



Highland Children's Education Project

Good Lessons Learned in Basic Education

Highland Children's Education Project

A Pilot Project on Bilingual Education in Cambodia

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ACRONYMS

CIDSE	International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (an NGO)
CLC	Community Learning Centre
DLE	Draft Law on Education
EFA	Education for All
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
HA	Highlanders' Association (an NGO)
HCEP	Highland Children's Education Project
HU	Health Unlimited (an NGO)
ICC	International Cooperation for Cambodia (an NGO)
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PCD	Policy for Curriculum Development
PNG	Papua New Guinea
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been produced by UNESCO in partnership with CARE International in Cambodia for the *Highland Children's Education Project* (HCEP) to document the model of bilingual primary education provided for the Tampuan and Kreung ethnic minority groups in six remote villages located in the northeastern province of Ratanakiri.

Central to the HCEP is the idea of *community schools* – schools where the community is largely responsible for governance and day-to-day operations. The schools provide students with formal primary education. The national curriculum is adapted to local conditions, teachers come from the communities and are trained, time tables are adapted according to farming seasons, and the schools are run by community School Boards – in effect, a *non-formalization* of primary education that is more flexible and tailored to suit local needs. The HCEP is a *bilingual education* project that encompasses more than mother tongue as the language of instruction. Curriculum, materials, teachers, learner-centred methodologies – all elements of the education process relate to the highland indigenous people's culture in a broad sense. The experiences from implementing the project have shown that it is impossible to work in such a context with “education only” as a focus. Hence, the HCEP has become as much a *community development* project as it is an education project. Since it has explored the new territory of bilingual primary education in Cambodia, HCEP's implementation process has seen elements changed, developed, and added. Indeed, the project has largely been driven by *action research*. Furthermore, it has promoted *inclusive education*, since learners from highland indigenous groups have long been marginalized and deprived of any opportunity for education.

There are a number of barriers to education for ethnic minorities in Ratanakiri. First, there are language barriers. The Government at various levels was initially reserved towards bilingual education for highland minorities for a variety of reasons, but was later convinced of its success, particularly after observing early results. Given the remoteness, there has not been the opportunity to support the infrastructure needed to develop or refurbish school buildings and administrative systems that educational activities require. There are few trained personnel who are fluent in both ethnic minority languages and Khmer,

and there is a lack of materials that are culturally relevant or readily adaptable for use in terms of language and content. Education for girls faces especially tough obstacles, often in the form of negative attitudes. In addition, very few inhabitants of the communities have ever gone to school, and the level of functional literacy is exceedingly low. The HCEP project was, thus, formulated with such barriers in mind, and has incorporated strategies to overcome them.

Community School Boards are at the centre of the project. In most cases, the people elected onto the School Board are elders who are highly influential in many aspects of village life. The School Boards function as management committees, they help identify education and learning needs, they select the community members to be trained as teachers and monitor their work, and they motivate parents to send their children to school. The Board organizes community members to build the school, as well as oversees maintenance and the development of the school grounds.

The original model for bilingual education is one where there is a gradual decrease in the use of vernacular language of instruction in Grades 1-3, and simultaneously an increase in the use of Khmer language, beginning with 80% local language and 20% Khmer in Grade 1. Orthography for Tampuan and Kreung languages was developed by the International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC) using Khmer characters. Khmer script covers the sounds found in the Tampuan language, but Kreung makes use of six additional sounds not represented in modern Khmer script. A special committee set up by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) and the Royal Academy identified six letters from Angkorian-period Khmer no longer in use now, and assigned Kreung sounds to them.

The HCEP has emphasized the recruitment of local highlanders as community teachers. Most of them have little formal qualifications. However, their local knowledge base - paired with their apt ways of communicating with local indigenous learners - is important, and they receive extensive pre-service and in-service training. In addition, a majority of the HCEP staff are from the same minority groups. They have received extensive training, and are invaluable assets to the project due to their intimate knowledge of the communities in which they work, as well as to their fluency both in Khmer and their mother tongue.

Thanks to adaptation of the curriculum to learners' needs, and also to the learner-centred approach to teaching/learning, many of the students - even in Grade 1 - have learned to read and write in their own language. Some other important impacts of the project are better behaved children and improved health/hygiene in the village. The School Boards have gained more confidence to lead the communities, and they have observed that the village has become more cohesive. Female teachers have become role models for young girls. The project has imparted the importance of education on children and parents, and has empowered the community as a whole to better stand up for their educational and legal rights.

