses of access and retention which rely on quantitative analysis.

Teaching and learning

Evaluation team members carried out 22 lesson observations during the field visit in November.

In general, teaching and learning could be described as reasonably learner centred. Although there was still considerable teacher talk, there were also discrete learning activities for children. Many of these activities involved small group tasks in which they were able to talk about their ideas and understandings with other children (in pairs, small groups or as a whole class). Lessons often seemed rather long to the evaluators with lengthy periods allowed children to complete relatively simple tasks. On the other hand, children rarely seemed bored with proceedings and certainly enjoyed the opportunities of working and talking together.

Evaluators did observe some shortages of textbooks and the need for sharing. Textbook shortages were much worse at Grade 4, 5 and 6 level and many teachers referred to it. Teachers did not have copies of Teacher Manuals in their classrooms and some were not to be found at all in the school. Teachers claimed, however, that they did refer to them at times. Again Grades 4, 5 and 6 were in shortest supply. Teachers generally were using content and examples from Ministry textbooks in their lessons but had usually devised their own learning activities and management arrangements. It was common to find whole class, small group and individual tasks all included in the same lesson.

Comparing learning and teaching in Preah Vihear to general Cambodian practice

To provide a focus for their observations, and to provide an external set of standards against which to measure the performance of teachers in schools, the team based its lesson observation form on the four teaching skills (the "four techniques") described in the MoEYS TGL package, an in-service curriculum which has been used in the MoEYS since 2000. The four techniques (Questioning, Classroom management, Use of the environment as a resource for teaching and Use of children's language in learning) were all classroom skills which teachers might reasonably be expected to have acquired in any sort of basic pedagogy program. Equally importantly, seeing them in schools everyday use in schools suggests that teachers were working in an enabling supervisory environment as many of the School Directors would be old style teachers with little exposure to child-centred methods.

Evaluators observed displayed many of the teacher behaviours which the TGL package aimed to develop. This speaks well of the teacher training work done under the project and of the supervisory

environment in which they are working. Features of the observations were the variety of classroom management techniques used (whole class, small groups, individual presentations, set both inside and outside the classroom); the amount of time children were able to spend in small groups talking about tasks; the extent to which teachers encouraged this student talk; the willingness of teachers to move around the classroom and assist individual students or groups; the teachers use of questions as a way of moving through a learning sequence and assessing children's level of understanding; the teachers natural style of speaking and responding to students' answers and the friendly atmosphere found in virtually all classrooms. It is important to stress that most observations were carried out in classrooms randomly selected by the evaluation team members (although the school and all the teachers were aware that the team would be visiting the school on that day).

In terms of the Four Techniques from the TGL Package the results of the observations have been summarized below.

Table 19 *Teacher behaviour in lessons observed in evaluation against the Four Techniques*

Technique	Conclusions from lesson observations	Assessment
1. Questioning	Frequent use of questions to drive content Frequent use of memory questions Some use of eliciting/experience questions Occasional thinking questions Frequent use of questions to evaluate learning	High level of application; higher level questions not common
2. Classroom management	Frequent use of whole class, small group and individual learning tasks Frequent use small group discussion tasks Some use of independent student research tasks Variety in working in and outside the class Frequent changes of work mode	Very high level of application; alternatives for Gr. 1 needed
3. Use of natural environment	Frequent use of natural environment as a setting for small group work High level of consciousness of the usefulness of the environment as a source of materials for teaching Some use of environmental materials in general teaching	High level of application
4. Using children's language	Frequent opportunities for children to discuss understandings in small group tasks Occasional capture of children's oral language by teacher for use in whole class tasks Some opportunities for older students to write short, original texts in response to teacher questions or tasks Some capture by teacher of children's written language for use in whole group tasks	High level of application; opportunities for greater capture exist, especially in writing

The new JSDF/SCN-CO classroom blocks all had classroom furniture purchased under the project. Desks and chairs, or benches, were much smaller and lighter than standard school furniture, much easier to move around to provide surfaces for group work or pair work. Most teachers, however, arranged these one person desks and chairs in rows and files and did not join them together to seat two or three children together or to form bigger groups of say 4 or 6. The result in some Grade 1 classrooms with very large enrolments (for example, around 60 in Saang Torsu Primary School) was that the entire floor area of the classroom was taken up these desks and teachers were finding children very difficult to manage. The teacher in the observed lesson at times had to almost shout to hold the attention of all the children in the room. With these large classes teachers would find it easier if the desks and chairs were grouped or if some of the desks and chairs were removed altogether and more use made of mats for working with larger groups on the floor. This would enable

teachers to set up groups more easily as well as being better able to identify and assist struggling or non-participating students.



New individual desks and chairs, portable and light, but filling up all the available floor space and leaving teachers no room to manoeuvre

Life skills

The decision to integrate life skills activities and approaches into the curriculum has also contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Its main contributions have been to focus attention on alternatives to classroom and textbook based instruction and send a clear message that formal education can be relevant to peoples' daily lives. This has been described earlier, pp. 28-30

Outside learning areas (Culture Centres, kiosks, under-the-tree)

All schools visited in November had organized outside learning areas. Evaluation team members saw numerous examples of the use of outside learning areas by children, teachers and community members during site visits. Children obviously enjoyed the variety that using such areas brought to the school day. The three main types of learning areas were Culture Centres, kiosks and areas prepared under trees.

Culture Centres

These structures are built by community members with assistance from teachers and children. They are typically a thatched roof cottage, often with half walls for ventilation. They usually include a blackboard at one end. Cross-cut sections of tree trunk are stood on their ends and used for seating with larger sections placed on top of smaller sections and used as tables. The seats and tables are arranged in groups or clusters. The walls of the Culture Centre are used to display artifacts of various kinds used locally. Items displayed are often labeled. Amongst collections seen by the evaluation team during the visit were agricultural implements, musical instruments, fish traps and machines, or parts of machines, used for spinning and weaving. As well as providing an attractive and interesting alternative venue for regular school activities, Culture Centres are also often used as a venue for school-community and general community meetings. Nearly all the interviews with community members during the evaluation were conducted in Culture Centres and they were certainly a more comfortable environment for such discussions than the standard school office. All the Culture Centres

seen during the evaluation at schools were constructed in 2004. Most have been well maintained although a couple of them were looking in need of a little attention and some of the internal displays had deteriorated a little.

Interestingly two of the DEOs (Koulen and Chey Sen) had added Culture Centres alongside the JSDF/SCN-CO provided offices and were proposing to use them for meetings as an alternative to more formal settings. The PEO in Tbeng had also recently constructed a Centre, with assistance from the recently retired District Director of Koulen, and it was first use for the meeting on 12 November in which the evaluation team presented its initial summary of findings.



Recently constructed Culture Centre, at left, next to the District Education Office, Chey Sen District

As is the case with many of the innovations introduced by the JSDF-SCN-CO project the challenge for Culture Centres will be to maintain interest and enthusiasm of both teachers and children and the community in the facility. While they obviously serve a useful and welcome purpose as a venue for outside learning activities by children and as a venue for community meetings, the aim in setting up Culture Centres ran a great deal deeper than that. The aim was that they would embody and showcase in the school the culture(s) of the local community in the broadest sense - ethno-scientific, technological, environmental and artistic. To realize this vision, schools will have to devise ways of constantly revitalizing displays in Culture Centres. Perhaps they could be used as exhibition spaces for children's work (especially community research work on local topics of interest such as agriculture, conservation and wildlife protection and EFA), renewed on a regular basis (say, monthly) with two classes sharing responsibility for creating and maintaining content. Centres could also be used for organizing displays about community education and development themes (for example, health messages, environmental conservation, electoral and human rights education) and offering them as spaces which can be used by CBOs and NGOs to publicize their activities.

Kiosks

These are typically a stout pole topped by a circular thatch roof, often with a table top and a bench underneath for children to sit around and work upon. They are often used for small group work or as a place for children to go to read, either in a group or independently. Most schools visited had two or three of these kiosks. They are also built by community members using materials donated or gathered locally.

Under-the-trees

Most schools also were using larger, shade trees in their grounds as places for whole class or group work. Blackboards were often affixed to the tree, or propped against it, so that teachers could write questions, collect information and ideas from students or for students to present the results of task work. Children again sat on sections of tree trunk which were arranged around the base of the tree. A couple of schools visited had fashioned very interesting under-the-tree areas in the middle of patches of bamboo (Pra Mer) or in a thicket of small trees (Anlong Svay).

In these outside work areas evaluation team members observed that much of the small group work time was being used productively and that tasks were being completed independently of the teacher. The levels of student interest and attention to their learning tasks in these surroundings was surprisingly high.



Outside learning area in a bamboo patch, Pra Mer Primary School
Tbeng Meanchey District



Outside learning area amongst the trees, Anlong Svay Primary School,
Rovieng District

Library facilities and resources

Some schools had dedicated library facilities, in others library collections shared space in the School Office while other schools had divided books up between classrooms ("corner libraries"). The final Project Quarterly Report state that : *137 schools have developed 165 different libraries which are divided into several types of libraries as follows : 12 separate libraries (separate room) , 16 libraries organized within the school office, 137 classroom corner libraries, 32 natural resources' libraries with a map that teacher organize in the classroom and human resources libraries.*³⁷ Metal boxes containing materials from the NGO Room to Read were in a number of schools. In two or three schools where the library and the office were combined or used for teacher accommodation, library furniture was stacked up against the wall.

The evaluation team did not see library materials (books and or games) in use in any of the schools visited, either in the libraries or in classrooms, although teachers in schools with libraries said that children liked going there once a week to use them. Some schools had librarians who were often also classroom teachers for at least one shift per day. Collections of print materials were generally very limited and consisted mainly of stocks of MoEYS textbooks and Mom and Mab magazines. There evaluation team were not shown any materials produced locally by children during their visits to schools and libraries but were assured that there were schools which have substantial collections, such as Koulen Primary School.

