



# REACHING THE UNREACHED

Bridging the social divide in Cambodia through  
inclusive education



## ABSTRACT <sup>12</sup>

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Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) is an international development agency that works towards inclusive development by building the capacity of partner organisations (governments and NGOs) in developing countries to fight global poverty and disadvantage. As part of its strategy, VSO supports inclusive education programmes. Over the last 5 years, VSO Cambodia has been working with both government and non-governmental partners to get out- of –school children of primary school age into school and more involved in their own education, through its Mainstreaming Inclusive Education (MIE) project.

This paper provides background and contextual information to the education sector in Cambodia. It then describes the activities and strategies implemented within the MIE project with the aim of increasing the enrolment and participation of disadvantaged children, whilst improving the capacity of teachers and education management personnel to respond to their unique and different needs. Finally, it identifies both achievements and challenges faced throughout the project and suggests some ways of bridging education inequality through inclusive education.

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<sup>2</sup> The present version of the paper has been revised for the 7<sup>th</sup> Inclusive and Supportive Education Congress (ISEC), 2-5 August, 2010, Belfast by Chea Vantha , Senior Education Programme Manager at VSO Cambodia with contributions from Maya Kalyanpur, Volunteer Education Advisor and Polly Kirby, Education Programme Development Adviser ,VSO International.

## INTRODUCTION

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VSO recognises that inclusive education needs to be looked at in the light of the right to education for all: if an education system is truly inclusive it works for all disadvantaged groups (not only disabled children) and improves its quality for all learners. VSO's approach focuses on building a voice for excluded children and strengthening the responsiveness of the education system at all levels. VSO's programmes to promote inclusive education now focus on: community involvement, value-based teacher training, whole school approach, and specialist support at district level and policy development at national level. VSO currently has approximately 1,500 volunteers working around the world, including 98 international volunteers working through VSO Cambodia, of which 41 contribute to the education programme. These volunteers are highly skilled, experienced professionals who work directly with partner organisations, providing training, building capacity and on-the-job professional support for teachers.

Cambodia has made remarkable progress in the education sector since post-war economic reconstruction and political stability. In 2008, the national average net enrolment rate in primary schools was 93 per cent and the completion rate for primary school children at Grade 6 was 86.3 per cent (MOEYS, 2008a). However, an estimated 181,000 primary-school-age children (6 years), including girls, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities, children living in remote areas, and orphaned, sick or trafficked children<sup>3</sup>, remain out of school. (UNICEF, 2006)

In order to reach this 'un-reached' population of children and meet the goals of Education for All (EFA) by 2015, both the Royal Government of Cambodia and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have developed specific strategies. However, the country's goal of universal access to primary education remains unrealised.

## VSO AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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For VSO, inclusive education is about all excluded children. Therefore, VSO education programmes work within the mainstream education system to overcome the barriers that marginalized groups face in realising their rights to education. Our approach to inclusive education is based on the following principles:

- All children are different, and difference is normal and valuable.
- All children can learn, and all children have different learning needs and rates of development.
- All children have the right to education, so schools should accommodate all children.
- This means that schools and education systems need to be flexible and adapt to the learning needs of all children-not the other way round. (VSO, 2007)

We recognise that supporting more inclusive education is a long-term process, which needs to be approached in a strategic and well-structured way. For this reason, our programmes focus on promoting greater inclusion, whatever the starting point. Our strategies include:

- Performing an analysis to identify the most disadvantaged children who are in and out of school.

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<sup>3</sup> A child victim of trafficking is any person under 18 who is recruited, transported, transferred harboured or received for the purpose of exploitation, either within or outside a country. In East Asia and the Pacific, most trafficking is into child prostitution, though some children are also recruited for agricultural and industrial work (UNICEF, 2006)

- Sensitising students, teachers and communities through peer education and training.
- Working with parents and communities to raise awareness of the value of education for disadvantaged children.
- Facilitating links between the government agencies and non-governmental organisations to increase coordination and collaboration in the planning, implementation and monitoring of education interventions.
- Making sure children are not exposed to physical or sexual abuse as a result of coming to school, by improving child protection measures like whole school policies on teacher and child behaviour.
- Ensuring the representation of disadvantaged groups in the Education Sector planning processes.
- Building the capacity of education management personnel and teachers to respond to the learning needs of all children.
- Fostering sharing and learning of good practices within and across the education system to influence national policies and practices. (VSO, 2007)

## EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

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Cambodia's population of approximately 14 million people<sup>4</sup> has a unique age-related distribution that reflects the nation's tragic losses, including the loss of many of the educated elite, during the Khmer Rouge period of the 1970s and the ensuing civil war. With 43 per cent of the population in Cambodia under 15 years of age, the implications for the education sector are tremendous. The challenge in responding to the exponential increase in numbers of children entering primary school and the demand for more schools and trained personnel is compounded by a crippling shortage of trained teachers and management staff. UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) affirmed in their 2006 report *Teachers and Educational Quality* that between 2000 and 2004 primary enrolments in Cambodia rose by 5.3 per cent and secondary enrolments by 15.8 per cent. An even higher growth of the primary-school-aged population is predicted between 2005 and 2015, which highlights the need for a large increase (16.9 per cent) in the number of trained primary teachers by 2015.