Future project activities should build on successful elements and achievements, such as fostering community ownership, building the capacity of the School Boards, strengthening the capacity of the project staff and local teachers, continuing adaptation of curriculum and materials, and extending collaboration with the MoEYS. As an innovative model of bilingual education, the HCEP has proven that young, marginalized people from isolated ethnic minority groups, in fact, can learn to read and write their own mother tongue *and* the national language surprisingly fast given suitable conditions for learning. In the long term, most or all bilingual education in Cambodia will be the responsibility of the MoEYS. However, for bilingual education to become a valid part of the education system, it must be part of national education policy plans, *and* the plans must be implemented in practice with sufficient resources in the form of allocated funds, properly trained personnel and other necessary resources. It will take time, but Cambodia has a unique opportunity to pave the way for bilingual education in South-East Asia.

Introduction

A. Aim of the Report

This report has been produced by UNESCO in partnership with CARE International in Cambodia for the *Highland Children's Education Project* (HCEP) to document the model of bilingual primary education provided for Tampuan and Kreung ethnic minority groups in six remote villages in the northeastern province of Ratanakiri. It is a pilot project funded by AusAID, with supplementary funding for specific activities from UNICEF, John Martello/Tower Capital Fund, Direct Aid Program, and the Canada Fund. This three-year project provides ethnic minority children with the first two years of primary education in their own languages and Khmer, the national language.

The project is in line with UNESCO's recent position paper on education in a multi-lingual world (UNESCO, 2003). In the position paper, three principles are outlined:

1. UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experiences of the learners and teachers.
2. UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality, and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.
3. UNESCO supports language as an essential component of intercultural education in order to encourage understanding between different population groups and ensure respect for fundamental rights.

B. Procedures, Methods and Constraints

The information presented in this report draws upon several sources, chief among them being a number of earlier reports, documents and papers that were produced by CARE project staff and external consultants. In addition, more data - in particular, qualitative information - has been obtained from discussions with Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS) officials and project staff. They are: H.E. Im Sethy, Mme Ton Sa Im, Phann Phirunn,

Nun Varina, Thuk Bun, Tith Ratha, Khath Samal, Kong Sonthara Ron Watt, Richard Geeves, Jan Noorlander, and Terry Durnnian. Interviews with community members were also conducted. The project began initiating activities around mid-2002, so its two-year “life” is a relatively young age for an education project.

The terms “ethnic minorities,” “indigenous peoples,” “hilltribes” and “highlanders” are not synonymous, but they are used interchangeably in this report to describe the population groups who reside in remote, difficult-to-access areas of Ratanakiri Province, who make a living mostly by subsistence farming and from forest products, and who do not speak Khmer, the national language, as a mother tongue.

C. Cambodian Context

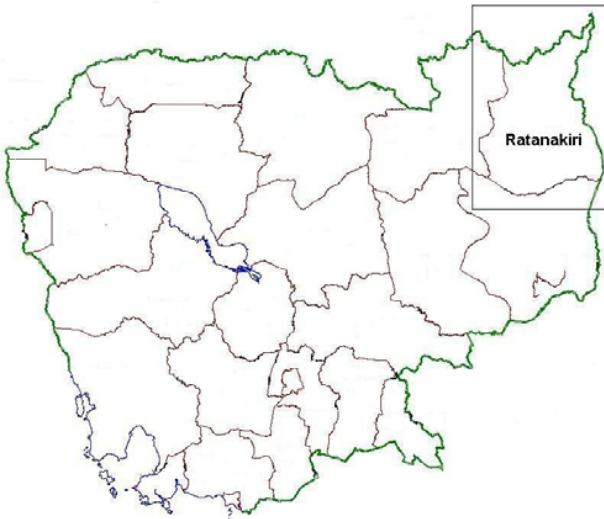


Figure 1.1 Map of Cambodia

Cambodia is a kingdom in South-East Asia with a population of approximately 12 million. Ethnic Khmer, predominantly Buddhist, constitute close to 90% of the population. Their language is Khmer, making Cambodia one of the linguistically least diverse nations in the region. About 19 other languages are spoken in the country. City-dwelling Chinese, Cham and Vietnamese living along the waterways make up the largest minority groups, while several ethnic minority groups, often labeled “indigenous peoples” or “highlanders,” are predominately located in the northeastern provinces of Cambodia.