The project documentation describes three kinds of libraries which are in use in schools in Preah Vihear. The first kind is the familiar collection of books and other materials in a room or part of a room or as a corner library in classrooms. The second is the "natural library" by which is meant the local natural and historical environment which surrounds the school (different kinds of trees, wildlife, water resources, temples etc). Project reports describe how children document the location of these resources in the form of a map which are posted on the walls of the library or classrooms. Evaluation team members observed labels attached to trees in the playground in some schools. Teachers and community members also showed evaluators gardens with collections of medicinal plants, described how they were prepared and taken and what conditions they helped cure. The third set of resources is that described as the "human library", made up of individuals within the community who are knowledgeable about the local environment, culture, performing arts and so on.

This typology is a practical way of thinking about resources for teaching and learning and one which does not dwell on the paucity of materials in print form. It is also an important signal of respect for local knowledge and knowledgeable people - often dismissed or denigrated in the past as, at best, unscientific and at worst as simply primitive. The evaluation team did not see any local resource people involved in instruction during school visits, although several members of School Support Committees participating in interviews, talked in depth about the uses of medicinal plants in school gardens.

Water and sanitation

In most schools contractors built wells and toilets alongside classroom blocks.³⁸ The final Quarterly Report notes that 45 wells and pumps have been built. The wells were equipped with treadle pumps with bicycle chain mechanisms rather than hand pumps. Two of the bicycle chain mechanisms and one of the hand pumps at another school were observed to be broken by evaluation team members. The Director of the school with the broken hand pump, Putrea in Chey Sen, said that he had asked for a replacement part but it had not come and that this was delaying the preparation and planting of

³⁷ JSDF Report No. 9 p. 10

³⁸ Two schools in Chheb were built without toilets and wells after permission was given to split the 27th school construction funds between two isolated locations and build a three classroom block in both sites.

the school vegetable garden. The DEO confirmed that they knew of the problem but that they were expecting the school to raise funds locally for the part .

Toilet blocks consisted of two cubicles with tanks and squat toilets. There was ramp access to one of the toilets. EFA Studies conducted by schools showed that there were very few hygienic toilets in any area of the province and, for many children, the new JSDF/SCN-CO built toilets at the school was the first time they would have seen such a facility.

The evaluation team found that there were many places in which toilets were not being used by children and/or were kept locked. Sometimes this was because one or both were being reserved for the use of teaching staff. In other cases there were problems with daily maintenance such as keeping the tanks filled with water. In others there were far too many children for the two toilets available. School Directors and most teachers said that students used the toilets but it was clear that they were not or at least had been told not to on the day of the visit. There were signs in some schools that toilets had been specially prepared for the evaluation visit such as tanks filled to the brim, soap put out on the tank wall and spotless floors. The intention was not so much as to create a false impression as to show that the facilities were being well looked after.

Project staff agreed that this was the case. They explained that, like many of the other developments in schools in the province, the use of toilets had to proceed step by step. School EFA studies include data on domestic sanitation and show that hygienic toilets in rural villages are almost non-existent. In schools, then, toilets built under the project are first and foremost teaching and learning resources. Nonetheless, sanitation is an important part of the curriculum and the current situation is not very satisfactory.

The practice of children bringing boiled water from home to drink at school, though not universal, was observed in several schools, perhaps those in which pupils came from further away.

School grounds and classrooms were relatively free of litter. This is in total contrast to many rural schools in more heavily populated lowland provinces. Some schools had introduced bins and rubbish pits. There was rather more litter behind classroom blocks than in front of them but, again, far less than would be seen in other provinces.

Section 5.4

Levels of community participation/contributions in all areas

School community relationship

The increased level of involvement of community members in schools in Preah Vihear has been one of the most conspicuous achievements of the SCN-CO-JSDF project. Beginning with work on basic improvements to the environment of established schools and the construction of mini-schools in unserved areas, community participation has now become an accepted part of the life of many of the primary schools in the province. Members of the evaluation team saw many much physical evidence of this involvement during school visits and also heard directly from representatives of School Support Committees, EFA groups and community based development groups about the impact of the project. SCN-CO project members also showed the team many examples of the documentation of project interventions on video which have been made over the past two years.

School construction, furniture and equipment

Project staff and counterparts oversaw the construction of 28 schools and seven DEO office buildings between in 2004 and 2005 with JSDF funds. In all the school sites the JSDF-funded schools had been preceded by mini-schools built by community members. Funds for the building of another 20 schools (18 primary and two Lower Secondary) in the province came from an ADB loan. These new physical facilities obviously contributed greatly to the increase in participation. During the field visit in November, members of the evaluation team visited all seven DEOs and 10 of the 28 JSDF school buildings. Construction was of standard comparable to school buildings erected by other organizations such as ADB, SEILA, RAD 1 and RAD 2.

Furniture was also provided under the JSDF grant. Evaluation team members noted that lighter, more maneuverable tables and chairs were in many classrooms with smaller sizes for Grade 1 and 2. The project also provided furniture for DEO and School offices including meeting tables and chairs, cupboards, shelves and large display boards for displaying statistical information about enrolment and attendance, school plans and budgets, school staff organigrams, membership of School Support Committees and school and community maps. Low level library tables and small benches were also provided in a number of schools.

SCN-CO produced documents in support of community training programs and to assist community members monitor construction. These materials included photographs of logos and brand names of construction materials required under the building contracts. Community members were able to report any perceived irregularities to the project and project staff would investigate on site. In one case such a report, on dry and crumbling concrete, led to an inspection visit from SCN-CO and an order to demolish and re-build. The contractor duly complied and the building was re-established. In general, however, contractors carried out their responsibilities satisfactorily.

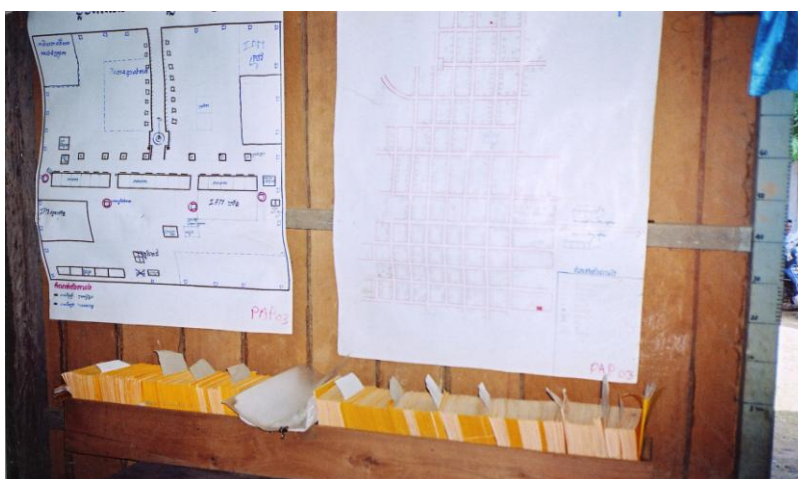
Team members who interviewed community representatives at schools during the evaluation found a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the construction process and the quality of the finished schools. Community representatives from School Support Committee were involved in consultations on the letting of contracts and on issuing approvals of the quality of work at various times during construction. The level of community involvement and general transparency appeared to be high and

an improvement over the process in Siem Reap where some concern was expressed over the full participation of school and community in all steps of the process.³⁹

As in Siem Reap, school construction in Preah Vihear helped project staff and counterparts focus community attention on education to good effect. Experience in other remote areas, however, Ratanakiri for example, has been that the construction of school buildings alone does not necessarily impact upon participation rates. That they were complimented in Preah Vihear by enrolment campaigns, parent-teacher days and various other ways in which community members contributed to improving the facilities of the school and the quality of its instructional program was obviously important.

School EFA mapping

SCN-CO has greatly expanded the work done on school mapping and community-school research documented in Siem Reap in 2003.⁴⁰ What began as an activity to help schools identify with precision the locations of all children of school age in their catchment area is now more comprehensive. SCN-CO staff chose school mapping as a key topic in one of the workshops for all school staff. During the workshop Trainers both introduced the new, broader concept of school mapping and began the collection of data as a workshop task. Following the workshop, small teams of teachers, students and community members continued the collection of data in sub-sections of the villages in the school catchment area. The data collected was written up in small yellow booklets, one for each family. Sets of these booklets, in their conspicuous yellow covers, were very easy to spot in school offices during the evaluation. The data from these booklets was then consolidated onto a single return for each school and also written up as a flip chart. These school flip charts set out the information topic by topic in the form of bar graphs and were used both in the school and to make presentations to other interested parties (such as the Commune Council or other government departments).



School map and collection of family books containing EFA data, Koulen Primary School, Koulen District

The production of these flip charts, apart from being a very useful in-service activity for teachers with its combination of research, data compilation and analysis and IEC tasks, was highly symbolic. It underlined the shift in school-community relationships which had taken place over the two years of the project in Preah Vihear. All respondents were clear that a major impact of the project had been to add a dimension to the concept of accountability in schools. From a situation in which accountability

³⁹ Schools of Hope, p. 34 and p. 36

⁴⁰ Schools of Hope, p 5, p.17)



Flipchart summarizing the outcomes of EFA data collection activities, Koulen Primary School, Koulen District

had been totally one dimensional (vertical - to the Ministry of Education), there is now a second dimension (horizontal - to the communities which the school serves). The collection of EFA data was a demonstration of accountability to local families and their children by schools taking the trouble to find out about the situation of those communities and the people who lived in them.

Community participation

A member of the evaluation team interviewed community groups in 24 schools during the evaluation. The groups were generally made up of members of the School Support Committee.⁴¹ These groups were adamant that there had been a dramatic change in attitudes and practices during the project and that active community involvement was now a fact of school life. It was clear that community representatives were very much at home in the school grounds. Most of the interviews took place in Culture Centres which had themselves been constructed by community labour. The community groups did not need any assistance or prompting by School Directors to answer questions or give their ideas and opinions and in most cases met with evaluation team members without any school staff being present.

Community members have participated in school improvement in many ways. The most conspicuous has probably been in providing materials and labour to improve school environments. All the schools visited during the evaluation, and most of those sighted, had outside learning areas in the school grounds - either in kiosk style or the arrangement of stumps around a blackboard fixed to, or leaning against, a large, shady tree. Many others had additional improvements such as Culture Centres, internal fences and paths, signage (slogans and alphabet blocks) and vegetable, flower and specialized gardens. In addition the evaluation group saw temporary classrooms built by community members and some of the community-built mini-schools which are still in use.