In keeping with international guidelines on inclusive education<sup>5</sup>, the Royal Government of Cambodia, with the assistance of several non-governmental organisations, has instituted a series of initiatives to increase access to education for disadvantaged children, including poor children, girls, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities, children living in remote areas, and orphaned, sick or trafficked children. The primary objectives include:

- Achieving universal enrolment and completion of primary education
- Increasing access to and completion of lower secondary school to achieve the goal of universal completion of nine years of basic education;
- Improving the quality of basic education<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> As projected from the 2008 National Census

<sup>5</sup> Salamanca and MDG2: UPE

<sup>6</sup> The policy and implementation framework for reaching these goals is articulated in the Education Strategic Plan 2006-2010 (MOEYS, 2006), the Education For All National Plan 2003-2015 (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2002) and the 2007 Law on Education (MOEYS, 2007).

The government has facilitated the establishment of two national advisory and advocacy bodies, the NGO Education Partnership (NEP), which is a consortium of 78 education-related NGOs, and the Disability Action Council (DAC), which focuses specifically on disability-related issues with the Ministries of Social Affairs, Education, Health and Labour. Through their membership in the Joint Education Sector Technical Working Group, these advisory bodies participate in policy decisions at national level and are instrumental in ensuring that the relevant Ministry moves in appropriate policy directions whilst advocating best practice among education-based NGOs.

## THE SOCIAL DIVIDE

Despite these policies, however, it is unlikely that the government will reach its Education for All target by 2015. The 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report, which uses the latest available statistics from 2007, ranks Cambodia 104 out of 129 countries on the EFA Development Index (EDI), as shown in the table below.

The EFA Development Index (EDI) of Cambodia (2005-2007)

Year	EDI	Ranking on EDI *	Total Primary Net Enrolment Ratio	Ranking on NER*	Gender specific EFA index (GEI)	Ranking on GEI *	Survival rate to Grade 5	Ranking on Survival rate to Grade 5 *
2005	0.807	103	0.989	21	0.871	104	0.631	121
2006	0.778	104	0.899	91	0.833	110	0.622	120
2007	0.781	104	0.894	95	0.844	108	0.622	119

(Sources: UNESCO, 2007; UNESCO, 2008; UNESCO, 2010) \* ranked out of 129 countries

The statistics clearly show a downward trend in primary enrolment rates and on top of this, the survival rates (children staying in school till Grade 5) worsened in 2006 and did not recover in 2007, and there has not been much progress on the gender-specific EFA index. In addition to girls, children from linguistic and ethnic minorities, children with disabilities and those in remote and mountainous areas are doubly disadvantaged by poverty and are largely excluded from many forms of educational opportunities and experiences. While the urban male population has an average of 6.04 years of schooling, the rural female has just 2.25 years (MOEYS, 2008a).

The 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report has also highlighted geographical inequalities in Cambodia, which are often linked to social and economic inequalities, rural-urban differences, ethnicity and language. For example, in Cambodia's most disadvantaged provinces (e.g. Mondulkiri and Rattanakiri) young women average just 1.8 years of school, compared with 3.2 years for young men (UNESCO, 2010). These findings indicate the increasing social divide in Cambodia, in which ever-larger groups of children continue to receive no or limited education.

A report by the Asian Development Bank (2007) noted that, although basic poverty levels have fallen with the expansion of the economy, the living standards of the wealthiest people in Cambodian society have improved at a much faster rate, leaving poor people lagging even further behind. The report stated that the main reason for widening wealth gaps is the inequality in investment between urban and rural areas. Both government and private investments have tended to favour better-educated, better-off urban populations. Similarly, a 2006 study found that widespread child labour at an early age, a high rate of late entry into school and a lack of school

readiness, all affect enrolment and ultimately school completion rates among poor children (Understanding Children's Work, 2006). As a result, Cambodia remains one of the countries in the South-East Asian region with the highest inequality of education distribution across the population (World Bank, 2009).