According to an assessment of functional literacy levels of the adult population in Cambodia (MoEYS/UNESCO/UNDP, 2000), 36.3% of the population are completely illiterate, 26.6% are semi-literate, and only 37.1% are functionally literate in the sense that they can deal with both reading/writing and socio-economic factors. If the data is split into female/male rates, the statistics show that only 29.2% of the women are functionally literate, while the figure for males is 47.6%. Literacy rates vary according to ethnicity, although there is not sufficient data to make comparisons between various ethnic groups.

It can be noted that there is a large number of NGOs working in Cambodia: international, as well as national and local. These NGOs play an important role in civic society, and are instrumental in complementing government services in many areas due to inadequate government funding, competencies and facilities. NGOs are at times positioned such that they may have a direct influence on policy-making, which is a rather unique situation in South-East Asia.

D. Ratanakiri Context

Ratanakiri Province is situated in the mountainous northeast of Cambodia, bordering Viet Nam to the east and Laos to the north. The sparsely populated province has a current population of around 110,000 inhabitants. About ten percent of the population lives in Ban Lung town, the provincial centre, where inhabitants are mainly ethnic Khmer who have recently migrated from the lowlands. The Khmers mainly live in the larger towns, where they are prominent in business, trading and government services. It has only been in the past fifteen years that government departments have had a presence in Ratanakiri (Watt, 2004b).

The highland indigenous groups residing in remote areas are marginalized and separated from mainstream society by their isolated geographic location

and language barriers. There are six main ethnic minority groups: Tampuan, Kreung, Brou, Kavet, Kachok and Jarai. Not much of their history has been recorded, though the linguistic characteristics of the languages shed some light on their origins. Most of the groups belong to the Mon-Khmer language group. The exception is the Jarai language, which is classified as belonging to the Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian) group. At present, the Tampuan is the biggest ethnic group, making up an estimated 24% of the population in Ratanakiri. The Jarai is the second largest group with 19%. The Kreung constitutes around 17% (CARE, 2003).

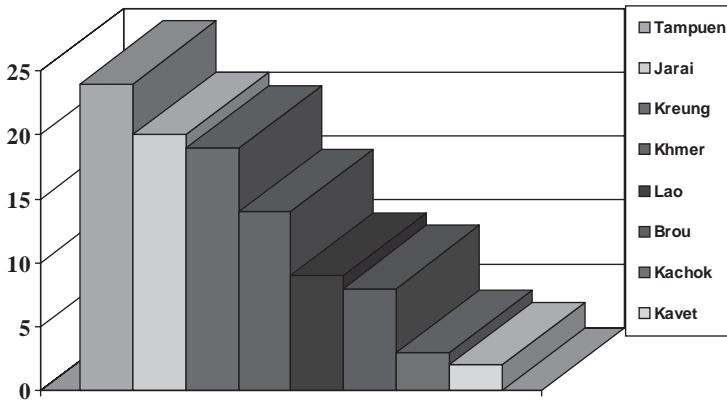


Figure 1.2 Percentage of ethnic minorities in Ratanakiri (CARE, 2003)

The total net enrolment rate in primary education for Ratanakiri Province during 2003/2004 was only 54.3% (MoEYS, 2004c). This is the lowest rate of any province in the country. For girls, the net enrolment rate was 46.4%. Only 7.4% of the total population in Ratanakiri is estimated to be functionally literate (MoEYS/UNESCO/UNDP, 2000).

**Table 1.1 Selected primary education indicators in Ratanakiri
(MoEYS, 2004c)**

Education Indicators (%)	Ratanakiri	National
Gross enrolment rate – primary (total)	72.2	119.9
Gross enrolment rate - primary (girls)	59.6	115.1
Net enrolment rate – primary (total)	54.3	90.1
Net enrolment rate - primary (girls)	46.4	88.6
Grade 1 promotion rate	48.1	67.2
Grade 1 repetition rate	25.2	19.0
Grade 1 drop-out rate	26.7	13.8

Chapter Two

Defining the Highland Children's Education Project (HCEP)

A. Introduction to the Ratanakiri Project on Bilingual Education

1. Research Findings on Bilingual Education

Studies have shown that instruction in the mother tongue is beneficial to achievements in other subject areas and second language learning. Also, in regions where the language of the learner is not the national language of the country, bilingual education can make mother tongue instruction possible while providing acquisition of the national language at the same time (UNESCO, 2003).

