

Reaching the unreached



Bridging the social divide in Cambodia through inclusive education¹

Sharing skills
Changing lives



Abstract

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). In order to reach this 'unreached' population of children and meet the goal 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. An estimated 181,000 primary-school-age children, including girls, children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children with disabilities, children living in remote areas, and orphaned, sick or trafficked children², remain out of school.

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² 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. Trafficked children are subjected to prostitution, forced into marriage or illegally adopted; they provide cheap or unpaid labour, work as house servants or beggars, or are recruited into armed groups. 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).

This paper describes the efforts of one international NGO, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), to support these children through its Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project. It provides background and contextual information concerning the education sector in Cambodia, and identifies both accomplishments and challenges faced. It then describes the activities and strategies implemented within the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project towards increasing the enrolment and participation of disadvantaged children and increasing the capacity of teachers and education management personnel to respond to their unique and differentiated needs.

Education in Cambodia

Cambodia's population of approximately 14 million people³ 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. The successor government to the Khmer Rouge began to rebuild the education system by gradually reopening schools and inviting back all surviving teachers to teach, but continued political instability for almost 20 years severely limited the effectiveness of these measures. The establishment of a ten-year educational system was gradually increased to the current 12-year system of nine years of basic education, consisting of:

- six years of primary school;
- three years of lower secondary education;
- three years of upper secondary education.

An administrative strategy of cluster schools, consisting of six to ten satellite schools with a core school in geographical proximity, was developed to facilitate the direct disbursement of public Programme Budget funds and a more equitable distribution of trained staff. By providing resources directly to schools for routine operating expenses and specified development activities, such as offering salary supplements to teachers for conducting remedial classes, Programme Budget funds have helped to mitigate the effect of very low teacher salaries. The strategy has also helped to stimulate demand for education from families for whom the cost of education was a barrier to entry, by requiring that schools that receive Programme Budget funds do not charge entrance fees.

However, 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, in their 2006 report *Teachers and Educational Quality*, affirmed that, between 2000 and 2004, primary enrolments in Cambodia rose by 5.3 per cent and secondary enrolments by 15.8 per cent. As the table below shows, an even higher growth of the primary-school-age population is predicted between 2005 and 2015. The table also highlights the need for a large increase (16.9 per cent) in the number of trained primary teachers by 2015.

³ As projected from the 2008 National Census.

	School-age population (2015 figures are UIS projections)		Increase/ decrease projected (%)	Number of teachers ⁴		Increase/ decrease projected (%)	Pupil- teacher ratio	New teachers needed by 2015	Teachers needed due to attrition ⁵	Total number of Teachers needed
	2005	2015		2005-15	2004					
Primary schools	2,010,000	2,229,000	9.8	50,200	58,700	16.9	55.1	8,500	38,600	47,100
Secondary schools	2,109,000	1,999,000	-5.2	25,200	N/A	N/A	25.1	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2006.

Inclusive education

The principle of inclusive education was first endorsed at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994, as an international guideline to provide educational services for children with disabilities. In 2000, the Millennium Development Goals and the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, set the goal of achieving universal primary completion and Education for All by 2015 by including within the educational mainstream all traditionally excluded and marginalised groups. In keeping with these international guidelines, 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 government's education sector program, led by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS) is aligned closely with the government's Rectangular Strategy for Economic Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2004) and the National Strategic Development Plan 2006–2010 for poverty alleviation (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2006). Its 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.

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 member 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 at the highest policy levels and are

⁴ 2015 figures are UNESCO Institute of Statistics projections based on a 40:1 pupil-teacher ration target.

⁵ Based on a medium attrition rate of 6.5 per cent per year. A higher attrition rate of 8 per cent per year would mean the need to recruit and train 47,500 teachers to replace teachers leaving due to attrition.

instrumental in ensuring that the relevant Ministry moves in appropriate policy directions and in 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 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report, which uses the latest available statistics from 2006, ranks Cambodia 104 out of 129 countries on the EFA Development Index (EDI), as shown in the table below.

Cambodia's ranking on the EFA Development Index

Year	EDI	Ranking on EDI (out of 129 countries)	Total primary net enrolment ratio (NER)	Ranking on NER	Gender-specific EFA index (GEI)	Ranking on GEI	Survival rate to Grade 5	Ranking on survival rate
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

Source: UNESCO: 2007; UNESCO 2008

The statistics clearly show a downward trend across the board, with decreases in primary enrolment and survival rates, and worsening results on the gender-specific EFA index. This may be a result of 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: 202-206) 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 lack of school readiness affects 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, 2007).

Although the 2007/8 Education Management Information System (EMIS) data showed net enrolment rates at the primary level at 93.3 per cent, these figures drop to 34.8 per cent at lower secondary levels, and further down to 14.8 per cent at the upper secondary level (MOEYS, 2008b). There is also some disparity by gender: net lower secondary and upper secondary enrolment rates for boys were 33.7 per cent and 15.7 per cent respectively, as opposed to 35.9 per cent and 13.8 per cent for girls.⁶ Similarly, in 2007, primary (Grade 6) completion rates were only 86.2 per cent, lower secondary (Grade 9) completion rates were 48.6 per cent, while upper secondary (Grade 12) completion rates were a dismal 19.7 per cent. Rural-urban disparities in completion rates indicate that more urban (91.6 per cent) than rural (86.7 per cent) pupils complete primary school; the pattern repeats at the lower secondary level as well with overall lower completion rates in rural areas.

