

**Education for Children with Disabilities  
Support Programme  
in Cambodia**

***Annual Report***  
***September 2002 – August 2003***



***THE DISABILITY ACTION COUNCIL***  
***in partnership with***  
***THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH & SPORTS***

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## 1. Executive Summary

The Project has continued to implement its activities using a participatory approach at all levels and with a strong emphasis on capacity building.

This led to a refocusing of the Project activities around four core objectives:

- Capacity building and training
- Development of Inclusive Education
- National Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting
- National Policy Development

The Education for Children with Disabilities Support Programme has been building the capacity of staff members in MoEYS, Special Schools, NGOs and UNICEF to enable them to develop and deliver appropriate, high quality, coordinated and sustainable education services for children with disabilities.

The DAC feels that effective education for children with disabilities requires a holistic approach to be taken. Rehabilitation services need to link with educational services. Special schools need to mesh more closely with and support mainstream educational provision. NGOs in the disability sector currently offering support to children with disabilities need to gain a greater understanding of education and the education system.

The Project has been working in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) through the Department of Primary Education to provide ongoing support and training to the Special Education Office. The Project achieved a major breakthrough in the area of policy development with the formal acceptance by MoEYS of Inclusive Education as its vision for the future as outlined in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP).

The Programme reviewed and made the training course on children with special needs in the classroom short in which advanced training course is incorporated. Teachers of Inclusive Education pilots have been already provided training on how to assess children with disabilities and the simple way to help. Teachers felt impressed about what the Programme delivered and supported in terms of training, resource materials for teaching children with special needs and training provided by Chhok Educational Resource in Kampot province.

In May UNESCO funded the second National Workshop on Helping Vulnerable Children which was held in Siem Reap province. Deputy Directors from all the Provincial Education Offices attended along with key MoEYS personnel, NGO and Special School representatives. The workshop was highly effective in raising awareness of the needs of children with disabilities and teachers from mainstream schools benefitted greatly from sharing experiences with counterparts. UNESCO experts spoke about best practices for Inclusive Education in the region.

The involvement of the new special educational needs advisor has proved to be a great support to the Programme Coordinator in terms of programme management and support to special schools working with children with severe and multiple disabilities.

The funding from UNESCO has enabled the Programme to host exposure visits to some provinces who are implementing Inclusive Education pilot projects. The Deputy Director of General Education, Director of Primary Education and other key MoEYS personnel took part.

## 2. Background: The Situation of Children with Disabilities in Cambodia

### **Problem areas:**

#### ***Data collection***

According to figures produced by the Special Education Office (SEO) of the MoEYS, there are over 60,000 children with a disability already attending mainstream, Government funded schools. The data is broken down into provinces and specific disabilities.

For example: Siem Reap has the highest number of children with a disability (over 8000) and Monduliri has the lowest (260). There are over 20,000 children throughout Cambodia with a learning difficulty (the largest single group) and less than 2000 with psychological difficulties. The SEO is using the agreed definitions of types of disability based on those produced by the World Health Organisation. School Principals are asked to provide details of children in their schools and this is collated by the SEO.

There are many problems with this system:

- ❑ School Principals are not trained to identify special educational needs or specific disabilities. For example:
- ❑ They have difficulty deciding if a child fits the 'learning difficulty' or 'psychological difficulty' criteria.
- ❑ A School Principle in one province asked if a child who is a slow learner has a disability.
- ❑ Similarly, a child with a broken arm is described as being a child with a disability.
- ❑ A child with Down's Syndrome is listed as having a 'psychological difficulty'

Certain difficulties are not well defined. For example:

There is no clear definition of what is meant by a 'learning difficulty'. As there is no data that describes the 'average' child's learning ability in Cambodia, there can be no baseline that describes a learning difficulty. That is, we would need to know if a child described as having a learning difficulty is in the lowest 20th centile group, 10th centile group or lower. We would also need to know which diagnostic tests have been used to decide this. What constitutes a 'hearing difficulty'? What percentage loss of hearing? Does the child have any functional hearing? Similarly, what is a 'seeing difficulty'? And finally, what is a 'psychological difficulty'? Who is qualified to make the diagnosis?

The figures, as produced, do not give any indication of the level of attendance of children with disabilities. How many children are there in schools in each province, what proportion is disabled, how many disabled children do not attend school? What is the dropout rate of disabled children?