2. Initiation of the Project in Ratanakiri

The project was formulated during 2000/2001 by CARE, in close consultation with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS) to ensure their support. Hence, prior to submitting the proposal to the donor, firm support for a pilot project on bilingual education was gained from the Ministry at the national level. The implementation of the project then started around mid-2002.

3. Objectives of the Project

The objectives of the Highland Children's Education Project (HCEP) are stated as follows (CARE, 2004b):

General Objective

To address the needs of disadvantaged highland ethnic minority groups through supporting the establishment of community schools targeting girls and boys who have never enrolled or who have dropped out of the formal system

Specific Objectives

Six functioning community schools managed by community School Boards and attended by village children, Grades 1 and 2

A stable force of 20 trained community teachers increasing in competence at a pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1

Production of culturally appropriate curriculum materials in language and social-cultural studies for Grades 1 and 2, and mathematics for Grade 1 adapted from the MoEYS's curriculum, in two minority languages

A project team of nine (six from ethnic minorities) able to provide technical and administrative support to the community schools to a level satisfactory to the School Board, teachers, parents and students

A set of arrangements that enables the MoEYS to regularly monitor outcomes and be able to apply/extend lessons learned within the national education system

B. The Ratanakiri Model of Bilingual Education

Central to the HCEP is the idea of *community schools* – schools where the community is largely responsible for governance and day-to-day operations. The schools provide formal primary education for the students. The curriculum is adapted to the local conditions, teachers come from the communities and are trained to meet the educational needs of the children in the community, time tables are adapted according to farming seasons, and the schools are run by Community Boards – a *non-formalization* of primary education that is more flexible and tailored to suit local needs. It is a *bilingual education* project that encompasses more than mother tongue as the language of instruction. Curriculum, materials, teachers, learner-centred methodologies – all elements of the education process relate to the indigenous people's culture in a broad sense. The experiences from implementing the project have shown that it is impossible to work in such a context with "education only" as a focus. Hence, the HCEP has become as much a *community development* project as it is an education project. Since it has explored the new territory of bilingual primary education in Cambodia, HCEP's implementation process has seen elements changed, developed, and added. Indeed, the project has largely been driven by *action research*. Furthermore, it has promoted *inclusive education*, since learners from highland indigenous groups have long been marginalized and deprived of any opportunity for education.



Figure 2.1 Community School Board meeting

The conclusions from a baseline survey were (CARE, 2003):

1. The existing educational services which are provided through the MoEYS do not reach people in the remote areas of Ratanakiri.
2. The overwhelming majority of the parents highly value education for their children if the education is adapted to their culture, and if it provides opportunities for their children to maintain the vernacular language while also learning the Khmer language.
3. Since virtually none of the students in the six project villages speak the Khmer language, and since a similar situation likely exists in the rest of the villages some distance from the district towns, a bilingual model of primary school education that is delivered by ethnic minority teachers is justified for these remote areas.

To address the needs and concerns raised above, it was recognized that there are a number of factors that directly influence the success of a

community-based education project such as the HCEP. Five interdependent components were formulated as priority areas for the project:

1. Fostering linkages and liaisons with district, provincial and national systems of the MoEYS to advocate bilingual education policy development and to build personnel capacity;
2. Encouraging community governance and management of schools through community School Boards, since a key to project success is the degree of local participation and commitment. A Community Board consisting of respected or elder members of the community can best lead such a project. In all facets of the project, the talents, skills and abilities of the community are used. The community needs to invest strongly in the project, and develop a sense of ownership so that its long-term future is more readily assured;
3. Adapting the national curriculum to local community settings/ producing localized learning materials so that community members recognize the potential benefits such a project could bring to the community as a whole, as well as to its individual members. It was also recognized that content must be directly relevant to students' needs and lives, and that the teaching/learning methodology be learner-centred;
4. Establishing a stable teaching force of 20 community teachers from the indigenous communities, increasing in competence throughout the project, through a community-based teacher training programme;
5. Building a team of ethnic minority resource people to act as project staff and support the establishment and operations of community schools.