Other varieties of community participation documented during the evaluation were providing support to teachers, especially new teachers; involvement in school EFA mapping data collection and involvement in the instructional programs of some schools. Several community groups and teacher groups interviewed during the evaluation described ways in which communities supported teachers.

⁴¹ These Committees, called School Support Committees in most of Cambodia, were known in Preah Vihear as School Development Committees early in the project and EFA Committees by 2005.

These included giving food, offering accommodation or assisting teachers who were staying in or around school buildings, providing land for teachers to establish small vegetable gardens. Assistance to newly qualified teachers is particularly important as they do not receive any remuneration for three or four months into the new school year (remote area incentives) and do not receive any payment of salary until the end of the year. The most easily quantifiable result of community participation in EFA research activities and follow up have been the increases in enrolment rates and the identification of children of school age still outside the education system who need special consideration to bring into schools. Community awareness of schools' new emphasis on serving the local community has been heightened by high profile activities such as school enrolment campaigns and parent-teacher days. Enrolment campaigns have often included a parade of school children and other vehicles around the village or town and special activities at the school. Parent-teacher days are ceremonies which take place at school in which parents are invited to sit alongside teachers. Children make public statements of their own commitment to attending school, acknowledging the role of parents in supporting their participation and of teachers in helping them learn.

Concrete examples of community involvement in schools' instructional programs were more difficult for the evaluation team to document. Displays of traditional household artifacts, weapons, traps, agricultural implements and musical instruments were sighted in many Culture Centres and the exhibits were supplied by community members. Evaluation team members also saw medicinal plant gardens in a number of schools and met community members (and teachers) who were knowledgeable in the use of these plants. What was less clear, however, was how community members participated in the school's instructional program or the way local knowledge was being documented and made accessible to teachers. No observations were made of direct input by community members during the evaluation.



Community representatives, Neang Ly and Rem Khan, after meeting the evaluation team in the Culture Centre at Putrea School, described some of the community artifacts on display

Another clear example of community involvement in instructional programs or materials development was the preparation of a Kouy language translation of the MoEYS Grade 1 Khmer Language textbook.⁴² The document was drafted by a Provincial Ethnic Minority Education Development

⁴² JSDF Report 8 stated that the Pedagogical Research department (of the MoEYS) was cooperating with 1 persons with phonological expertise to provide technical advice to the PEMEDC "to edit and revision a draft learning material (written Khmer scrip textbook for KOUY ethnic minority classes) that have been developed and

Committee (PEMEDC) with some Kouy membership.⁴³ This has already been discussed, above (pp. 39-41). Another JSDF Report mentioned "collecting pictures, sound recordings and video on Kouy way of life" although it also added that : "It seems still to be difficult for PEO and DEO to produce teaching and learning material for ethnic minority student. However, those students are studying in the ordinary classes with other children."⁴⁴ It does appear that work in this area of the project has not proceeded in the way described in the project design document and that some of the early statements of intention have not been realized.

piloted over a year. This Khmer-Kouy scrip textbook is becoming a special supplementary teaching material." (p. 11)

⁴³ A Provincial Committee "for ethnic minority education for Khmer script development has been established to support the national ethnic minority education committee for textbook development with Khmer script for Kouy minority. Textbook will be a bridge for Kouy children to be able to learn national curriculum textbooks. " (JSDF Report No. 4, p. 3)

⁴⁴ JSDF Report No. 4, p. 3 and Report No. 3, p. 5

Section 5.5

Constraints under which the project has been implemented (included in Section 6, Factors affecting implementation)

Section 5.6

Potential of ideas in project for application in other disadvantaged areas

Broad implications for Cambodian primary education from Preah Vihear

Many of the innovations described above have potential for broad application in Cambodian primary schools. Others are of particular relevance to small schools in rural and remote areas. The following table classifies the innovations into these two categories (of broad relevance and of specific relevance to isolated schools) and offers a comment about each.

Innovations in SCN-CO project with broad implications for schools in Cambodia

Table 20.1 Innovations with broad relevance to all schools

Intervention	Comment
1.1 Approaching primary education holistically with a strong life skills foundation	Project demonstrates how life skills approaches can be integrated into the school program, rather than added on, to increase the relevance of primary education and promote interest amongst children and parents
1.2 Encouraging teacher reflection and self-evaluation as quality improvement mechanisms	Project offers an alternative to current practices which rely on external assessments of erratic quality by infrequent inspection visits as a quality monitoring device; also offers a methodology by which isolated teachers can work systematically on developing skills in the absence of support. Such a component could also be considered for inclusion in the pre-service teacher education course.
1.3 Assisting isolated and under-qualified teachers improve teaching skills through teacher-to-teacher support from mobile teacher teams	Project offers a practical, relevant alternative to the infrequent visits referred to above and should help build support networks for isolated teachers that have been conspicuously absent; peer support is also likely to be more responsive and less directive in dealing with issues of teaching and learning and is likely to be far more cost effective
1.4 Streamlining reporting procedures from school to District and District to Province	Project offers a clear and practical model which could rationalize a system characterized by the poor organization, use and retention of data. It enables Districts to offer effective support to schools on the basis of evidence of need. It could also help provide a solid foundation for building a system of school performance appraisal which the MoEYS has stated is a policy target.
1.5 Promoting the concept of District Working Groups	DEO staff are moving towards being generalists and working together as a group to support education activities in the district rather than operating along departmental lines
1.6 Promoting exchanges of good management practice at District level	A practical school-helping-school process which will be a vital part of a more formal and comprehensive school appraisal process towards which the MoEYS is working (this activity would be conducted at Cluster level in less remote, more populous Districts)
1.7 Extending school mapping	An activity which offers many possibilities for integration within the

activities to include a wide range of socio-economic data to help schools better understand the communities they serve	primary program and teacher in-service training activities; the expanded mapping activities give school staff insights into the communities in which they are working and promotes the ideas that (i) schools serve a local community (rather than the reverse) and (ii) schools should be responsive to local socio-economic and environmental conditions in designing their instructional programs.
1.8 Conducting training using participatory methodology and clear, practical tasks for participants, both in and after the workshop, with documentation based on workshop outcomes	Training methodology demonstrates learner-centred approach, consistent with that advocated for teaching-learning in school; workshop and follow up activities for participants involve practical applications of key ideas and content; formal documentation is prepared after (not before) the workshop demonstrating that workshops are dynamic, not simply knowledge transfer, processes.

Table 20.2 Innovations with specific relevance to isolated schools

Intervention	Comment
2.1 Using external mentors (<u>but selected from within MoEYS ranks</u>) to provide continuous, on-the-job training for MoEYS officials at District level in Preah Vihear	Addresses the immediate need for experienced, well trained and qualified staff in areas in which human resources are limited; offers continuous on-the-job training and a way of following up formal training inputs in the work place and demonstrating accountable and transparent practices in the workplace, especially in relation to financial management
2.2 Mobilization of communities around the construction of mini-schools and community-supported volunteer teachers	The strategy of working with communities to build mini-schools in under-served areas as a catalyst for mobilization continues to be effective and the level of community interest is reinforced when permanent schools can subsequently be constructed. Teachers move from volunteer to contract status and now there is the prospect of newly graduated, fully trained teachers beginning to staff these schools.
2.3 Maintaining incomplete schools (Grades 1-2 or 1-3) in some very small communities	It may not be possible to offer complete primary schooling to all children living in very small and/or isolated communities; there may be a case for establishing/maintaining some incomplete schools to Grade 3 level with older children being able to ride bicycles greater distances to continue to Grades 4, 5 and 6 at another, larger village.
2.4 New approaches to multi-grade teaching	The project has introduced new approaches to multi-grade teaching which emphasize the potential benefits, rather than the difficulties, of teaching in such classrooms. Focuses include child-to-child support, independent learning activities and a much more integrated daily program.
2.5 Assisting isolated and under-qualified teachers improve skills through teacher-to-teacher support from mobile teams	See general comments (1.2, 1.3 in Table 19.1). In isolated areas the cost (in money and time) of supervisory visits will always be an inhibiting factor so teacher-to-teacher support, using the best local practitioners available, offers a practical alternative
2.6 Increasing the frequency and depth of visits from DEO personnel to schools	Regular contacts between DEO and remote schools are necessary for DEO to have a realistic picture of their situation; they also play a vital role in maintaining teacher morale and in demonstrating commitment to parents/community (<u>but are very sensitive to vagueries of funding</u>)
2.7 Identifying and engaging local resource people in the school's instructional program	This is a potentially powerful strategy for building the relationship between schools and communities, especially in ethnic minority areas. It demonstrates schools' sensitivity to cultural and linguistic diversity and that the education system values non-mainstream knowledge, skills, artistic expression and belief systems
2.8 Promoting community support for infrastructure development and teacher support in isolated schools with potential for dissemination of good ideas through additions to the menus of school improvement planning in remote schools	In an under-resourced system, community contributions continue to be essential and there are a range of high value activities they can organize, especially in connection with the improvement of the school environment (Culture Centres, outside learning areas, <i>natural libraries</i> and <i>human libraries</i>), the instructional program of the school and the living conditions and general well-being of teachers.

Note on Sections 5.7 to 5.9 and Sections 6 and 7

The sections which follow about the project structure, design, implementation, lessons learned, implications for education in Preah Vihear and relevant to MoEYS strategies necessarily involve repetition. Where the point being made has been discussed elsewhere in greater detail in a preceding section then it is repeated only as a phrase or statement with a reference in parentheses to more comprehensive reference.

Section 5.7.1

Strengths and weaknesses in the project design

The basic belief on which the project rested, that combining a major construction initiative with support on human factor activities by an NGO working in partnership with government at the local level would produce a powerful mobilizing effect on disadvantaged communities, has been realized. All stakeholders consulted during the evaluation, from the Governor, education officials and teachers to children and community members, agreed that public education in Preah Vihear has been transformed over the last two years.

