External Final Evaluation

"Improving Child Rights and Enhancing Education for Children (ICREEC)"

Cambodia - March 2018

ABBREVIATION

DoE	District Office of Education
KHEN	Khmer NGO for Education
POE	Provincial Office of Education
RoGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
UXO	Landmine/UXOs (Unexploded Ordonance)

Executive Summary extracted from document Project Evaluation "Improving Child Rights and Enhancing Education for Children" prepared by AIKC consulting in Battambang, Cambodia, in March 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

ChildFund Cambodia is the representative office of ChildFund Australia – an independent and non-religiousinternational development organization that works to reduce poverty for children in the developing world.ChildFund Cambodia's community development programs are in the areas of child protection and resilience,quality education, sustainable livelihoods, improved local governance, and youth empowerment. ChildFund in Cambodia implements a range of programs in collaboration with local civil society organizations, and in partnership with the relevant ministries and government departments, in the rural provinces of Svay Rieng, Kratié and Battambang, as well as Phnom Penh, and focuses on working with the vulnerable, excluded or marginalized sections of society. Spanish NGO EDUCO is a global development agency with over 25 years' experience in child rights, particularly the right to equitable and quality education. Educo delivers projects that social justice and development projects in Spain, Africa, America, and Asia, with a reach of more than 550,000 children and 150,000 adults in promoting just and equitable societies that guarantee their rights and wellbeing. Educo envisages a world where all children fully enjoy their rights and lead a life of dignity. Educo is a member of the ChildFund Alliance, one of the foremost international networks of NGOS working in favour of child protection on five continents. A management transfer occurred in July 2017 in which EDUCO and ChildFund Cambodia merged and in July 2017 and became a joint entity known as ChildFund-Educo Cambodia.

The Improving Child Rights and Enhancing Education for Children Project (ICREEC) Phase II, implemented by local partner KHEN (Khmer NGO for Education), was an existing project originally started by Educo whilst it was working in Battambang Province as an individual development entity.

KHEN is a local NGO and certified Child Safe Organisation based in Battambang Province. They have a focus on child rights, accessible, inclusive & quality education and child protection. Their education projects focus on rural and remote areas where significant barriers to child education exist.

ICREEC II operated across 4 communes in Samlout District, which is approximately 100km from Battambang Town. Samlout was a former Khmer Rouge stronghold and still has large areas of land contaminated by landmine/UXOs (Unexploded Ordnance). Access to basic (let alone quality) education is limited in Samlout, with distances to schools, resource shortages, and weak educator training and capacity, all negatively impacting the education system. Samlout District Department of Education (DoE) has experienced resources and skills shortages over the years, which has further isolated the schools in the area. Adult literacy in Samlout is low, especially amongst older parents (whose own education was impacted the length of Khmer Rouge control in the area) and this has added another barrier to improved schooling in the area.

ICREEC II commenced in 2014 and aimed to continue supporting and build upon the gains made in a Phase 1*1*, in 25 schools (state' schools and community/ annex'2 schools). The project's goal was that *"remote/rural children and their communities in the outreach areas of Samlout, to value, participate in and actively support & advocate for education and other Child Rights."* Its objectives focused on increasing school access and attendance, improving teacher quality and school management, and strengthening the understanding and application of child rights within schools and communities. It was due to conclude in September 2017 but undertook a three-month no-cost-extension, in large part due to implementation delays resulting from the Educo-ChildFund merger and the support uncertainty this created for a time.

KEY FINDINGS

The Education Ministry's 2016 Mid-term review states that "even though access to primary school is relatively high, children are not learning sufficiently", and this is a good reflection of the state of the schools in Samlout District and those supported through this project. The project has benefitted schools and children in multiple ways, most noticeably improved access and children are attending school. When KHEN's started working in Samlout when there were either no schools in existence, or very basic community-run schools and the starting level of education quality was very low. The project model targets those areas that are remote, isolated and un-serviced, and in this context, the achievements of easier access to schooling and better resources are commendable. There are also many examples of good educator performance in schools, or appropriate and child-friendly learning environments. However, the overall education quality available in the target schools (materials, teaching competency, management quality, and durability) is weak.

The links between schools and communities could be stronger and more meaningful, especially in the state schools. And the evidence suggests a child will not receive an education of the standard desired by RoGC standards, and their learning outcomes will be weak.

Major Achievements of the Project	Key Strengths of the Project
5% increase in students in state schools	Enrolment campaign activities are strong and increasing school access, especially for girls
20% increase in students in community schools	Good example of WASH hardware in schools
10% in in the number of girls in state schools	Child rights awareness raising has been effective in strengthening child protection in schools/communities
27% increase in the number of girls in community schools	Relationships between parents/communities and 'Community schools' is positive example
7 of 11 'Community schools formally transferred to POE/DOE – very big achievement	Relationship with government that translate into government taking ownership of community schools
Enrolment campaigns completed every year	Project model targets those areas that are remote, isolated and un-serviced - very commendable
100% of Kids feel safe in their schools	

The project was analysed in five major areas - impact, sustainability relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency -using a simple traffic light system[1],the results are summarised below:

Effectiveness - Satisfactory performance (borderline)
Efficiency - Acceptable performance
Impact - Acceptable performance:
Sustainability - Acceptable Performance (borderline)
Relevance - Satisfactory performance

[1] Green for satisfactory performance - with strengths highlighted as well any areas for refinement.
Yellow for acceptable performance- but needing improvement in highlighted areas.
Red for concerning performance -in need of significant improvement in highlighted areas.

ICREEC II has continued investment in 25 rural schools and has been able to gradually improve the material conditions, whilst also undertaking attempts at strengthening and reforming teaching, school management and community relations. During this period, there has been significant reform and advancement in the education sectors, which highlight some of the deficiencies in the KHEN model, but also the opportunities for them explore in order to grow as an education-focused NGO.

KEY RECOMMANDATIONS

These advancements make up the bulk of the evaluation's recommendations for future education-focused project work, and are as follows:

1. For education projects, shift the focus on learning outcomes for kids, rather than materials gains.

2. KHEN to gain more education technical expertise if it wants to grow as an education-focused NGO (kook at orgs such as See Beyond Borders successful for technical help).

3. Increase and target investment in pre-primary and Grades 1-3.

4. Avoid cascade training models and shift to a model built around regular support, mentoring, progressive and intervaled, and in-service.

5. Increase engagement and support from project stakeholders, and management and maintenance of results, in order to improve sustainability.

6. Invest in quality solutions/activities, even if means fewer target schools/beneficiaries - Quality over Quantity!

7. Try to narrow that gap between strong, durable results and weak, fragile results – improve the consistency of results between location and contexts.