C. Barriers to Bilingual Education in Ratanakiri

There are a number of barriers to bilingual education in Ratanakiri. Some are external, others are internal, and all manifest themselves at various levels. The project was, thus, formulated with consideration of these barriers, and includes strategies to overcome them.

The Government at various levels was initially *reserved* in their view towards bilingual education for ethnic minorities for a variety of reasons, but was later convinced, particularly after observing early results.

Ethnic minority communities have maintained their cultural, linguistic and traditional differences through their *remoteness* from the majority ethnic communities. Given this remoteness, there has not been the opportunity to support infrastructure and the development and/or refurbishment of school buildings, transport and administrative infrastructure that education may require.

There have been few educational opportunities for indigenous peoples and, consequently, there are *few trained personnel* who are fluent in ethnic minority languages and Khmer. As Khmer is not the first language of the different highland groups, children are placed at a disadvantage when it is used as the only language of instruction.

Given that there have been few projects that have catered to the specific educational needs of ethnic minorities, there is also a *lack of materials* that are culturally relevant or readily adaptable for use in terms of language and content.

Indeed, village support for schooling has been lacking, most probably due to the fact that formal school services did not meet the needs of the community, and conflicted with socio-cultural norms in highland villages. Also, methodology and inflexible time-tabling were not suitable. Curriculum and materials developed for the ethnic minorities need to be *appropriate* to suit the needs of the indigenous communities. If an education project is not based on real, identified needs in the relevant communities, the learners will deem it inappropriate and not useful for their needs.

Table 2.1 CARE's responses to concerns about bilingual education in Ratanakiri

	Concerns/Fears	Responses
National Level (decision makers)	Bilingual education will lead to demands for autonomy by ethnic minority groups	Re-iterate that ethnic minority leaders in Ratanakiri never express aspirations of this kind
	Bilingual education will lead to political instability in border areas	Denying access to relevant education, i.e. denying them human rights, will lead to social unrest. Relevant education will make them more inclusive in the country
	New script will lead to the tainting of the national language	Establishment of a MoEYS spelling committee which approves books before use in schools
	Minorities have less ownership of bilingual education because of their lack of understanding of it	There is a growing understanding of bilingual education, because frequent monitoring trips for MoEYS to the project are organized
	Ethnic minority teachers are not capable of teaching the national curriculum (low level of formal education)	Step 1: On-going support for teachers to increase their academic skills is part of the project Step 2: (long-term: Establishment of a Regional Teacher Training College with a special focus on teacher training for bilingual education
	Students will be confused by learning two languages, therefore not learning the correct form of national language	Experience in bilingual education does not show this to be the case
Provincial Level	Misconception that bilingual education takes twice as long to learn	By using the Khmer script to write the local languages, they only have to learn the alphabet one time. Furthermore, by introducing the whole language approach, proficiency in two languages is increased
	Minorities have less ownership of bilingual education because they lack understanding of the approach	Organize frequent workshops for education officials from the provincial and district offices of education
	Bilingual education will lead to political instability in border areas	Denying access to relevant education, i.e. denying them human rights, will lead to social unrest. Furthermore, provincial offices of education feel the pressure from national level to meet EFA goals. They are willing to look at innovative ways of improving the education system, because they see that the system is not working in remote and indigenous areas
	Bilingual education will be used by organizations as a cover for political/religious activities	By introducing bilingual education into the formal education system and giving the MoEYS a strong monitoring role, hopefully will bring the realisation that bilingual education is not used as a cover for such activities. Because in many places faith-based organisations have taken the lead in developing orthographies for oral languages and started in non-formal education, a concern has developed.
	Bilingual education will lead to demands for autonomy by ethnic minority groups	Same as at national level
	Ethnic minority teachers are not capable of teaching the national curriculum (low level of formal education)	Through the regular monitoring visits at provincial level, they see the positive results of the schools. They recognise the impact of student-centred methodology in the HCEP schools. Moreover many teachers in the state schools are not well-trained. The provincial level receives demonstrations of the methodology HCEP uses.
Local Level	The national language is more important than the mother tongue	Discussions with elders, teachers and parents to raise the awareness on the importance of the first language transference of perceived importance: The value we place on it has increased the perceived value they had for it
	They have misconception of bilingual education that it takes twice as long to learn two languages	This is not something we hear from the villages. However, they undervalue their first language and want their children to learn the national language as soon as possible

Education for girls faces especially tough obstacles, often in the form of negative attitudes. Discrimination is evident in social norms, language, and submissive stereotypes. Socio-cultural influences work against girls' access to education in the form of early marriages, a heavy workload and low educational expectations.