The project design was ambitious. It set targets at high levels, especially for participation in the more remote Districts in the province. It is a credit to the project team, Ministry counterparts and all stakeholders that targets have been achieved on some major indicators and that many of the project targets have been met over all, or in most of the Preah Vihear's 154 primary schools. Some targets have proved to be unreachable, partly due to the duration of the project. Meeting teacher recruitment figures has not been achieved but much progress has been made and experiences in Preah Vihear have undoubtedly helped shape the Ministry's new policy on focusing on local recruitment (rather than redeployment and incentives) to meet the demand for teacher in remote areas. Two years was also too short to achieve many of the ideas for ethnic minority curriculum and materials development set out in the design document.

Some of the strengths and weaknesses identified in Table 17 and Table 18 below have already been discussed in the report. In such cases the feature is stated is written in summary form with a reference to the place(s) in the text where more detailed descriptions have been given.

In setting out the information in the two tables below STRENGTHS have been interpreted as those parts of the Project Design which the evaluation team found to have been carried out to good effect and the satisfaction of stakeholders. WEAKNESSES have been interpreted as those parts of the project design which the evaluation team has found were not carried out effectively or were not able to be carried out effectively, often because of external constraints. It does not necessarily mean that any of the ideas themselves were weak - in most cases they will be followed up in the next four years of SCN support.

Table 21 Strengths in the project design

	STRENGTHS	Reference
1	Comprehensive and holistic approach, integrated approach	15-16, 29-30
2	7 DEO's and 28 schools with wells and latrines	60-61
3	Collection, reporting and management of accurate statistics	26, 61-62

4	Range of activities to support increased enrolment including enrolment campaigns	63
5	Child friendly learning environments	37
6	Increasing child responsibility for their own learning	51,53-4,
7	Exploring synergies/complementarities between existing curriculum and life skill activities	29
8	Teacher training, follow up, on job training, supervision, teacher self-assessment	28-29
9	Establishing child to child support groups	56-57
10	Multi-grade teaching strategies	50-51
11	Teacher support strategies - Thursday sessions	47
12	Mainstreaming disabled students	37-38
13	Life skills as away of drawing poor children to school and away from work	29
14	Life skills approach to operate as a learning tool for teachers themselves	30
15	Let parents see relevance of schooling through home applications of life skills	30
16	Life skills programs with PDAFF (poultry, fish, vegetables) and implement at home	30
17	School libraries strengthened - materials, equipment, furniture. Training for librarians	58
18	Efficient school management	34-35
19	HTs/AHTs trained in management - statistics, planning, teacher supervision, reporting	31-35
20	7 Facilitators seconded from other provinces for on the job training and follow up at DEOs, returning to their provinces on completion	32-33

Table 22 Weaknesses in the project design

	WEAKNESSES	Comment	Pages
1	Recruit 290 teachers (TTC grads or Contract Teachers)	Progress made, not fully realized Timeframe too short. Decision-making beyond control of Province (and, to some extent, MoEYS)	53-54
2	Developing methods, materials, teaching manuals, textbooks etc. materials for mother tongue and Khmer language instruction for ethnic minority children (knowledge is available others organizations but will need adaptation)	Limited progress. Modest outputs. Curriculum development very difficult for officials and teachers with limited pedagogical training and no experience in curriculum development. Time frame of project too short. Other sources of input not fully explored.	40-43
3	Developing self-learning programs for children	Project has had success with self-learning as a strategy for group work in standard and multi-grade classes but "self-learning programs" probably overstates the case. Very challenging for teachers with limited pedagogical training.	50-53 86
4	Multi-grade teaching strategies	Problematic. Assumed that teachers with limited pedagogical training would be able to adopt multi-grade strategies. Limited vision and technical leadership from the MoEYS on this strategy despite its potential to address problem of incomplete primary schools	50-52
5	School libraries strengthened - materials, equipment, and furniture. Training for librarians	Very limited collections of books observed (but interesting alternative approaches in cataloguing local natural resources and identifying local human resources)	58

Section 5.7.2

Strengths and weaknesses in project implementation

Most of the strengths and weaknesses identified below have already been discussed in the report. In such cases the feature is stated in summary form with a reference to the place(s) in the text where more detailed descriptions have been given

Strengths

1. A strong philosophical foundation for working with post-conflict societies

The process of implementing the project has been shaped by beliefs about the impact of warfare and extreme poverty on Cambodian society and that these must come before technical, educational interventions. There has been a strong emphasis on relationship-building and emphasizing practical activities (pp. 15-16).

2. Building a functioning system of management of education in the province

Accurate and comprehensive data gathered by schools has been transmitted to DEOs and DEOs have transmitted it to PEOs using simplified forms. Regular planning is taking place at all levels and plans are being properly filed. There is a general sense of a functioning system in place (pp. 31-35).

3. Working closely with DEOs and providing TA at District level in a mentoring role

SCN-CO chose to make formal agreements with each of the seven districts under the project and place a Facilitator from outside the province in each one. Facilitators have been able to provide continuous, on-the-job training (more effectively than capacity building than short, formal courses) and their presence has had a positive effect on accountability and transparency in DEO practice. The fact that they were working under official MoEYS appointments also lent them credibility and clout.

It may be a step in overcoming objections within the public education system to talented people working outside their own provinces and the tendency for provincial officials to try and retain funds for trainers within their province, even when competent people do not exist. It is also in accordance with the Ministry's commitment to appointment and promotion on merit rather than on seniority or other considerations and could be a useful strategy to address issues of patronage and nepotism which are still widespread (pp. 31-33).

4. EFA mapping

SCN-CO has greatly expanded the work done on school mapping and community-school research begun in Otdar Meanchey and Siem Reap. Schools are actively researching local communities, collecting data and thinking about how schools programs can be made more relevant and useful to them (pp. 61-62)

5. Community participation

School Support Committees and parents express positive opinions about the work of schools and there is much evidence of their participation in improvements to school environments (pp. 62-64)

6. Teachers' application of new ideas, morale and teacher-to-teacher support

The evaluation team found much evidence of the willingness of teachers to take up new ideas, especially in relation to the planning and management of child-centred learning activities and the general child friendliness of classrooms (pp. 46-48, 53-57). All informants in interviews with evaluation team members frequently talked about how much teaching and learning in schools had

changed. All perceive that life skills approaches have been important in demonstrating linkages between school learning and family life.

Teacher morale, even in isolated schools, is high. There is evidence of community support for teachers in remote areas. Relationships between the older generation of teachers and a new, younger, TTC-trained teacher cohort appear to be comfortable. The role of SCN-CO in providing relevant, participatory training and following it up, even in remote schools, has been important in helping teachers feel that they are valued and that they are developing professionally (pp. 62-63).

7. Emphasizing sustainability by avoiding salary supplementation

SCN-CO has not continued its previous practice of paying counterparts at Provincial and District levels various levels of monthly salary supplement. The mentor approach is has proved a much more effective and sustainable alternative. The responsibilities of a mentor are clear and payment is for a full-time commitment. In Preah Vihear there have been no token payments to figure heads, irrespective of whether they contributed to the work of the project or simply "facilitated" it (p. 31).

8. Sharing and spreading good ideas

SCN-CO has used study tours and cross-visits very effectively to disseminate good ideas and lessons learned in the project both within and outside the province. A good example of this is the way that DEOs and the PEO have now constructed Culture Centres in their compounds as a venue for less formal meetings and as a display area (p. 57).

9. Use of computer technology and digital media to publicize project innovations and impacts

SCN-CO placed lap top computers in each DEO and extensive use was made of simple camcorder video cameras to document project activities. Amongst the results have been the publication of leaflets summarizing achievements at District and Provincial levels and several hours of archival video which has been used to publicize the project to groups visiting Preah Vihear and to wider audiences, such as at the MoEYS Annual Congress in October 2005 (p. 21).

10. Strong identification of SCN-CO with the province, commitment to ongoing support

SCN-CO undertook research and development activities in Preah Vihear before receiving the JSDF grants and has made a substantial commitment to remain in the province after the ending of the grant-funded project in December 2005. This has been a significant factor in securing and maintaining a strong partnership with officials in the province. It has also enabled SCN to build up its own knowledge of the capacities of key individuals with whom it works (p. 5, 19)

11. Adding a new dimension to school accountability

Schools and DEOs in Cambodia have always been conscious of their place near the bottom of a top-down system of governance. Accountability was vertical, school to District, District to Province. Under the project, schools and DEOs have begun to add a horizontal dimension - to local communities. Obvious examples of this are the way in which EFA mapping activities have been carried out and in the way life skills approaches are described by teachers, children and their families. This is major shift, from a strong feeling that the school-community relationship was basically one in which communities support schools, to one in which schools also serve communities (p.61-62).

12. Matching teacher supply to demand and addressing severe shortages

SCN, with other NGOs, has been active in lobbying the MoEYS to focus on local recruitment as the main strategy to address issues of teacher shortage. Preah Vihear provides a good example of what can be achieved by targeted recruitment to PTTCs and support of teachers in the field (p.52-53).

Weaknesses (or areas for further work ...)

1. Complexity, number of interventions, high maintenance

While the evaluation team appreciated the breadth and depth of the interventions introduced under the project the sheer number of activities which have been launched has created major challenges of maintenance (pp. 5, 19-20, p. 78).

2. Ethnic minority curriculum

Ethnic minority work has not been informed by consultation with other organizations working in the field. This is particularly the case with the systematic investigation of language use at home and at school in project target areas (i.e. no language use survey), linguistic analysis of Kouy and the development of supplementary learning materials. Both ICC and CARE would have been able to provide very useful assistance in these areas. That PV people have not been able to travel to Ratanakiri to see what CARE/ICC have been doing is also an opportunity missed (pp. 40-43).

3. Pre-Service Teacher Training

Although there has been some participation by staff from the PTTC in project-supported activities, interviews with neophyte teachers revealed that the content of their pre-service course had neglected the key Ministry strategy of multi-grade teaching. Some teachers said that it had not been covered and PTTC staff confirmed, during an interview, that they was the case.

The SCN-CO Education Coordinator informed the evaluation team that this is a priority area for work in 2006. One of the activities being considered is increasing the amount of time given over to practice teaching activities and other time to be spent in schools. Project staff will work with PTTC lecturers to plan, organize and carry out these activities in cooperation with schools. Capable teachers, identified during teacher education activities in the project, will have a prominent role in working with student teachers.