⁶ This disparity does not occur at the primary level, where female enrolment rates at 93.3 per cent are actually slightly higher than male enrolment rates at 93.2 per cent.

Persistently high drop-out 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. There are 1.52 million economically active children aged 5–14 years, of whom 8.6 per cent do not attend school (ILO, 2006). In 2006, an estimated 213,000 children (aged 6–11) were not attending primary school⁷ (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, immediate monetary gains from each member contributing to the family earnings at as early an age as possible. In towns where some residents have a greater income, access to education is primarily achieved through their ability to pay and by the ability of the family to release children to attend school. Although education in schools is free, parents are required to pay ‘informal fees’ (and other costs such as ‘start-up costs’ and ‘daily costs’; see NEP, 2007) that supplement the very poor salaries that teachers receive (range US\$28–US\$54 per month). Informal fees are lower in provincial areas than in urban areas, however, they increase as the child gets older – undoubtedly a contributing factor to drop-out rates.

Thirty-four per cent of Cambodian children enter school late (UIS, 2006), often due to poor health and malnutrition; about 45 per cent of children under the age of five are underweight (World Bank, 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). The aforementioned 2004 World Bank study found that for each additional year that a Cambodian girl delays school entry, her total number of completed years of schooling is reduced by three years. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the higher drop-out rate for girls (usually at about Grades 7–8) occurs as result of pressure to become economically active and to look after siblings (Roberts, 2006). The World Bank study also concluded that a school uniform policy, whereby students who do not wear a school uniform are not allowed to attend school, inhibits attendance.

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 the lowest access of just 2.25 years (MOEYS, 2008a).

⁷ It is significant that girls constitute almost 92 per cent of this population.

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. Pupils' learning achievement is especially low among ethnic and linguistic minorities in these remote areas. A situation analysis in Ratanakiri, one of the least developed provinces in Cambodia (CARE International, 2008), noted that most indigenous children live in remote areas where there are extremely limited numbers of schools. 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. A high domestic workload is the main barrier to indigenous girls' participation in school, as girls are expected to contribute to housework, cooking and caring for younger siblings.

The 2004 Cambodian Socio-Economic Survey noted that 2.6 per cent of girls and 2.9 per cent of boys between the ages of 5 to 17 years did not attend school due to a disability (MOP, 2005). Children with disabilities are less likely than able bodied children or even children with very poor health to have ever attended school. Unlike for girls, there has been no increase in the enrolment of children with disabilities in schools: 22 per cent of children with one or more disabilities is less likely than non-disabled children to be currently enrolled in school and estimated to complete about 0.33 fewer grades (Knowles, 2005).

As a result of a 1995 government edict⁸ on the criteria for teacher candidates' physical appearance for recruitment of public primary and pre-school teachers, stating that candidates must "have clear bio-data, good health and [be] free of disabilities", adults with disabilities, until recently, were prohibited from becoming teachers in government schools. It was hoped that the 2007 Education Law would overturn this edict. However, there is some ambiguity in the statement that the Ministry in charge of education shall determine the "minimal physical and professional criteria for the recruitment of public and private educational personnel" (MOEYS, 2007: Article 20).

⁸ Council of Ministries, *Prakas* 1356/1995, 223/1997, 872/1997, 835/1998, 39/1999 and 2002, cited in ILO, 2003.

Barriers to quality education

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 supervisory support;
- few opportunities for women at upper and middle management levels;
- curriculum and education content are not relevant to 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 2006 VSO Cambodia study (Roberts) 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. Teachers reported that they earned more through fishing, farming and working in the salt fields than they did through teaching. This not only affects the teachers' morale, but also affects the community's perceptions of the value of receiving an education: families had no incentive to send their children to school when they saw no economic returns to receiving an education. The rural families recognised that their children, after completing basic education, would have to move to towns and other urban areas where there were more opportunities for better-paying jobs; they had concerns about their children moving away from the family and about losing their labor in the process. Similarly, a more recent study into teachers' moral 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.

The government has attempted to address the problem of shortage of schools and teachers by the separate strategies of building incomplete schools (that is structures that may lack permanent roofs or walled-in classrooms, but have sufficient infrastructure to enable them to be used as school buildings) and providing multi-grade classrooms, particularly in remote areas. An additional strategy has been to have shifts, where students attend lessons for a three-hour block of time each day, while teachers may teach double, even triple, shifts to supplement their salaries and reach greater numbers of students. One of the negative consequences of this system is that student instruction time is low – about 850 hours annually against an international standard of 1,000 hours (FTI Secretariat, 2006). Despite these changes, high pupil-teacher ratios and high rates of

repetition are still areas of concern, and class sizes remain large, particularly in urban areas like Phnom Penh, where they range from 50 to 90 students in a class.