### **Ministry Commitment**

Although there has been some movement on this issue, the education of children with disabilities remains low on the Ministry's list of priorities. Two important documents serve to illustrate these points:

The ESSP review of 2003 contains only one reference to children with disabilities. The draft Summary contains the following statement under the heading "Remote Area Schools and Special Education Needs" as the only reference to children with a disability: "Teacher deployment and training need to be addressed, including for contract teachers and for students with special needs."

No members of the SEO were in attendance at the ESSP Review 2003 and there were no written submissions given to the working party on "Special Education".

The "Education for All National plan 2003 – 2015" has only two references to 'disabled learners':

In the foreword, the Prime Minister, Samdech Hun Sen, refers to the "fundamental thrust" of the EFA being "to ensure all Cambodia's children and youth have equal opportunity to access formal and non-formal basic education, independent of economic status, gender, geography, physical disability and ethnicity". 3.3.3.8 Operational Strategy: Addressing Gender equity and Other Cross Cutting Concerns

In Chapter 1: Development Context, there is a discussion on the effects of poverty, HIV/Aids and gender on education. There is no mention of physical, emotional or developmental disability.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Generally, teacher knowledge and experience of disabilities and their effect on learning is minimal. The vast majority of teachers in Cambodia have not received any training on disability or special educational needs. Therefore children with disabilities are not taught well, often their disability is misunderstood or totally ignored. Teachers are not to blame for this.

Their initial training does not contain any reference to special educational needs. Indeed, teacher training concentrates on teaching an inflexible curriculum with an inflexible methodology. The so-called "Child Friendly Approach" is very new and still very rare in schools in Cambodia. This means that teachers are ill equipped to meet the needs of a child with a physical or developmental difficulty. This type of child will have to keep up with the rest of the class or fail.

### **School Buildings and Access**

Cambodia's climate, post war infrastructure and general level of development all conspire to produce a huge range of difficulties for a child with mobility problems:

- ❑ For many months of the year, poor quality roads in rural areas (and we should note that about 80% of Cambodians live rural areas) in rural areas) are almost impassable. Floods, sand, mud and rocks make the use of a wheelchair very difficult. Most schools have no footpaths between classrooms or from the road to the classrooms. In the rainy season, actually getting to your classroom is a huge endeavour.
- ❑ Getting into the classroom is another problem: most schools are built without access ramps so wheelchair users rely on friends to get them into class.
- ❑ The vast majority of classrooms have no electricity so there are no fans and no internal lighting. There are usually problems with ventilation so that temperatures can rise dramatically. For some children with certain disabilities this leads to severe discomfort which in turn leads to low concentration and effort.
- ❑ As there is no electric lighting the teacher has to control light levels by opening and closing shutters. Children with seeing difficulties may find these variable light levels to be a problem.
- ❑ Many schools are next to Pagodas or busy roads. This leads to noise levels which will be very distracting to children with hearing difficulties and indeed all children.
- ❑ Many schools do not have toilets. Where there are toilets they are often at the top of several steps, fifty metres away across a field and so are not accessible to children with mobility problems. Some schools now have ramps leading to the toilets but they often are too steep, too narrow and raised off the ground so the child in a wheelchair has a 'step' to negotiate before getting on the ramp. The toilets themselves are small, cramped and make no concessions to disabled children.
- ❑ Few schools have access to clean, safe water. Many children with disabilities need to drink water all day or their health suffers badly.

### Other Factors

Children with disabilities suffer from a multitude of other problems.

For example, a family with a disabled child will find itself poorer than its neighbours as the child is not able to contribute to the family's income and is a drain on the already scarce resources. Having a disabled child also means that many mothers have to stay at home to look after the child and so they are not able to add to the family's income. In this type of family, the disabled child will be the last to go to school as other children in the family are seen as more educable and more likely to benefit from education.

This means that there are thousands of disabled children across the country who are receiving no education at all.

This is a typical story: a 10 year old boy in Kampong Som. He has cerebral palsy, comes from a very poor home and has never been to school.



## 3. Review of the Year's Activities September 2002- August 2003

### Capacity Building and Training

#### ❑ Teacher Training

The DAC in partnership with MoEYS conducted a series of training workshops using the in-service course " Children with Special Needs in the Classroom " for its new clusters and NGOs partner pilot programmes as follows:

- 26th to 31st August 2002 for OEB Battambang
- 02nd to 07th September 2002 for HI Kompong Thom
- 09th to 14th September 2002 for NCDP Kompong Speu
- 23rd to 28th September 2002 for VI Prey Veng
- 30th Sept to 04th October 2002 for Svay Rieng new cluster
- 21st October to 26th October 2002 for CT Sihanoukville (supported by MoEYS)

#### ❑ MoEYS Counterparts

Sign Language Development liaison officers and principals from both school clusters came to Phnom Penh to attend a workshop on " What is Sign Language? ". They learned a great deal and gained more knowledge on how to develop sign language at pilot site for children who are deaf.