Although the 2008/9 Education Management Information System (EMIS) data showed net enrolment rates at the primary level at 94.4 per cent, these figures drop to 33.9 per cent at lower secondary levels, and further down to 16.4 per cent at the upper secondary level (MOEYS, 2009). There is also some disparity by gender: net lower secondary and upper secondary enrolment rates for boys were 32.9 per cent and 17.1 per cent respectively, as opposed to 35.0 per cent and 15.7 per cent for girls.<sup>7</sup> Even though the percentage of girls entering into lower secondary level is higher than boys, the completion rate of girls is lower than of boys. Persistently high dropout and repetition rates continue to affect outcomes for universal primary school completion, despite increasing enrolment rates. A study, undertaken by a VSO Cambodia volunteer, which examined why children drop out of school found that:

"...it is not a lack of understanding of the value of education but the realistic understanding of the present job situation that influences parents to make the choice to keep their children at home... Many parents believe that children should attend school up to Grade 3 to acquire sufficient knowledge for 'reading things at market, medicine labels and their own children's homework' after which they would be better off learning relevant life skills at home [and] contributing to family income and thriving at locally available jobs" (Roberts, 2006: 25-26).

Many children, especially girls, are required to work in order to supplement the very meagre incomes of poor families. An estimated 52 percent of 7 to 14 -year-olds (over 1.4 million children in absolute terms) are economically active (World Bank, 2009). In 2006, an estimated 213,000 children (aged 6-11) were not attending primary school<sup>8</sup> (UNESCO, 2008). To these children and their families living in extreme poverty, an education, with its long-term returns, has little economic value as long as there are greater, more immediate monetary gains from each member contributing to the family earnings at as early an age as possible.

Thirty-four per cent of Cambodian children enter school late (UIS, 2006), often due to poor health and malnutrition. Cambodia is among the 36 countries with the highest burden of child under-nutrition in the world, and one of 33 "alarming or extremely alarming" countries in terms of hunger and under-nutrition (World Bank, 2009). The recent economic downturn and high food prices have affected progress in malnutrition indicators as the percentage of underweight children under five has remained steady at 28.8 percent, while the level of wasting among the urban poor has risen alarmingly from 9.6 percent in 2005 to nearly 16 percent in 2008. They also lack the pre-school care and education that makes them 'ready' for school. This has particular implications for girls, who constitute almost 54 per cent of the unreached population (UNESCO, 2008).

In the five provinces of North-east Cambodia, there are approximately 115,000 indigenous people from over ten ethnic groups, commonly referred to as 'ethnic minorities', who are marginalised and vulnerable because of their cultural, linguistic and religious difference, isolated geographic location, lack of access to services, chronic food insecurity and limited ability to speak Khmer.

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<sup>7</sup> Gender disparity is generally good at primary level where female enrolment rate is slightly lower than the male enrolment rate (94.0 % versus 94.8 %).

<sup>8</sup> It is significant that girls constitute almost 92 per cent of this population

Pupils' learning achievement is especially low among ethnic and linguistic minorities in these remote areas. The few schools that do exist lack adequate infrastructure, such as completed buildings, sufficient desks and chairs, functioning toilets and teaching materials. Few state employed teachers stay long term in such remote posts. In addition, students do not experience a culturally relevant curriculum, as the basic education curriculum emphasises Khmer language and teachers provide instruction exclusively in Khmer. In such a situation, where children can't understand teachers and teachers can't understand children, little learning is possible. Villagers report that they wish to maintain their own languages and support the idea of their children reading and writing in their native language in non-formal educational settings.

## **BARRIERS TO QUALITY EDUCATION**

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Although poverty is a major barrier to children's access to education overall, there are several additional factors that impact on the education system. In recent years, the government has become aware that the focus on quantitative increases in educational services, such as building schools, has often been at the cost of quality, which significantly affects both the retention and transition rates of students, and involves a reduction in pupil-teacher ratios and an increase in teaching hours (World Bank, 2008). Other critical factors that relate to the poor quality of education are:

- Poorly trained and unqualified teaching staff;
- Emphasis on learning by rote rather than an interactive, child-centred approach;
- Lack of management capacity at district and provincial level to provide effective supervision and support;
- Few opportunities for women at upper and middle management levels;
- Curriculum and education content could be more flexible to respond to the needs of poor or marginalised families;
- A disproportionate focus on visual change (buildings, materials, school grounds) rather than on the quality of the learning processes;
- A lack of quality assurance standards to ensure the delivery of effective education;
- Low levels of motivation among teachers;
- Low salary levels for all educational staff (VSO Cambodia, 2008).