Over 43 per cent of primary schools do not have clean water and over 34 per cent have no latrines, contributing to high drop-out rates. 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 Mondulakiri 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

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 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.

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 specially 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.

To facilitate policy development and fiscal allocations, and to ensure that all children who are currently out of school are being targeted, the government is also developing mechanisms to gather statistical data on these groups of disadvantaged children. An indicator on disability was included in the 2008 National Census (National Institute of Statistics, 2008) for the first time, as were indicators for disadvantaged children in the School Registry form. In efforts to increase enrolment figures, a policy for School Mapping was enacted in February 2007 that utilises community-based local structures, such as School Support Committees, to identify out-of-school children and their reasons for not

being in school. Wherever possible, through NGO funding, these children then receive the support they need, such as a bicycle for transportation to school or free breakfast and lunch, to enable them to come to school.

Collaborative Ministry and NGO initiatives

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.

VSO and inclusive education

VSO is an international development agency that works to build the capacity of partner organisations (governments and NGOs) in developing countries to fight global poverty and disadvantage. 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. The volunteers are highly skilled, experienced professionals who work directly with partner organisations, providing training and on-the-job professional support.

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 contribute towards a process of social transformation, as individuals explore their attitudes and values towards specific marginalised groups.

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 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, which are Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Kampot, Ratanakiri, Mondulakiri 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 is 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 works towards sustainability.

Implementation of the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project occurs through the strategic placements of volunteer professionals at all levels to provide technical support to their national counterparts. At the central level, volunteers are 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 are placed at the Provincial Education Offices and, where applicable, at the Teacher Training Colleges. Finally, volunteers are also placed at specific District Education Offices.

The overarching concept is that VSO's volunteer professionals will work strategically in 'teams' with their national counterparts to contribute towards the overall objective, rather than being expected to work as individuals. This has several purposes: it facilitates ownership of the project by the national counterparts towards building sustainability; it ensures stakeholder buy-in for the various activities and accountability for the outcomes of the project; and it builds 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 has additional significance: it enables 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 provide a wide range of needs-based capacity-building activities, which are 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 have been 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 provide follow-up or ongoing technical assistance to teachers. By February 2008, over 78 per cent of provincial and regional Teacher Training College staff and 90 per cent of pre-service teacher trainers had been inducted in using student-centred methodologies.

Training initiatives have 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 have also included specialised components or curricular modules to meet the specific needs of disadvantaged populations. Featured among these are 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 have 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 has resulted in the development of a large number of teaching practice handbooks for the Teacher Training Colleges.

In addition, volunteers support activities that are 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, including 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 have been 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 have 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 have provided technical assistance to other NGOs involved in specific target groups often in the provinces where the Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project is being implemented. For instance, a VSO volunteer is placed with KAPE, a local NGO that targets underserved populations in Kampong Cham province. Similarly, VSO volunteers have supported bilingual education training that is offered through CARE, an international NGO, in Ratanakiri. The Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project has also supported the funding of small grants to enable volunteers to provide effective teaching and learning training, and help schools build ramps and functioning toilets. To date, four Teacher Training Colleges and 54 per cent of target districts have received small grants.

The Mainstreaming Inclusive Education project has also been 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, has informed subsequent project activities in the province. Partnerships with NGO Education Partnership and the Disability Action Council have 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. 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.

What still needs to be done?

When an assessment of the educational situation in 2006 indicated that the Millennium Development Goals were unlikely to be met by 2015, donors endorsed a request for additional funding from the Cambodian government in order to achieve the Education for All by 2015 goal. This has resulted in an infusion of US\$57 million to the Ministry of Education through the global Fast Track Initiative (FTI) created expressly for this purpose. Administered by the World Bank, this plan covers the years 2008–2011. A total of US\$2.5 million has been earmarked for reaching the unreached groups. The Special Education Office has designed a programme for teacher training in inclusive education, and community awareness-raising as well as involvement, to utilise these funds.⁹

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, as well as a cadre of technical personnel who can provide ongoing support to ensure effective implementation of these strategies. Through 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, and in cooperation with various disability-based NGOs, 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 child 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 establishing and training 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) by raising teachers' morale and social status, making 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

⁹ Special Education Office Proposal to Primary Education Department, July 2008.

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.

The issue of low salaries for teachers must, of course, be seen within the broader context of Cambodia's current situation as one of the poorest countries in the world. As Cambodia continues its economic growth and poverty is ameliorated, the quantity and quality of education will improve. However, this requires political will and commitment from the government to ensure implementation of its policies and continued increased investment in education.

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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 42 developing countries. VSO has education programmes in 19 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.

Valuing Teachers

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 12 countries and is currently underway in two further countries. Following the research, advocacy strategies are developed, which include the development of volunteer placements in: civil society education coalitions; and Ministries of Education. In addition to this publication the following research may also be of interest:

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

Forthcoming publications

- *Valuing Teachers in Ethiopia* Julia Lalla-Maharajh and Nigel Parsons
- *Valuing School Leaders in Zanzibar*

To learn more about *Valuing Teachers* contact stephen.nock@vso.org.uk or purna.shrestha@vso.org.uk or visit www.vsointernational.org/how

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