#### ❑ **Disability Awareness Training**

The Project has been active in promoting understanding of the rights of children with disabilities to receive an education. Awareness raising activities have been linked to the development of a national awareness raising strategy being coordinated by the DAC. For the Project this meant a shift from generalised messages about the rights and abilities of children with disabilities towards more targeted messages aimed at education professionals, teachers and key community figures. The disability awareness and teaching materials were widely distributed to teachers and NGOs partners.

#### ❑ **Presentations**

The Project gave presentations about its activities to the DAC facilitated Children with Disabilities Committee, the Community Based Worker Training Committee and the Cambodian Cooperation Committee (CCC) Child Welfare Group.

#### ❑ **Events**

The Project facilitated the involvement of children with disabilities in events organised to celebrate the International Day for the Disabled (December 3rd 2002) and International Children's Day (June 1st 2003).

#### ❑ **Media Coverage**

Significant media coverage in local and international media was achieved with the National Workshop on Helping Vulnerable Group. The articles on promoting education for children with disabilities in mainstream schools were issued in CNCC newsletter, Rasmey Kampuchea and Mom Mab magazine.

### **Development of Inclusive Education**

#### ❑ **VSO London Visit**

Early in October, a representative of VSO London came to Cambodia to look at how our experiences here can help with the training of new Volunteers in England. He came with us to Svay Rieng to see the training in progress and was very impressed with the materials that have been prepared. So impressed, in fact, that he took copies back to London to use in the extensive library that VSO has there. Lessons learned here will also be fed back to trainers in England.

#### ❑ **UNICEF EAPRO Visit**

The Program also received a guest from UNICEF EAPRO to visit Inclusive Education pilot program in both K'Cheay and Kompong Chak cluster schools in Svay Rieng province for lessons learned and initiatives for Inclusive Education for children with disabilities. He was very impressed to learn that the cluster school principle, primary school teachers trained by DAC and Provincial Implementation Teams have performed their duties successfully on disability awareness raising, physical rehabilitation, referral for other services and school enrolment of children with disabilities. The level of collaboration between UNICEF/CNSP, UNICEF/Education, DAC, POE and other UNICEF supporting partners is promising in terms of information sharing and working relationships.

#### ❑ **Support to the Rabbit School**

After receiving a grant from London, we have been able to start improvements to the Rabbit School. Volunteers from Maryknoll and VSO and staff from the school spent an exhausting but thoroughly enjoyable weekend cleaning and painting the school.

The grant also made it possible for the Headteacher go to India to study for a diploma in special education. DAC worked very closely with Cambodian Child Mental Health to send him there. In his absence the DAC SEN Adviser has played a 'monitoring' role in the day to day running of the school.

## **National Coordination, Monitoring and Reporting**

DAC undertakes 'monitoring' visits to each of the projects as and when it can. These visits are usually short and involve visiting several schools in the project area. Individual children are observed briefly in class and their teachers are interviewed about the child's progress. The results of this work are very subjective. DAC has developed a simple monitoring form which can be used to get basic information about individuals but putting this data together to paint a true picture of the education of these children is difficult.

For example, a skilled classroom observer is able to comment on many aspects of the teaching and learning activities they see, such as:

- The involvement of children in the learning process
- The use of active learning approaches or rote learning
- Assessment of learning - how children's learning is evaluated (oral/written/in groups)
- Child to child interactions in learning (in pairs/team work)
- Are children with special needs following the same schedule as others?

However, the key word here is "skilled". There are very few people here in Cambodia with that level of skill so the data that is obtained is generally of limited value. The areas where less skilled observers can comment are:

- Is the classroom well lit?
- Are the school grounds free of obstacles? (including litter?)
- Are there any classroom displays (children's work)?
- Are there any teaching aids (availability and in use)?
- Is the blackboard legible (quality, colour and availability of chalk)?

This should not stop us continuing to observe teachers and children but it should be recognised that this is an area where more training needs to take place so that data obtained is truly useful.