The problem of low salaries for teachers perpetuates the inequitable system of informal fees. Separate studies have identified this as the single most significant factor affecting the quality of education. The VSO Cambodia study (Roberts, 2006) found that low salaries compel teachers to seek alternative sources of income, either by taking on a second job, or by charging for extra or remedial lessons. Similarly, a more recent study into teachers' morale and motivation (VSO Cambodia, 2008) found that teachers see themselves as underpaid, under-supported and working in under-resourced schools. They remain de-motivated by their low salaries and do not feel valued for their contributions to society.

A 2008 UNICEF report on out-of-school children found that although the number of unreached children is shrinking, five groups of children still remain to be incorporated into the educational system. These include: children in Mondulhiri and Ratanakiri (two of the remotest provinces in Cambodia); children in the poorest families, with the lowest levels of parental education; children who have migrated from rural areas; orphans or children whose household head is not their parent; and children who have entered school at a late age.

## MINISTRY INITIATIVES IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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In 2000, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports established the Special Education Office (SEO) in the Primary Education Department, with the express purpose of developing and implementing inclusive education programmes. This portfolio includes gender mainstreaming for girls, bilingual education for ethnic minorities, accelerated learning for over-age students, multi-grade classrooms for rural and remote areas, and the education of children with disabilities. Strategies and policies include:

- **The 2003 Gender Mainstreaming Strategy**, which aimed to increase overall enrolment and reduce drop-out rates for girls, particularly in secondary schools;
- **The 2007 National Education Law and Child Friendly Schools policy**, which aimed to establish a pedagogical framework for interactive teaching and learning across six dimensions. The first dimension is inclusive education that targets various populations of marginalised or vulnerable children. Currently, about 70 per cent of all primary schools across Cambodia have received training in Child Friendly Schools methodologies;
- **The 2008 policy and action plan for inclusive education for children with disabilities**, which recommended the need for systematic processes for identifying children with disabilities both in and out of school, increasing the number of trained teachers in inclusive education, and developing a stronger nexus between Ministry and NGOs to ensure delivery of appropriate educational services and assistive devices.
- **The 2010 Partnership Principles** between donors, development partners and MoEYS for active partnership process, which aimed to increase aid effectiveness.

In addition, accelerated learning programmes for students entering school late and bilingual education programs for students whose first language is not Khmer have been launched in several provinces. The bilingual programmes have especially targeted outlying provinces where the numbers of ethnic minorities are highest. Multi-grade classrooms have been set up in rural and remote areas where there are few students and/or few teachers.

## COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY AND NGO INITIATIVES

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Collaborative efforts between the Royal Government of Cambodia, development partners and education sector NGOs, such as UNICEF, CARE International, Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), VSO, Krousar Thmey and Handicap International, have been vital in implementing many of these programmes for disadvantaged children. Education NGOs play a particularly crucial role in addressing gaps in education services to disadvantaged groups, not only by helping to extend the reach of basic education in Cambodia, but also by helping to broaden the scope of intervention. In addition to formal education services, NGOs offer a wide range of programmes that include health education, vocational/technical training, language education, community support, scholarships, gender issues and advocating for national policy reform.

What is significant about VSO's approach is not only the long-term nature of the support that volunteer professionals provide, but also the methodology of capacity building. VSO's commitment to capacity building is based on the assumption that in order to achieve meaningful change within society, positive behaviour change must first start at individual level. This means starting with individual VSO staff, before seeking change at organisational

level, both within the VSO Cambodia office, and then among local counterparts and partners with whom volunteer professionals would be working closely, with the ultimate aim of influencing change within wider society. In this way, VSO delivers and supports training that focuses not just on the acquisition of skills and knowledge, but also contributes towards a process of social transformation, as individuals explore their attitudes and values towards specific marginalised groups.

## **VSO MAINSTREAMING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROJECT: ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

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Based on VSO Cambodia's substantial experience in the education sector and its close relationship with MOEYS since 1993, it was decided to target the unreached groups of children through the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project. With matched funding from the World Bank and the European Union (EU), VSO began implementing the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project in Cambodia in September 2005, initially in three provinces and then expanding to six provinces after two years. The provinces - Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Kampot, Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri and Koh Kong - were selected based on criteria such as low net enrolment rates in primary and lower secondary education, high population of children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, and high population of children in remote areas.

The overall goal of the project was to improve the quality, accessibility and relevance of formal basic education in six provinces of Cambodia, focusing in particular on the inclusion of girls, children with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Helping to address the educational needs of poor people not only contributes to the fulfilment of their human rights, but also gives them greater awareness of their rights as citizens. Improved education helps individuals to improve their livelihoods in a variety of ways, for example through better access to job opportunities, or through a better understanding of basic health issues that could improve family capital livelihoods. By building technical and management capacity at the central, provincial, district and cluster school levels, the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project has worked towards sustainability.