As a reaction to the barriers mentioned above, CARE has developed its own responses which can be seen in Table 2.1.

D. Policies on Bilingual Education in Cambodia

Cambodia is in the process of updating its education policies. Three documents published by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are particularly relevant for bilingual education and education for ethnic minorities: *Education Strategic Plan 2004-2008* (ESP), *Draft Law on Education* (DLE), and *Policy for Curriculum Development 2005-2009* (PCD). The latter two documents are based on the principles laid down in the ESP. At this stage (October 2004), the ESP has been approved by the MoEYS, while the other two are still drafts. However, the current draft of PCD will likely be approved without significant changes. The DLE will need to have some parts amended in order to be in line with the principles of the ESP.

Quoted below are sections from the three policy documents. These are parts that relate to bilingual education and/or education for ethnic minorities.

Section 1.3.4 of the Education Strategic Plan 2004-2008 (MOEYS, 2004a)

From Table 2: Cross-Cutting Issues and ESP Strategy

Cross-Cutting Issues	ESP Strategy and Interventions
Ethnic Minorities	Targeted facilities programs and curriculum reform for ethnic minorities; special incentives for minority area staff deployment

Section 3.3 of the Policy for Curriculum Development 2005-2009 (MOEYS, 2004b)

"Schools, local communities, community groups, NGOs and private education providers are expected to develop programs that will enrich and broaden the national curriculum."

Section 3.4 (ibid)

“Schools, in partnership with parents, their local community organizations and NGOs, develop and administer a Local Life Skills Program (LLSP) of between 2 to 5 x 45 minutes lessons per week to supplement the national curriculum.”

Section 3.19 (ibid)

“The standard medium of instruction is Khmer. Textbooks will be published in Khmer except for foreign language textbooks. In schools where there are a large number of speakers of minority languages, teachers may conduct some instruction of the class in the minority language, and may translate key vocabulary contained in textbooks from Khmer to the minority language as a means of assisting student learning.”

Article 44 of the Draft Law on Education (MoEYS, 2003)

“Khmer language shall be the vehicle language used for instruction of general education program in public schools. Cambodian learners of minority origin shall have the right to instruction at public schools in their native language in addition to Khmer language for at least the two grades – grades 1 and 2.”

The three policy documents are quite favourable as they relate to extending education to ethnic minority groups. The DLE has the furthest reaching consequences in relation to bilingual education. However, the DLE has not yet been sanctioned. The ESP is a four-year policy plan, and there will be yearly interpretations of it. Positive signals have appeared from the Ministry, which hopefully will lead to concrete action being taken at provincial and district levels, and in the village communities.

Chapter Three

Implementation of the Highland Children's Education Project

A. Baseline Survey and Needs Assessment

1. Introduction

It is commonly accepted that educational programmes are most effective when they are based on an assessment of learner needs and the context of instruction. Meeting a learner's concrete needs is essential to sustain motivation and effort to gain new knowledge and acquire new skills. When there is a link between the "academic" setting of a classroom and the daily practical use of the skills and knowledge imparted therein, the learner is able to make a connection between the *use* of knowledge and the *acquisition* of knowledge. Similarly, context makes a difference with regard to outcomes. When the local context is reflected in a classroom setting, the purpose behind the education becomes apparent to the learner. The context can also help make the learner a self-motivating individual who will seek out opportunities and instances of written language from the wider environment that can reinforce and extend the classroom activities.