## **National Policy Development**

Following the ESSP Review 2002 in early September, the "Education Sector Review Summary Report" highlighted the need to train people with disabilities to become teachers and the need to increase teachers' and other Ministry employees' knowledge of special education. This was as a result of the attendance by a member of DAC as part of the "cross cutting themes team". The news from the ESSP 2003 review was not as positive.

## **Svay Rieng Provincial Pilot**

The DAC's approach has been to focus on the school teachers to help them to understand the needs of children with disabilities and to improve their teaching skills so that they can provide the specialist help these children require. Currently there are 88 children with disabilities attending these schools. These children have a range of disabilities from mild physical impairments to more problematic conditions such as cerebral palsy, deafness and Downs Syndrome.

The DAC has set up a local implementation team made up of 3 MoEYS staff, one person from the Cambodian Disabled Persons Organisation (CDPO) and one person from MoSALVY who links with Veterans International (VI). This team called the Provincial Implementation Team (PIT) visits each school once a month advising the teachers and assessing the needs of children with disabilities. Several children have been referred for corrective surgery and/or have received assistive devices. The DAC provides technical and financial support to the PIT.

The IE pilot is unique. The aim is to help all the children with disabilities at the schools by improving the quality of education they receive instead of supporting individual disabled children to go to school. The IE pilot aims to transform the school environment so that it is welcoming to children with disabilities.

## **The National Workshop on Helping Vulnerable Group (May 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> 2003)**

That was a follow-up workshop from the first ever national workshop on education for children with disabilities held in April 2001, it was financially supported by UNESCO Bangkok. The workshop aimed at improving the standard of education currently being provided to children with disabilities and also children with special needs to explore ways to expand the provision of educational opportunities to more children with disabilities. The outcomes resulted from the workshop are as follows:

- Reports on the Inclusive Education Pilot Programme from the Provincial Implementation Team (PITs) were shared to participants

- Experiences of implementing Inclusive Education and of helping vulnerable groups among NGOs/Institutions who are implementing their project were exchanged
- Recommendations for the future were formulated
- Further training on helping children with learning difficulties are delivered to special needs officers and senior education staff from provinces through out Cambodia
- Roles and responsibilities of the MoEYS/SEO and POEs special Education sector staff were clarified

### **Research and Statistics of Children with Disabilities**

The project has still been working on collecting the statistic of children with disabilities from NGOs. Eventually the Special Education Office started its first important function to collect statistics of children with disabilities from all 24 provinces and municipalities, but only 9 provinces had collected and sent to the office. The results suggest large number of children with disabilities at school. However the reliability of these figures is uncertain. In the future MoEYS seek to improve easy-to-use data collecting form with support from DAC and UNICEF.

### **Special Education Office**

The Project has also provided computer training to the Disability Officer. Staff from the office attended the National workshop and the Director of Department of Primary Education and Deputy Director of General Directorate of Education also took part in visit to Svay Rieng and Sihanouk Ville pilot sites to view and get to know about the Inclusive Education for children with disabilities piloting process.

### ***Cooperation with other Organisations***

The Project has continued to work closely with other organisations. The Special Needs Advisor has become a member of the board of the newly formed NGO Education Partnership (NEP). The NEP will be the formal consultative mechanism for MoEYS to discuss planning and policy with NGOs and representatives of civil society.

In November, Kong Vichetra, IE Program Co-ordinator went to Bangkok with Mrs Sieng Sorvathana to attend the Regional Meeting on Lessons Learned and Initiatives for Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities. The meeting was a great success and many useful ideas came from it. We are now looking at ways of putting those ideas into practice here in Cambodia.