4. Teacher self-assessment

The strategy of teacher self-assessment adopted by the project was a worthy idea but the time available was not enough to entrench it. SCN's commitment to a further four years in the province should provide the opportunity for follow up. The framework adopted for introducing self-assessment was also a very challenging one for teachers to become comfortable with in two years (pp. 27-28).

5. Moving from centrally mediated to locally mediated interventions and activities

Schools visited looked very similar - blue slogan boards, internal paths and low fences, kiosks, under-the-trees learning areas and so on. This was an excellent way to begin work in the project, immediately involving communities and building confidence through success in achievement. The challenge will be to maintain the current momentum and to encourage the emergence of local ideas so that ideas begin to come from the communities themselves rather than being centrally mediated (pp. 35-36).

6. Responding directly to problems of multi-grade teachers

SCN staff maintain, correctly, that just about every class is a multi-grade class. This has no doubt been done to make the point that there is nothing terribly different about a multi-grade class, especially in a remote area, from a "normal" one. It is a good point, but it is also evasive. What does make multi-grade classes different is the formal requirement that teachers must teach two distinct bodies of content using two distinct sets of curriculum support materials. If teachers see this as a problem then it ultimately has to be addressed (p. 51).

7. Looking inwards, looking outwards

SCN-CO has been able to manage very well to date in a number of recent projects in challenging areas in Cambodia. In particular agency staff have developed an expertise in working in remote, re-integration areas, at a time when few other agencies or programs were doing so in effective ways. SCN-CO has also been successful in developing exclusive relationships with MoEYS officials and

teachers in the provinces, districts and school with whom they have worked. But there may be benefits, now, in opening up to other ideas and resource people. It is notable that visits to the project and other areas visited by project staff and beneficiaries have mostly been from SCN-CO areas. This may tend to reinforce insularity rather than broaden experience - something which field trips are supposed to do. The rapid pace of change in Cambodia, however, is increasingly bringing remote areas within the national fold. It may be difficult in the future for SCN to work in quite the same exclusive way it has managed so successfully in reintegration areas since 1999.

There are several interventions about to commence which will have an impact in Preah Vihear. One is the Cambodian Education Sector Support Program (CESSP) to be implemented by the MoEYS with World Bank support. Its main focuses are construction of lower secondary schools and quality improvement in basic education (including primary schools). Another is a much smaller, but more closely targeted, MoEYS project funded by the Asian Development Bank aimed at improving quality of education in remote primary schools by greater community involvement. The project will make small (\$1,500 to \$3,000) quality improvement grants available to schools on the basis of consultative school improvement planning.⁴⁵ The third intervention is to investigate and undertake pilot activities in bi-lingual education in a number of provinces (CARE-UNICEF). SCN will be sought out by staff employed in all of these project teams, in part for pragmatic, intelligence gathering reasons, but also out of a genuine desire to learn from SCN's experience.

How will SCN staff deal with these, and other, interventions and the agencies directing them ? Does it mean that there will be a greater need for networking ? Does it have implications, for example, for the preparation of documents by education program staff ? It may be in the interests of SCN, for example, to begin publishing English versions of at least some of their key documentation.

⁴⁵ In the first year of operations the MoEYS/ADB project will work with thr Chey Sen District in Preah Vihear (see p. 88, below)

Section 5.8

Tentative assessment/report on cost effectiveness/ management/utilization of project resources

Construction

Construction activities were completed under budget, on time and to a high level of quality in what is a particularly challenging area. The level of community involvement in the management and ongoing supervision of the building process is also exceptional. Construction activities in Cambodia are notoriously susceptible to poor quality performance and the skimming of commissions. It is an important precedent that an NGO can work closely with communities to manage such a process to the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Technical Assistance

SCN-CO has been able to demonstrate a high level of cost effectiveness in its previous major education interventions. This is principally because it has operated largely at a provincial level and has avoided the overheads associated with a national office. That all the technical staff are Khmer represents a huge saving in staff salaries. The principal mentors (Provincial Facilitators) were MoEYS staff seconded to the project and paid monthly salaries of US \$400. Payments for the four national Consultants in the project budget, at \$18 900 over the 27 months of the project are very modest. Any other comparable organization working in education in Cambodia would be employing at least two or three specialist international staff on a program of this level of sophistication. Expatriate TA of comparable experience and with only rudimentary Khmer language skills, if any were available in country, could be (conservatively) estimated at \$30 000 to \$60 000 per year. More likely would be expatriate consultants without in-country experience in which case the initial 3-6 months of any contract is needed to develop some understanding of the context in which they are working. UN agencies working in Cambodia routinely budget \$250-300 000 per year for program officers.

NGO efficiencies

The Preah Vihear project again shows what can be achieved through a collaboration between a large donor, NGO and government. NGOs keep implementation costs down, are realistic, can organize rapid start up, have an ongoing presence in the field which encourages enterprise and inhibits mismanagement and corruption and can bridge between local experience and national level policymakers. As summarized in Schools of Hope :

The multi-lateral/NGO nexus is a very interesting arrangement. ... Multilaterals have the capacity to mobilize/make available resources on a scale that can make major impacts both in terms of geographical coverage and in terms of depth of impact in particular places. Such a level of resources is a strong attraction to government to become involved as it enables them to show people that they can do things that improve people's lives and that they are seen as generally "good". The role of the NGO is critical because they address two of the biggest weaknesses of the donor and the government; that is, the inability of the donor organization to monitor and provide technical support at ground level and the inability of the MoEYS to demand the level of accountability, responsibility and the mentality of "civil service" from its staff necessary to carry out these activities successfully (chiefly because civil service salaries are so low). The presence of the NGO helps create the environment in which responsible and capable public officials can work to their best of their ability.

Schools of Hope, p. 42

Section 5.9

Key strengths, weaknesses and recommendations relevant to MoEYS development strategies

SCN has a historical relationship with the MOEYS stretching back to the late 1980's. It was one of the first NGOs to work with the concept of Cluster Schools in Cambodia. It was also one of the first to take up the challenge of working in areas formerly run by remnants of the Khmer Rouge. SCN staff have worked in post conflict villages in Otdar Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kompong Chhnang and now Preah Vihear and Pursat. In doing so they have built up their own theory of practice which has proven very effective in mobilizing community participation and energizing all those involved in education.

The MoEYS began to undertake its own comprehensive, data-based reviews and planning exercises of the education sector in Cambodia since 1999 when it published its first national EFA country report. Two years later the first Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2001-2005 was published. This policy document was accompanied by an Education Sector Support Plan (ESSP), for the same period, which described how policy would be transformed into action, taking into account government revenues and the contributions of international organizations, bi-lateral programs and NGO's.

SCN staff have been involved in all the annual reviews of the ESP and ESSP which have been held since 2001, partly through their membership in the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) and also in their own right, as a donor. It is as a donor that SCN participates at the meetings of Ministry-Donors-NGOs which are held from time to time during the year and in the more regular meetings of the Education Sector Working (the peak IO-NGO body giving advice to the government one ducation sector activities). Apart from these formal contacts, SCN staff are often sought out by Ministry Departments for policy-related discussions, technical assistance and training. Ministry managers also frequently ask SCN to perform curriculum development tasks and drafts produced are then discussed with Ministry staff before being approved for piloting or broader application.

Given this background it is not surprising to find that there is a high level of consistency between practice in Preah Vihear and the key strategies and activities of the Ministry (many of which are listed in Table 22, below).

However, being an NGO also allows SCN to innovate and experiment much more readily than can any department of a national Ministry. The JSDF grant for work in Preah Vihear enabled SCN to push many existing ideas further forward and introduce others. The most promising of these innovative practices have already been set out earlier in this report in Section 5.6 (*Potential of ideas in the project for applications in other areas*, pp. 66-67).

Table 23 Application of key Ministry strategies and activities in Preah Vihear

Key MoEYS strategy and activities	References	Practice in Preah Vihear
Commitment to EFA	ESP pp. 2,6	Numerous examples
Commitment to MDG	ESP p. 2	Experimentation with MDG village concept
Commitment to quality	ESP pp. 2, 6, 7 etc	Numerous examples
Commitment to the poor, vulnerable groups, disadvantaged, border areas and social problems	ESP pp. 6, 8, 16 etc.	All these issues and groups are addressed or targeted in the Preah Vihear project
Cross cutting issues include gender, ethnic minorities, disability and issues relating to	ESP p. 12	All issues are topical in Preah Vihear, project has addressed all though some e.g. gender)

geographical location (remote, border and reconciliation areas)		remain problematic
Reduction of repetition, drop out and increase participation	ESP pp. 8	Project has applied to strong effect through EFA activities, enrolment campaigns etc.
EFA participation by schools and communities	ESP p. 10, 11	Project has applied in depth
Recruitment of PTTC students and deployment of graduates to underserved areas, local recruitment of student teachers	ESP p. 9, 20	Project staff have worked with POE to apply this policy and has contributed to policy development
Capacity building at provincial and district levels in support of decentralization	ESP pp. 5, 10, 11	See below under <i>Additional comments</i>
Improve performance monitoring and reporting, governance and accountability	ESP p. 10	Intensive work with School Directors, DEOs and PEOs to improve management
Greater delegation to regional/local authorities	ESP pp. 10-11	Project has put into practice by organizing direct technical support to PEO and DEOs and animating the administrative system
Educational development as a partnership between MoEYS, Donors and NGOs	ESP pp. 2,3, 11, 25-26 etc	Project is an excellent example
PAP operational school grants to eliminate school fees and encourage community participation in school improvement planning	ESP p. 8	Project has stressed community participation in planning and management of resources
National Curriculum Development Policy 2005-2009	NCDP Policy	Project has emphasized the importance of child learning activities, children's demonstrations of learning, the use of life skills approaches and curriculum integration
National Child Friendly Schools (CFS) Policy	NCFS Policy	Project has applied many CFS principles in Preah Vihear

Source : MoEYS, Education Strategic Plan 2006-2010, third draft 24 August 2005

Additional comments

National Curriculum Development Policy 2005-2009

The use of strategies such as curriculum integration and alternatives to textbook-based and classroom-based teaching is consistent with the recently approved National Curriculum Development Policy of the MoEYS.⁴⁶ The approaches also sit well with the new emphasis on Curriculum Standards and explicit student learning outcomes within the Ministry's Department of Pedagogical Research.⁴⁷ In fact, teachers who have experience with integrating life skills approaches into the general instructional program are likely to find the concept of Curriculum Standards less intimidating than teachers who have stuck closely to textbook content.