Implementation of the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project occurred through the strategic placements of volunteer professionals at all levels to provide technical support to their national counterparts. At the central level, volunteers were placed within the Ministry of Education in the Departments of Teaching Training, Inspectorate and Pedagogical Research, and in the Special Education Office of the Primary Education Department, as well as with the advisory bodies, the NGO Education Partnership and Disability Action Council. At the provincial level, volunteers were placed at the Provincial Education Offices and, where applicable, at the Teacher Training Colleges. Finally, volunteers were also placed at specific District Education Offices.

The overarching concept was that VSO's volunteer professionals worked strategically in 'teams' with their national counterparts to contribute towards the overall objective, rather than being expected to work as individuals. This had several purposes: to facilitate ownership of the project by the national counterparts towards building sustainability; to ensure stakeholder buy-in for the various activities and accountability for the outcomes of the project; and to build collaborative relationships and working in partnership, which are key components of the VSO vision. The placement of four volunteer professionals in the NGO Education Partnership and Disability Action Council had additional significance: it enabled VSO to support these agencies to engage more effectively at the highest policy levels in an advisory capacity, and to build stronger

civil society networks.

The teams of volunteer professionals and national counterparts together provided a wide range of needs-based capacity-building activities, which were prioritised and implemented based on input from parents, teachers and other local stakeholders. With the government's policy decision to implement Child Friendly School methodologies across the nation, volunteers were deeply involved in supporting teacher trainers at Teacher Training Colleges to develop interactive pedagogical skills towards effective teaching and learning. Technical Grade Leaders and key staff at cluster schools provided follow-up or ongoing technical assistance to teachers. By 31st August 2009, 86% of Regional and Provincial Teacher Training College staff and 113 pre-service teacher trainers had been trained on disability awareness and inclusive practices appropriate for the classroom and the community. 95% of pre-service teacher trainers had been inducted in using inclusive student-centred methodologies within the pre-service curriculum had been inducted (VSO Cambodia, 2009).

Training initiatives also targeted provincial and district education management personnel to develop supervisory skills to monitor and evaluate teachers' implementation of these practices. Due to the particular focus of the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project on reaching the unreached groups of children, these training initiatives also included specialised components or curricular modules to meet the specific needs of disadvantaged populations. Featured among these was inclusive education as a dimension of Child Friendly Schools, as well as bilingual education, disability awareness training, accelerated education and multi-grade teaching. In many cases, the volunteers facilitated the development of the materials for these trainings. For example, the VSO- Disability Action Council partnership has resulted in the production of disability training materials, while the VSO-Teacher Training Department partnership resulted in the development of a large number of teaching practice handbooks for the Teacher Training Colleges.

In addition, volunteers supported activities that were significant to local communities, such as school or community mapping. In order to increase school enrolment, the government policy on school mapping specifies that, as part of the Enrolment Campaign, School Support Committees, which consist of community members like commune or village chiefs, parents and students, as well as school personnel, like school directors and teachers, go door to door to enumerate all school-age children, and identify those not in school and their reasons for not enrolling. The intention is to provide families with the support they might need to enable their children to access schooling. Volunteers were instrumental in networking with other NGOs in their provinces to procure the necessary support, in disseminating information about relevant services offered by NGOs, and in increasing community involvement and ownership in the educational system. VSO volunteers also helped to support the development of school improvement plans and in school self-assessments, tasks that are undertaken by school directors in conjunction with School Support Committees, and to facilitate their involvement in decision-making processes concerning the allocation and disbursement of Programme Budget funds.

As an extension of NGO networking, VSO volunteers provided technical assistance to other NGOs involved in specific target groups often in the provinces where the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project was being implemented. For instance, a VSO volunteer was placed with KAPE, a local NGO that targets underserved populations in Kampong Cham province. Similarly, VSO volunteers supported bilingual education training that is offered through CARE, an international NGO, in Ratanakiri. The Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project also supported the funding of small grants to enable volunteers to provide effective teaching and learning training, active

classroom methodology, the development of school libraries and the building of access ramps

and functioning toilets. 270 schools and four Teacher Training Colleges benefited from small grants of around \$120 each, which covered 84% of target districts and 98% of recipient schools. (VSO Cambodia, 2010)

The Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project was also involved in developing research and advocacy skills as part of its capacity-building function. Two research studies, one on teachers' perspectives and concerns about the educational system and the second on informal fees and their impact on students' access to schooling, were conducted in partnership with NGO Education Partnership. The aforementioned VSO Cambodia study (Roberts, 2006) into the reasons for student drop-out after Grade 3 in a district in Kampot, informed subsequent project activities in the province. Partnerships with NGO Education Partnership and the Disability Action Council resulted in 38 per cent of NEP members and 37 per cent of DAC members being trained in developing and applying participatory decision-making approaches through advocacy training and advocacy strategy development. (VSO Cambodia, 2010). Both agencies are members of the Joint Education Sector Working Group, with the government and international donors, participating in policy decisions at national level. Three television broadcasts demonstrating Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project processes, learning and achievements, and four brochures on various aspects of Education for All, including disability awareness, have been produced.