#### 4. Project Summary Table

Capacity Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposure visits to Inclusive Education projects in Svay Rieng and Sihanouk Ville made by Deputy Director of General Directorate of Education, Director of Department of Primary Education and key staff members from MoEYS</li> <li>• Exchange visit of Provincial Implementation Team (PIT) made to Svay Rieng and Sihanouk Ville</li> <li>• Conducted training courses on literacy and math for teachers of grade 1 and 2 and who teach children with special needs in old and new cluster school in Svay Rieng. The training provided by trainers of Chhouk Educational Resources in Kompot province.</li> <li>• Tasks oriented and assigned to MoEYS-LPO Special Needs Officer in teacher training in 6 provinces and some days hands-on work at the Rabbit School</li> <li>• Training on database set up and on-job-training on project management arranged for MoEYS LPO</li> <li>• IE Program Co-ordinator presented programme activities to Director of Cambodia Mine Action Authority. Also he presented at Child Welfare Group meeting, Krousar Thmey workshop on " Social Integration of Visually Challenged &amp; Speech &amp; Hearing Impaired Children through Education and at the Deaf Education Workshop</li> <li>• Technical Assistance on Special Education provided to the Rabbit School and Lavalla School and other NGOs</li> <li>• 7 INSET training courses conducted in 6 IE provinces. 45 teachers x 6 + 27= 297 from grade 4, 5 and 6 newly were trained.</li> <li>• Technical session on in-service teacher course provided to all teachers in Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Kompong Speu and Sihanouk Ville</li> <li>• Advanced Teacher Training on Special Education provided to trained teachers of grade 1,2 &amp; 3 in all provinces implementing Inclusive Education pilots</li> <li>• Director of the Department of Primary Education of MoEYS attended the Deaf Education workshop and provided information on strong position on support education for all children with disabilities.</li> <li>• Program Coordinator and Special Education Advisor attended at the International Conference on Inclusive Education in Hong Kong, China</li> <li>• All staff members of the Special Education Office provided training course on " Children with Special Needs in the Classroom "</li> </ul>
Development of Inclusive Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided consultation on setting up Inclusive Education project to NGOs partners</li> <li>• Facilitated the Disability Awareness shows performed at schools of all provincial project sites by Ponleu Silpak Circus School</li> <li>• Facilitated participation of children with disabilities in the Children's Day, 01st June and International Day for Disabled Persons, 03rd December 2003</li> <li>• Teachers training on Sign Language training were arranged for 3 teachers and 3 Deputy Principals from Svay Rieng province.</li> <li>• 3 Integrated classes opened in new study year in Svay Rieng, begin practice Sign Language by selected teachers, and new books for children provided to all IE provinces including Svay Rieng Inclusive Education schools</li> <li>• MoEYS LPO attended at the Evaluation workshop of UNICEF in Steung Treng to present project activities and provide some inputs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Revised and translated the training pack on " Simple Ideas on Teaching Children with Disabilities"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

National Coordination , Monitoring and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DAC and MoEYS co-organized the National Workshop on “Helping Vulnerable Children” on 26-29 May 2003, at Siem Reap province</li> <li>• Regular monitoring visits made to all provinces implementing Inclusive Education pilots</li> <li>• Internal Assessment workshop on Inclusive Education programme held</li> <li>• PIT's gather academic achievement results on children with disabilities</li> <li>• Regular meetings of the Children with Disabilities Committee held (2meetings held)</li> <li>• Progress report developed based on monitoring to all IE provinces and was used as internal evaluation on education situation of children with disabilities produced</li> <li>• Regular meetings of the Children with Disabilities Committee held (Monthly meetings held),</li> <li>• Progress report developed based on monitoring to all IE provinces and was used as internal evaluation on education situation of children with disabilities produced</li> <li>▪ The Program had designed a class observation form. It was trialled by -DAC/MoEYS in Svay Rieng has proved to be useful in other IE Provinces.</li> </ul>
National Policy Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attended regular meetings in EDUCAM and meetings in NEP</li> <li>• Provided input to EFA, ESSP review via NEP and at ESSP review itself. Limited outcome – final ESSP report not yet available</li> <li>• 3 meetings arranged with MoEYS to discuss technical assistance and 4 meetings arranged with UNICEF to discuss on education for children with disabilities</li> <li>• MOU agreed upon between MoEYS and DAC on Partnership project on Education for Children with Disabilities (Inclusive Education) (2002-2005)</li> <li>• Initial moves are being made to bring together interested parties to serve on a National Policy Steering Group</li> </ul>

## 5. Budget

The Program financially supported by UNICEF with amount of US\$ 30,000 and provision of partial fund made by UNESCO was US\$18,000 for additional specific activities on capacity building and training for MoEYS staff members.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Project has made considerable progress this year and is well on the way to achieving all of its objectives. The Project has made this progress by working in partnership with MoEYS, other organisations working in disability and with children with disabilities themselves. Special Education Advisor is now in a much better function on his roles especially the development of special schools.

The Project will continue this participatory approach to ensure that the progress achieved so far is not abandoned. It is essential that MoEYS and those working for children with disabilities have a sense of ownership over the activities and aims of the Project. This sense of ownership will ensure sustainability and enable Inclusive Education to flourish on the foundation the Project has laid.