MoEYS performance-based incentives and other PAP payments

One of the key Ministry strategies for improving the quality of teaching is a program of incentives and allowances. Education staff in Preah Vihear, because of its remote location, are eligible for many of these payments. The most important of these incentives is the 50 000 and 60 000 riel per month remote and difficult areas. Many teachers in Preah Vihear receive the higher payment. Teachers reported they were receiving these payments on a quarterly basis. This was particularly important for first year out teachers who are not paid any salary until the end of the first year.

Payments of double shift and multi-grade allowances are still being paid annually. During the evaluation visit in November teachers reported that payments for 2004-2005 had not yet been made.

⁴⁶ MoEYS, National Curriculum Development Policy 2005-2009, Phnom Penh, 2005

⁴⁷ See MoEYS, "Curriculum Standards and Development", Pedagogical Research Department, MoEYS, n.d. This leaflet includes a section on Life Skills alongside summary descriptions of Curriculum Standards and the Basic Education Curriculum. Two of the three photographs included in this leaflet show primary school students engaged in vegetable gardening activities.

PAP operational funds to schools were being paid late and in part as is typical throughout the country. Payments for meetings held annually to develop the school improvement plan were not being received, nor were payments for participation in Thursday sessions and payments for trainers at Thursday sessions.

Capacity building, trainers and training

Capacity building of government staff is obviously important in a Ministry and a country in which expensive foreign technical assistance is still often required. The debate about how to enable more Cambodians to operate effectively in research, policy development and documentation is ongoing. The SCN project in Preah Vihear offers a number of contributions to the debate.

- it shows that technical advisors at district level can have a strong impact on local capacity building
- it shows the impact of a *mentor* type arrangement (as opposed, or to complement, to short term, intensive training)
- it shows the importance of choosing trainers according to explicit criteria, and not solely by virtue of their office (this is in accordance with the Ministry's own official position on supporting merit-based appointments - [ESP 2006-2010](#), p. 28)
- it shows the value of inviting talented people to work outside their own departments, districts and provinces, in capacity-building roles, both for the trainees and for their own professional development
- it demonstrates how participatory approaches can be used to make training courses more relevant, reflect the needs and interests of the learners and document processes and outcomes rather than inputs from outside experts.

Teacher supply

Preah Vihear provides a good example of what can be achieved by targeted recruitment to PTTCs and support of teachers in the field. In particular the project is demonstrating

- the impact of the 9+2 entry requirement to PTTCs on teacher supply to remote areas
- reserving high quotas for PTTC entry for candidates from remote provinces amongst national entry intakes
- the success of more closely managed local recruiting requirements (ensuring that candidates are genuine residents and not newcomers from outside the province seeking concessional entry)
- the way young PTTC graduates can thrive, even in very challenging educational environments, when given regular professional support and opportunities for development
- the ways in which communities can and do support neophyte teachers

Section 6

Constraints and other factors affecting implementation

History of violence, subsistence and alienation

Some of the general constraints under which SCN-CO implemented the project have been mentioned in the introduction and other sections of the report. These constraints include the turbulent history of the province in the modern era, the prevalence of banditry and predatory commercial activities, extensive areas which have been sown with landmines and poor roads leading to extreme isolation (both in social and economic terms). Many families have been living literally hand to mouth for more than a generation. Social services were offered only in the major towns until the turn of the century. Seriously ill people are still carried from villages to health posts in a hammock strung to a pole borne by family members – one such group was encountered by the evaluation team walking towards Chheb District Hospital on the final day of field work in November.

Infrastructure

The state of roads and tracks make travel very difficult in many areas. The main roads into the province from Kompong Thom to Tbeng Meanchey and out towards Siem Reap are much improved but can deteriorate quickly during the wet season. Travel to some schools in District like Chheb, Chey Sen and Sangkum Thmei involves long motorbike rides. Teachers told evaluation team members that they were walking up to three hours along flooded and boggy roads at the beginning of the school year to attend Thursday meetings within the Cluster. During the dry season the trip by bicycle was far shorter. The most extreme case is probably the set of schools along Preah Vihear's Mekong River boundary with Laos. Kompong Srolau, visited during the evaluation. Kompong Srolau is six hours by motorcycle from Chheb DEO, and other, smaller schools can only be reached there. This has obvious implications for attempting to bring such schools into cluster and district networks and to maintain contact with teachers, especially the funding of actual travel costs, let alone additional DSA or Per Diem payments.

Systemic problems of government (MoEYS)

Another major set of constraints are problems systemic to the public education system in Cambodia. The best documented are the difficulties in translating policy statements into on ground reality. This is particularly the case in respect to the implementation of decentralization policies and the delivery of funds on a predictable and timely basis. These are familiar problems to anyone working in the sector in Cambodia and have been well documented in a number of recent studies. Many specific examples have been mentioned in the course of this report such as PAP school operational budgets for schools, funds for planning and professional development meetings, payment of extra duty allowances and the availability of funds for travel and DSA.

Short term project for a long term task

It was obvious to all concerned in 2003 that building quality primary schooling in Preah Vihear would take far longer than the 27 months of the SCN-CO/JSDF project. Nonetheless this was the time specified in the project agreement and plans had to be made accordingly. One result of this has been that SCN, quite appropriately, planned and implemented very quickly a wide range of activities and project staff and counterparts have worked on many fronts. So many activities have taken place that

members of the evaluation team had some difficulty in unraveling and understanding them all. Project staff members agree that not all the interventions have been fully understood by stakeholders but that they wanted to provide a “big picture” before beginning to work step by step. Now that SCN itself has announced it will undertake a four year extension there is more time to develop key interventions in more depth. These might include, for example, broadening the focus of life skills activities, intensifying the role of community resource people in schools’ instructional programs, perhaps in conjunction with the use of Cultural Centres, further work on teacher self-assessment in the direction of participatory action research, further development of teacher-to-teacher strategies for support and professional development as a compliment, or alternative, to inspection.

Human resources and the management of education activities in Preah Vihear

Although officials from Preah Vihear Province were routinely seated at the table in various national training activities organized by the MoEYS, their ability to pass on knowledge gained was very limited. In part it was limited by factors of distance, poor roads and poor communications. But key PEO managers were probably also the victims of their own historical experiences, the way things had always been done. This became more difficult to do after new practices were introduced nationwide from 2001 under the Priority Action Program with its emphasis on decentralization and promoting decision making at District, Cluster and school levels. Preah Vihear was unable to move with the times – there are, for example, still no Budget Management Centres (BMCs) in any of the DEOs and all management of funds is done at PEO level. The PEO reportedly even had difficulties in managing the proportion of funds it did receive and in getting those funds out to Districts and schools. This had led to Districts developing a high degree of self-reliance but also meant that many of the routine activities they were supposed to be carrying out could not be done. It was in this environment that SCN-CO began implementing project activities in late 2003.

Teacher shortages, under-qualification and local recruitment

Like most remote provinces Preah Vihear has suffered from an under-qualified teaching service and has had to rely for many years on large numbers of long-term local recruits with little or no pedagogical training and the employment of Contract Teachers. The abandonment of the Contract Teacher mechanism could have had disastrous consequences in Preah Vihear but for the focus on local recruitment to the PTTC in the last three years and the more rigorous application of residential criteria for these local recruits. The result is the *two generational* teaching service encountered by the evaluation team during the November school visits - a first generation of older, under-qualified but often resourceful and stable teachers and a new generation of young, recently graduated teachers with little experience but newer ideas and much energy and enthusiasm.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

As noted in the project proposal document, SCN-CO's work in Preah Vihear was the first time the agency had worked in areas with large numbers of ethnic minority people. The proposal stated that access to education for children from ethnic minority communities the adaptation of the existing curriculum and the development of learning materials, responsive to their needs and interests were important objectives.

While the document noted that agencies with experience of bi-cultural and bi-lingual education in Cambodia did exist it perhaps should have added that most activities up until then had been academic (linguistic or anthropological) and/or connected to vernacular language literacy programs for adults (as was the case with programs run by the NGO International Cooperation for Cambodia [ICC]). CARE's Highland Children's Education Program (HCEP), which began in Ratanakiri in 2002, was the first concerted effort to work at primary level with children who spoke ethnic minority languages. In building a full bi-lingual program for children from Grades 1 to 3 in Tampuen and

Kreung languages during the period 2002-2005, HCEP brought to bear considerable technical assistance in the field of both pure and applied linguistics and in cross-cultural education. Resource people were drawn from abroad, from within Cambodia and from within ethnic minority communities themselves.

SCN-CO thus accepted a very challenging task in attempting to realize the objectives set out in the project document relating to ethnic minority education, on the scale required, in quick time and on top of all the other challenges offered by working in Preah Vihear.

Section 7

Lessons learned

The evaluation team has been asked in the Terms of Reference to discuss both the application in Preah Vihear of lessons learned from SCN's earlier work in Siem Reap and the lessons learned from Preah Vihear experience itself. Table 23, below, takes up the task of relating experiences in Siem Reap to practice in Preah Vihear. The following Table 24 briefly summarizes lesson learned in Preah Vihear although this Table should be read in conjunction with the earlier Tables 19.1 and 19.2 (on the application of experiences from work done in Preah Vihear on schools in general and remote schools in particular) and is also a synthesis of ideas discussed in Sections 5.9.1 and 5.9.2 on strengths and weaknesses in the design of the project and its implementation.