The final external evaluation of the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education was completed in July 2009 by Andrew Jones, an independent consultant and his team. The evaluation team made several observations about the impacts of the MIE project, amongst them are the following four highlights:

1. The general consensus is that the MIE project has been a success overall - "good value for money" as some would put it'.
2. The most frequently noted impact of the project was the increased confidence of teachers and educational leaders directly related to the pro-active presence of VSO volunteers.
3. The importance of leadership training to Provincial and District Offices Education, Teacher Training Colleges, and School directors as a way of developing vision statements which provide guidance and achievable goals for administrators, trainers, and teachers (pre- and in-service) was frequently stressed.
4. That where volunteers worked in joint VSO and Ministry project (Cambodian Education Sector Support Project - CESSP) target areas, there was a considerable improvement in access and quality objectives compared to CESSP and non-CESSP provinces and districts without VSO collaboration (James, 2009).

Other impacts of the project which were observed or reported by the education practitioners (primary stakeholders) are as follows:

- Enrolment and promotion rates increased, especially of the target groups (girls, children with disabilities, ethnic minority children) while dropout rates generally decreased in schools, districts, and provinces with VSO interventions.
- School leadership training and school support visits noticeably improved the management of many target lower secondary and primary schools thus contributing to an increase in access and quality of children's education.
- Volunteers in four Teacher Training Colleges encouraged Teacher Trainers to incorporate effective teaching and learning practices into their pre-service teacher instruction and

practicum supervision, thus helping new young teachers to provide child-centred learning for their students. Teaching practice schools are integrated into the process of delivering effective teaching and learning practices. Pre-service teachers now produce teaching resources to be used in their assigned schools.

- In-service teachers in target schools have been made aware of Child Friendly Schools and Effective Learning & Teaching policies and strategies by Provincial and District Offices of Education with VSO Provincial/district Education Advisors. Monitoring/school support visit reports indicate that student-centred learning is becoming a more accepted practice in these schools. District and Cluster Resource Schools of the project areas have become models of good practice for visiting teachers and directors and act as 'the stone dropped into the pool of water' encouraging replication in other motivated schools.
- The quality of teaching in target schools is much improved with 83% of teachers, 98% of teacher trainers and 86% of teacher trainees matching the learning intentions of the lesson to the differing abilities of the children in lessons observed for the recent final evaluation.
- The membership of coalition NGOs has grown by 70% since the start of the project and they have advocacy strategies following the advocacy training in 2007 and the follow-up support offered by British Members of Parliament volunteers in September 2008 and September 2009. The coalitions engage more fully in educational debates at the national level being members of the Education Sector Working Group and the Technical Working Group Education.

The evaluation team concludes that the *VSO Mainstreaming Inclusive Education in Cambodia Project* has been successful particularly in the area of professional development for administrators and teachers (pre-service and in-service). This work has become the foundation for noted improvements in children's access to schools and progression rates (promotion, repetition and drop-out) to Grades 6 and 7, and will inform continuing improvement, especially on a national scale. The professional school leadership and Effective Teaching & Learning training, provided by education staff with MIE support or directly by volunteers, have gone a long way to improving the quality of education in target schools and thus students' enjoyment of learning and their academic achievement. MIE's work with MoEYS departments and the two national coalitions underpins much of the progress made in recent years in educational policy, especially in the areas of education for disabled children and ethnic minority children.

In terms of the sustainability of the project, it was a stated strategy that the project would work within existing government structures and support MoEYS initiatives, such as the policies of the Child Friendly School (CFS) and Education for Children with Disabilities, with its commitment to expand nationwide. The Ministry has been able to use the programme budget to continue implementing the project. There were a few developed Model Child Friendly Schools in each district that will be used to cascade good MEI practices by sharing learning with other schools. Thus, volunteers have supported the implementation of the CFS policy including Effective Teaching and Learning initiatives; the training of District Training and Monitoring Teams (DTMT) and their work in the provinces. They have also supported the development of teacher standards etc. By working within the MoEYS framework, and adding to the value of MoEYS's training, the project has set a climate where, if education professionals carry out their day-to-day duties as determined by MoEYS, the work of the project will be sustainable.

## WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE?

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In order to reach the target of Education for All through inclusive education, we not only need to look at barriers to access outside of the school environment; we also need to improve the quality of education delivered in school to encourage children to enrol, stay and complete their schooling and improve learning outcomes. Achieving quality education includes developing a cadre of educational personnel who are trained in effective teaching and learning strategies, as well as specialised staff who are trained to work in multi-grade classrooms with over-age students, children from ethnic minorities and children with disabilities. Also essential is a cadre of technical personnel who can provide ongoing support for the head teachers and teachers to ensure effective implementation of these strategies. Through the global Fast Track Initiative (FTI) the Teacher Training Department and Special Education Office will cooperatively develop pre-service and in-service curricula in inclusive education that will be cascaded through the Regional and Provincial Teacher Training Colleges. In cooperation with various disability-based NGOs, they will also develop and implement specialised short-term training in the use of Braille and education for students with hearing impairments. Additionally, the Inspectorate of Education Office will establish quality assurance indicators for school self-assessment, and develop a Code of Professional Conduct for inspectors.

Achieving quality education also requires community involvement. As families see the benefits of education, they are more likely to send their children to school and to ensure their school completion. A second component of the FTI implementation will involve community awareness raising and involvement. This may include campaigns for disability awareness, the creation of parent support groups, and the establishment and training of community working groups. As community members become engaged in the management and running of their schools, offering support and advice on the governance of the schools in the districts they serve, productivity and accountability increases, resulting in improved quality of education.

Teachers' low salaries affect parents' perceptions of the value of education as well as teachers' morale and motivation. Paying teachers adequately can become "an investment in the future of the Cambodian people" (VSO Cambodia, 2008) and by raising teachers' morale and social status, it will make them less likely to seek alternative sources of income and more able to focus on the quality of their teaching. This will help to make teaching an attractive profession for young people in the future and change community perceptions about the value of education, so that families will be more motivated to ensure that their children access and complete their education.

Low salaries for teachers are still the main issue even though the Government of Cambodia has increased teacher's basic salary by 20 per cent in January 2010. The Government has also confirmed its' commitment to increase teacher's basic salary by 20 per cent every year. The new monthly salaries of public teachers are: USD50 for primary school teachers; USD75 for lower secondary school teachers and USD100 for upper secondary school teachers. In addition to this, the teachers will still receive other benefits such as incentives for teachers who are willing to get to the remote areas and pedagogical incentives. This new scale of teacher's salary will improve the living standard of teachers in the rural areas but there are still concerns about teachers in cities as the living cost in cities is high compare to the rural areas. However, the amount of increased salary is still not adequate and further commitment from the government is needed to ensure implementation of its policies and continued increased investment in education.

In order to support the MoEYS to address the above needs for achieving the new Education Strategic Plan 2009-2013 and the EFA goals by 2015, VSO plans to build on the success of the

MIE project and will continue to support the MoEYS in improving effective teaching and learning, education management, increasing community support for schools in the current six provinces plus two additional provinces in the North-East of Cambodia and advocacy work to monitor the implementation of the MoEYS's commitment to increase teacher's salary to an adequate level. (MoEYS, 2009b)

VSO recognises that support is still needed in the target provinces. VSO will continue to provide long and short term volunteers to work in target provinces. However, VSO is not able to fund activities. VSO will seek external funding to continue and expand the support given to this activity. VSO will also work closely with other agencies, which are capable of providing training, and will provide follow-up support in schools and offices of education. VSO will provide the following support to target provinces for the next two years at least, whether external funding is secured or not:

- Each target province will have one management advisor. This volunteer will work with the Provincial and District Offices of Education, and target clusters in order to improve education management at all levels. The volunteer will support the District Training and Monitoring Team who deal with management and administration.
- Each target province will have one or two Effective Teaching and Learning Advisors. These volunteers will support the District Training and Monitoring Team who deal with training and follow up support.
- The Management and Effective Teaching and Learning Advisors will support schools to develop and implement a school improvement plan based on realistic self-assessment. They will attend Ministry and NGO training with their colleagues and provide the necessary follow-up to ensure implementation. The work will be tightly focussed within the provinces to ensure high impact.
- Through its National Volunteering initiative, VSO will provide long-term support to a limited number of school clusters in four provinces in order to increase community involvement in education and through student support networks that encourage students to stay in school.
- Through strengthening school management committees in their oversight role of school management for enhancing service efficiency and accountability to education service recipients, which is one of the focuses of VSO's support to decentralisation and deconcentration at commune council and school level.
- VSO Youth for Development volunteers will work to encourage community links in three to four provinces.
- VSO will work closely with other agencies such as UNICEF which can provide financial support for training but which are not able to provide the technical assistance at the grassroots level.
- VSO will continue to provide volunteer professionals to the Provincial Teacher Training Colleges in the target provinces. At the request of the Teacher Training Department VSO will also provide volunteers for other Teacher Training Colleges in two other provinces, as they train teachers for VSO target provinces in the northeast of Cambodia.
- VSO will continue to support central Ministry of Education departments such as Primary, Teacher Training and Curriculum Development.
- VSO will continue to provide long and short-term volunteers for NGO Coalitions (NEP and DAC). The work at NEP will focus on increasing the effectiveness of the organisation's research and advocacy work, including GCE, whilst the support given to DAC will focus on the inclusion of children with disabilities and on management support to the organisation.
- VSO will support the Cambodian Independent Teachers' Association (CITA) to strengthen the management and advocacy work for increasing the voice of teachers in educational debates.

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## **Sharing skills** **Changing lives**

VSO is a federation of member organisations that all contribute volunteers and resources from Canada, India, Ireland Kenya, the Netherlands, the Philippines and the UK to fight poverty in 44 developing countries. VSO has education programmes in 18 countries. Volunteers support improvements in education by working in teacher training colleges and with schools on developing teaching methods. They also work within the mainstream education system to overcome the barriers to marginalised groups, for example by improving policies relating to and the provision of inclusive education in partnership with local and national government in areas such as assessment, strategic planning, national curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation and national quality standards.



VSO also undertakes national level advocacy research through its *Valuing Teachers* campaign and is an active member of the Global Campaign for Education, an international coalition of charities, civil society organisations, and education unions that mobilises public pressure on governments to provide the free education for all children they promised to deliver in 2000. Since 2000, VSO's *Valuing Teachers* research has been conducted in 13 countries and is currently underway in three further countries. Following the research, advocacy strategies are developed, which include the development of volunteer placements in civil society education coalitions, teachers unions and Ministries of Education. In addition to this publication the following research may also be of interest:

**How Much is a Good Teacher Worth?** – A Report on the Motivation and Morale of Teachers in Ethiopia, Emma Sarton, Julia Lalla-Maharajh and Nigel Parsons

**What makes teachers tick?** – VSO policy report, Lucia Fry

**Learning From Listening** – A Policy Report On Maldivian Teachers Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Louise Wheatcroft

**Lessons from the Classroom** – Teachers' Motivation in Nepal, Purna Shrestha

**Listening to Teachers** – The Motivation and Morale of Education Workers in Mozambique, Simone Doctors

**Making Teachers Count** – A Policy Research Report on Guyanese Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Leena Vadher

**Managing Teachers** - Chikondi Mpokosa, Susy Ndaruhutse, Carole McBride, Stephen Nock and Jonathan Penson

**Participatory Advocacy**- A Toolkit for VSO Staff, Volunteers and Partners, Janice Cox

**Seen But Not Heard** – Teachers' Voice in Rwanda, Reed Thomas and Ruth Mbabazi

**START** – Simple Toolkit for Advocacy Research Techniques, Lucy Tweedie

**Teachers for All** – What governments and donors should do, Stephen Nock, Lucia Fry.

**Teachers Speak Out** – A Policy Research Report on Teachers' Motivation in The Gambia, Sara Cowan

**Teacher Talking Time** – A Policy Research Report on Malawian Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Marianne Tudor-Craig

**Teachers' Voice** – A Policy Research Report on Teachers' Motivation and Perceptions of Their Profession in Nigeria, Helen Sherry

**Teaching Matters** - A Policy Report on The Motivation and Morale of Teachers in Cambodia, Sarah Jago, Peter and Margaret Harvey, Julia Lalla-Maharajh, Freda Ellis

**They've Got Class!** – A Policy Research Report on Zambian Teachers' Attitudes to Their Own Profession, Saskia Verhagen

**Valuing School Leaders** - An Investigation into the Constraints Facing School Leaders in Their Efforts to Improve the Quality of Education in The Maldives, Sue O'Shaughnessey

**Forthcoming publications**

- Valuing School Leaders in Zanzibar
- Research into the impact of para, contract and untrained teachers on the quality of education in Mozambique and The Gambia

To learn more about *Valuing Teachers* contact [purna.shrestha@vso.org.uk](mailto:purna.shrestha@vso.org.uk) or [stephen.nock@vso.org.uk](mailto:stephen.nock@vso.org.uk) or visit [www.vsointernational.org/how](http://www.vsointernational.org/how)

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