Table 24 *Application of lessons learned from experience in Siem Reap*
(SoH = *Schools of Hope*, SCN, Phnom Penh, 2003)

#	Lesson learned from Siem Reap project	Application in Preah Vihear project
1	DOEs were not as strongly involved as they might be (SoH, 2)	Design of project focused squarely on DEOs and they have proved to be the backbone of the project.
2	Reduce emphasis on income generation in life skills education activities and de-link from credit (SoH, 6, 27-28-29-30 and cf Lesson Learned SoH, 10)	Credit schemes have not been applied in Preah Vihear. Some income generating activities remain as a minor activity in some schools.
3	Reduce animal raising components of life skills education programs and emphasize agriculture/horticulture (SoH, 29)	Horticulture/agriculture/sylviculture are emphasized. Animal raising can be observed but is in a minor role.
4	More should be done to give special support to contract teachers (SoH Lesson Learned 6)	Contract Teacher numbers have been greatly reduced by an MoEYS policy decision to eliminate them. Remaining Contract Teachers receive assistance through Thursday training activities and visits by Mobile Teacher Support team.
5	Specific support to under-qualified teachers (SoH, 5 and SoH Lesson Learned 6)	Support given through visits of the Mobile Teacher Support Team
6	SCN-CO should lobby MoEYS to improve payment of remote/difficult teacher incentives and PAP	Project Reports say that representations have been made. Many problems still remain
7	Multi-grade teaching is the strategy which can help small, primary schools add classes thus retaining students and reducing drop out rates	Was a feature of the design and training has been widely implemented. Numbers of multi-grade teachers have leveled off after an initial early surge. Some resistance to teachers to teaching in multi-grade classes.
8	Extend school mapping activities (SoH, 5,17) which had been very effective in focusing attention on enrolment (<i>child seeking schools</i>)	School mapping activities greatly expanded to cover a wide range of data collection, analysis and presentation activities involving school staff, children, community members, local authorities and staff of other government departments
9	Links between teachers and community members should be expanded (SoH Lesson Learned No. 3 and p. 39)	Put into practice in Preah Vihear

10	Collaboration between large donor-NGO-government can be very effective (SoH, 6 and SoH Lesson Learned 11, 41).	Preah Vihear again demonstrates that NGOs keep implementation costs down, are realistic, can organize rapid start up, have an ongoing presence in the field which encourages enterprise, inhibits mismanagement and corruption and can provide a bridge between local experience and national level policymakers
11	Community preference for Local teachers (SoH, 3 and 20) and SOH Recommendation 7 (SoH 37)	Carried forward in Preah Vihear where there has been a strong effort to recruit and train local student teachers in the TTC and there are formal agreements that they will return to their communities of origin on graduation.
12	Travel subsidies and payments to POE/DOE personnel important to maintain (SoH, 36)	Strategy in Preah Vihear has been to rely on local and Ministry-provided resources as much as possible but there has been some subsidization of travel in the form of payments for training and other meetings, activities of Mobile Teams etc.

Table 25 Lessons learned from work in Preah Vihear

Lessons learned	
1	EFA activities are most powerful when actors include people from all sectors of the local community. School mapping activities give many opportunities for doing this - in data collection, analysis and presentation.
2	The use of mentors is an effective way of delivering capacity building of managers and administrators
3	There are competent Trainers within Ministry ranks but they must be selected according to explicit criteria (not simply the office they hold) and may be best used outside their provinces of origin
4	The presence of external trainers/mentors and other NGO agency staff provides an opportunity to reduce or eliminate corrupt and/or dysfunctional management practices in accordance with MoEYS and RGC policies.
5	DEOs have successfully operated in a coordinating role through the monthly meetings of School Directors (held in different venues) in which information, ideas and experiences are shared.
6	The project has successfully used a participatory model of training in which local trainers have developed the curriculum together (design workshop), presented it to participants (follow up workshop) and then documented it afterwards including content and proceedings and outcomes from the workshops themselves. This greatly increases the relevance of the reference document.
7	Teacher Training - training should be conducted as close to the workplace as possible, with regard to cost effectiveness. In Preah Vihear much training has been done at Cluster level but small, workshops have also been organized at very isolated schools
8	Activities with minority languages are complex and require lengthy development periods
9	Teacher self-assessment requires a long time for teachers to develop the objectivity and skills required to pass reasonable assessments. It may have been better to begin the process on a more simple footing and build step by step (but the project was trapped to some extent by the indicators chosen for teacher development).
10	Education staff attitudes on school-community relationship can be turned around through EFA related research, data collection and analysis
11	Life skills has proved a very successful way of increasing the community's perception of the relevance of schools, especially when school activities is replicated at home
12	Community members enjoy assisting in practical ways in improving school environments and that this is a good way to of opening up discussion on more abstract activities such as school improvement planning

13	Again, as in earlier work, the strategy of communities building mini-schools as a practical way of demonstrating interest in and a commitment to education, which are then followed by permanent buildings, has proved highly successful.
14	The use of outside learning areas has proved a simple, inexpensive way of making schools far more child friendly.
15	Culture Centres have proved popular installations in many schools serving as venues for outside learning by children as well as an exhibition space for artifacts, implements, musical instruments, fishing and hunting equipment and other handcrafted local products. They have also been very useful as a place where community members can meet school staff and other visitors in a much less formal setting than around the big table in the school office.
16	Lobbying the MoEYS on policy reform, based on field experiences, can have effects on national level policies (for example, on teacher recruitment and deployment) but it has very limited effect on policies which are set down outside the Ministry, especially policies with budgetary implications such as civil service payment and conditions.

Section 8

Recommendations about continuation of the project

The transformation of public education in Preah Vihear over the last two and half years taken place around an extensive construction program and with a high level of technical input. SCN-CO has used resources very effectively to galvanize local energy and enthusiasm in the same way they did earlier in under-served areas of Siem Reap. Under the project Preah Vihear has experienced an unlikely celebrity for its recent achievements in education, hosting visits by Ministry parties from all over Cambodia, even from Phnom Penh. As the end date for activities under the JSDF grant nears, however, everyone concerned with the project is conscious that December 2005 only marks the end of the beginning.

At the end of the evaluation field visit in November SCN-CO announced their intention to sign an agreement for four years further work in Preah Vihear Province. At meetings in Tbeng Meanchey on 12 November the Provincial Governor and education officials greatly welcomed this news. SCN-CO's ongoing commitment will be critical in sustaining the impact of the work which has taken place so far. But everyone should recognize that many of the biggest challenges lie ahead.

This is particularly the case in the DEOs where staff have experienced full-time mentoring for two years. Planning, reporting, monitoring and record keeping structures and systems are demonstrably in place but must be considered fragile, particularly if current low levels of salary are maintained and no government funds are available for travel and DSA within the District. Further support, both financial and technical, will clearly be required, especially if the MoEYS continues to be unable to deliver PAP and other funding in full and on time.

Even though the evaluation team observed morale amongst teachers, especially young teachers, to be at surprisingly high levels, it could also be considered fragile. Perhaps nothing could have a more serious impact on rates of student participation, promotion and drop out, and on quality in general, than a turn around in teacher morale. It is a familiar road - frustration, demoralization, a loss of child friendliness and professional commitment, reductions in instructional time, absenteeism, the need to form larger classes and so on.

For Preah Vihear to simply maintain the improvements made during 2004-2005 during the next four years of reduced support will itself be a major achievement. Targets commonly seen by the evaluation group in school plans such as attaining 100% enrolment and zero rates of drop out could be counterproductive if schools feel pressured to return figures that show continued progress when they are already achieving very good results. A recently produced ADB document giving background information on primary education in six remote provinces estimated repetition was typically about 20% and drop out 10-12% which gives an idea of progress in Preah Vihear in recent years.

It is very likely that there will be some falling away of interest as the impact of the new buildings fades and the reality of working in an under-resourced system in a very poor part of the country re-asserts itself. Even external factors, such as one or two bad seasons and poor rice harvests, could produce a sharp increase in drop out rates, irrespective of the performance of schools and the public education system. The rapid expansion of Lower Secondary education being planned by the government for remote areas will also bring pressures of its own, especially if some of the best teachers are drawn out of primary schools into re-training courses and redeployment. The attention of the PEO, and DEOs to a lesser extent, will have to shift away from Primary Schools to some extent. The planned reform of the national curriculum and the shift to standards-based teaching and learning will also add pressure. In this context the decision by SCN-CO to continue a technical assistance role in the

province is a critical and reassuring one. SCN-CO staff will have a major role in maintaining momentum and enthusiasm and helping schools be realistic about what they can do in what still is a very challenging educational context.

What follows is a mixed set of suggestions, some quite broad and some very specific, which SCN and their partners may consider in continuing to work in Preah Vihear.

Broad recommendations

1. Assess the costs of project maintenance, prioritize and plan accordingly

Project staff will need to weigh up the real costs of a further four years of support. Current project discourse is that the work in Preah Vihear has been carried out with a minimum of subsidization and a high proportion of local input. This is true and is admirable in striving for sustainable impacts. Project staff may, however, be discounting many of the flow-on effects from the funds made available under the JSDF grant. This is seen, for example, in the extent to which project driven training workshops and general movement around the province has facilitated regular contact between PEO and DEOs and schools which has been so significant in strengthening public education as a system. The presence of the District Facilitators at DEO level has meant immediate access to advice and training. If they are withdrawn there may be additional costs in other forms of support and training. The flow of materials which accompanies the workshop program will also decrease as schools and institutions fall back on the not always reliable PAP operational funds.

Project staff and Ministry counterparts may have to take some difficult decisions about where to direct energies and funds in following up the 2003-2005 project. It will not be a case of sorting good activities from bad, but rather of prioritizing what are very good, strategic and already well entrenched and well managed activities over what are only very good ideas. This may mean a reduction in scope or a reduction in depth. It may mean that some schools and districts choose to work at more depth on one aspect of the program which they feel is particularly relevant to their needs. It may simply not be possible, for example, to support the full range of EFA mapping activities every year if new teachers are floundering or if management systems at District level begin to break down.

For this reason, opening a new set of activities, for example, supporting additional Millennium Development Villages, should be looked at very cautiously.

2. Maintaining the integrity and quality of management in the education system

Few things inspire teacher performance and community involvement more than competent, honest and caring management. The project has succeeded in building an effectively functioning system of management of public education in Preah Vihear in which stakeholders have confidence. This is precious in the Cambodian context and maintaining it should be one of the highest priorities of the follow up. This means continuing to provide access to information, continuing to support opportunities to meet and share with colleagues (such as Thursday sessions, Mobile Teacher Team visits, one-off workshops) and continuing to encourage good management practice amongst officials at all levels. The physical presence of NGO staff in the PEO, DEOs and around schools will provide moral support for those in the MoEYS who are interested in good governance and principled management. It may be worth considering using two or three new, itinerant District Facilitators in the follow up project who could act as trainers in management but also fill mentor roles for shorter periods in DEOs which are struggling without full-time support and request assistance.

3. *Teacher support*

The strategy of self-assessment is an appropriate one for the conditions of many of the schools and teachers in Preah Vihear but it could be useful to review the current structure and moving towards a less wide-ranging, more focused model. This might involve, for example, working with the idea of Participatory Action Research and getting individual teachers to choose a small number of particular teaching skills to work on over time. Assessment might also be made more meaningful by the use of specific behavioural descriptors such as those used in classroom observations carried out in the assessment of the Ministry's School Readiness Program.

The evaluation team, however, believed that the project's emphasis on teacher-helping-teacher strategies was appropriate and should be pursued. There may even be possibilities for linking it with pre-service teacher education, especially if the Ministry moves as it has said it will in the direction of targeting recruitment on under-served communes and districts.

4. *PTTC and pre-service teacher education*

SCN has plans for working with PTTC staff on the design and organization of a program which will bring student teachers out into the schools on a regular basis during their training. This is an excellent suggestion which the TTD, while accepting it in theory, has never been able to operationalize except in small pilots. Another way in which SCN could contribute to the PTTC curriculum is on several topics within the pre-service curriculum which do not seem to have been covered very well to date. These include life skills and multi-grade teaching and could also include teacher self-assessment.

5. *Expanding teacher repertoires for active learning and life skills*

Evaluation team members were generally impressed by the way in which teachers in Preah Vihear managed their classes and used learning activities which were clearly child-centred. Small group tasks, however, tended to be repetitive - the most commonly seen were small groups asked to make arithmetical calculations and then bring them back to the whole group, groups who were asked to read a text in groups and groups who were given a question to discuss, and sometimes research, and then come back to the whole group with their ideas or information. SCN might look into ways of expanding teacher repertoire in these areas, perhaps using simplified versions of materials prepared a few years ago for work in Otdar Meanchey (teaching games and puzzles in mathematics). A recent preparation workshop for Community Teachers organized under the Educational Support for Under-served Populations (ESCUP) program in Kg. Cham, Kratie and Monduliri, found participants very interested in how simple card games could be used for reinforcement and assessment in language and maths.

As mentioned in the main text of the report there is also a need to expand life skills approaches beyond agriculture/horticulture, especially in areas which underline the value of literacy.

6. *Look again at multi-grade education*

The expansion of multi-grade teaching as a strategy in the project does not seem to have been as rapid as the design anticipated. The possible reasons for this have been discussed earlier. The Teacher Training Department is aware that the content of current Ministry materials is narrow and needs updating. A small project being funded by the ADB involving quality improvement grants to remote schools in six provinces, including Preah Vihear, will be bringing a consultant in multi-grade teaching and learning to Cambodia in 2006. This might provide a focus for further work on the

approach, which, although officially a key strategy in the MoEYS's plan to improve access to education in remote areas, has been badly neglected since 2003.

7. Minority language and culture issues

This topic has already been discussed at several places in the text. With SCN committed for four more years work in Preah Vihear there is now room for longer term thinking. One activity which may help here is a language use survey which UNICEF-CARE plan to carry early in 2006 in a number of provinces, including Preah Vihear. Visiting the Highland Children's Education Project in Ratanakiri would also be a very worthwhile experience, particularly for Kouy speaking teachers and community representatives. Kouy communities may not wish to adopt a full bi-lingual model like those organized in the Community Schools in Ratanakiri but there would be great interest in Kouy language story books, social studies materials, ideas for teaching Khmer to children who do not speak it at home, the Junior Picture Dictionary produced in Tampuen and Kreung languages and so on.

8. Promoting local choice in development planning

SCN may also wish to investigate how the process of school improvement planning in Preah Vihear can be further opened up to enable community members to make more choices over the interventions they wish to see in their schools. The main way this is done in Ministry training curricula is by the use of a menu - a non-exclusive list of possible interventions which will expose community members to a range of possibilities they otherwise might not have known about. Work in the project in Preah Vihear in the last two years have generated a number of original interventions (which should be finding their way onto Ministry planning menus in the near future).

The Preah Vihear PEO has chosen Chey Sen District as the first in Preah Vihear in which ten schools can apply for quality improvement grants under the MoEYS-ADB new Disadvantaged Schools Project. Grants will be extended to schools in other districts in the second and third year of operations. Some 50 to 60 schools in Prey Vihear could ultimately benefit. Many of the innovations of the JSDF/SCN-CO project will find their way onto the menus to be offered schools under this project from which schools-communities from which schools-communities can select according to their immediate needs.

9. Scholarships and other support for disadvantaged children

SCN is not involved in scholarship programs in Preah Vihear at the present time. As the province develops and more children begin to move from Primary into Lower Secondary Schools it is likely that a need for scholarship support for girls and disadvantaged groups will emerge. Although the MoEYS has a national scholarship plan, for students at Lower Secondary level, this will not be sufficient to meet the needs of children in Preah Vihear. Some of this scholarship support in very remote areas may need to begin in primary schools. Support for further boarding facilities at Lower Secondary Schools for students who study during the week and go home on weekends, will also be required. These are areas in which SCN might play a role, particularly given that it is a trusted NGO and that it has a strong record on child welfare and child rights issues. It is well known that the participation of girls under such arrangements is always difficult unless high levels of trust and care can be demonstrated.

Specific recommendations

1. Realistic goal setting

This will require sensitivity because no one would wish to dampen the enthusiasm which currently exists in the province. Perhaps instead of setting absolute targets, schools and DEOs could be looking at small percentage increases each year.

2. Grade 1 classes organization

Grade 1 teachers in very large classes in JSDF schools could use the existing furniture more creatively to make classes easier to manage. Introducing mats into the classroom for group activities would also be a way of dealing with very large classes and space for independent learning groups. Although this is a commonplace activity in many countries there is still considerable resistance to it amongst leaders in the MoEYS.

3. Use of Culture Centres

Constructing Culture Centres, kiosks and other outside learning areas has been a very successful intervention. They are popular with children, help to vary learning activities and offer many possibilities for using the natural environment as a resource for teaching and learning. As stated earlier in the report there is a need to devise strategies which will keep such facilities alive through constantly refreshing contents.

Project staff informed the evaluation team that they were planning Culture Centres to serve an important future role in ethnic minority areas as places for highlighting minority languages and culture - either as a medium of instruction (particularly by community resource people) or as displayed texts (stories, descriptions of ceremonial and other community events or as captions for exhibits).

4. Project publications and resource materials

While the process of producing these materials has already been endorsed there are some minor technical areas in which they could be improved.

The first is that the structure and internal numbering systems adopted for books and booklets is often confusing and difficult to follow. In some cases it would be better to have no numbering system for topics, components, sub-component and beyond, at all. The style and font of headings also changes frequently and it is difficult to see what is following what. Other problems include awkward page breaks, repetition, uncorrected typing mistakes and so on. This may be caused, in part, by different people contributing their own pieces of content to the same book. If so, it would help if one person was given overall style control.

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Title or description		Type and description
Management and supervision		
1	School monthly report form	Data reporting form
2	District monthly report form	Data reporting form
3	Family information booklet 2005-2007	Booklet for EFA data entry
4	Lessons in classroom management	Photocopied booklets with a record of the proceedings and outcomes of workshops for POE/DOE/School Directors on aspects of management indicated by titles
5	Lessons in developing environment	
6	Lessons in enrolment campaigns	
7	Lessons in Thursday meetings	
8	Leadership and management of school	Printed, illustrated resource book published after the workshop documenting contents, proceedings and including forms and checklists, 142 pp, SCN, 2004 (13 000 copies)
9	Monitoring and supervision	Booklet, pink cover, with rating criteria (a later version of the booklet, above)
Lifeskills		
10	Lifeskills Part 1	Printed, illustrated resource book published after the workshop documenting contents, proceedings and including forms and checklists, 100pp., SCN, 2004 (20 000 copies)

11	<u>Growing leafy vegetables</u>	Small illustrated, photocopied booklet with mainly technical information produced for teachers participating in the pilot program, including forms for teacher monitoring and for students' data record.
12	Management of life skills	Photocopied summary of content, proceedings and outcomes of workshop for school managers focusing on Life Skills
13	Learning and teaching pedagogy	Printed, illustrated resource book published after the workshop documenting contents, proceedings and including forms and checklists, 160 pp., SCN, 2004 (13 000 copies)
Teacher self-aessment		
14	Teacher competencies - sheets	Form completed by teachers
15	Learning and teaching activities	Booklet, yellow cover - with rating criteria [early edition]
16	Learning and teaching activities	Booklet, green cover - with rating criteria [later version]
Kouy language materials		
17	MoEYS Grade 1 Khmer Language textbook with Kouy translation	Photocopied booklet, very limited circulation (3 schools), with Khmer language text on left hand side and Kouiy translation on right hand side of each page
18	Khmer-Kouy word list	11 pp. word list with Khmer and Kouy equivalents side by side arranged by initial letter of Khmer word
Maps		
19	Maps of Districts (English and Khmer)	Coloured A4 photocopied sheets, folded into three, with map of school locations and statistical tables showing trends in key indicators

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Attachments

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| Attachment 1 | Terms of Reference for Evaluation |
| Attachment 2 | Report on preliminary visit to Preah Vihear, July 2005 |
| Attachment 3 | Question sets used as a basis for semi-structured interviews |
| Attachment 4 | Schedule for Field Visit 31 October-12 November 2005. and roles of members of the evaluation team |
| Attachment 5 | Summary of results of rapid survey to identify interest in interventions made in the Basic Education for Disadvantaged Children project in Preah Vihear Province |
| Attachment 6 | Information leaflets produced by the PEO and selected DEOs |