2. Selection of Communities

The communities selected for the HCEP all displayed a clear motivation and interest in taking part in the pilot project. CARE consulted with provincial education authorities, governors of three districts, the Highlanders' Association, and other NGOs working in Ratanakiri. On the basis of this information, it produced a shortlist of around ten villages that were motivated to take part. The final selection was then made by applying additional criteria, such as:

- Mainly one language spoken in the community, either Kreung or Tampuon
- There was no other NGO or education project ongoing
- Reachable within one day's travel

In fact, one village (Krola) had been receiving support from other NGOs. It was, nonetheless, included to provide a comparison with the other villages that were not under Government or NGO support. The final list of six villages selected was presented to the Governor of Ratanakiri for endorsement.

3. The Baseline Survey

Introduction

A baseline study for the Highland Children's Education Project was first conducted in December 2002. This was done by the newly recruited community teachers; however, when analysing the collected data, it was apparent that the information was flawed. The survey was repeated in May 2003, and this time with an improved translation of the data collection tools in Khmer. Current baseline data is, thus, based on the results from this second survey (CARE, 2003).

Cultural and Socio-economic Context

Highlanders live both in their village and, depending on the season, in a farmhouse at the fields (*chamkar*). It was planting season during the time the survey was conducted, so most families were to be found in the fields. Under the supervision of project staff, the interviewers collected data on 1,970 individuals in 388 households.¹ According to the village chiefs, the total number of inhabitants was 1,989. Therefore, data was collected on 99% of the villagers, which is a rather unique situation in development projects. It is rare that a survey has been in the position to carefully record data for almost *all* villagers. Data and anthropological research on the way indigenous peoples live, with their background, beliefs, physical setting, education, inter-personal interactions, etc. are very important in order to tailor education to the communities' real needs. Therefore, the data is outlined in some detail below. Most of the information was gathered through interviews with village members.

-
1. The number of families in these communities changes constantly. Newly married couples live with their respective parents for periods of three to four years. This explains the difference in numbers in this survey. The Planning Department records 428 families in 2002, the village chiefs told us there were 388 families in total. During the time of the survey, we recorded 411 families. The total number of inhabitants remains the same: 1,989.

A danger in relying mostly on interviews is that the subjects interviewed do not always tell the whole truth. Stated level of literacy provides a case in point. When cross-checking the results given by the interview subjects with the village elders, the elders were of the opinion that villagers had overestimated their literacy levels. All elders said that in their villages there were hardly any literate women at all, and fewer men than the percentage quoted.

All six villages are remote and, except for Krola, none have had access to education before. [Krola has had support from a number of NGOs, including International Cooperation for Development and Solidarity (CIDSE), which has supported Khmer literacy classes in Krola for some years.]

Table 3.1 HCEP Target Villages

Village	Commune	District	Ethnicity	Families	Inhabitants
Team Leu	Kachoun	Veunsai	Kreung	59	267
Krola	Poy	O' Chuum	Kreung	84	343
Mais	Poy	O' Chuum	Kreung	38	179
Paor	Kei Chong	Borkeo	Tampuen	79	378
Paor	Lung Khung	Borkeo	Tampuen	88	450
Seung	Seung	Borkeo	Tampuen	80	372
Totals 6	5	3	2	428	1989

The hilltribes in Ratanakiri do not constitute a homogenous group. Their cultures differ; in particular the Jarai represent a unique cultural group. However, between the other ethnic groups, there are more similarities than differences. The two ethnic groups with which the HCEP works, the Tampuen and Kreung, are well described by Joanna White² (White, 1996):

Amongst all of the groups, respect for the family elders is fundamental. These individuals steward religious ceremonies such as ceremonial feasts in the fields, ceremonial offerings in the house for the ancestors, or healing ceremonies for family members. It is their responsibility to manage these proceedings and begin ceremonies with an opening

2.. Joanna White is an anthropologist who has done research on ethnic groups in Ratanakiri to study their culture, ways of living, traditions, beliefs, etc.

prayer (sen) to the spirits over rice wine jars, inviting them to feast. These elders may also be called upon to mediate over intra-family disputes. They also play a role in reminding the family of obligations to the ancestors and for preserving the family oral history. Villagers described how within some families, the elders are careful that younger family members are taught the names of their recent ancestors in a chronological sequence which they learn by rote.

Ethnicity was not asked during the survey, but supplementary information was given by village elders during cross-checking. The project villages are ethnically rather homogeneous, with only very few villagers from other ethnic groups. The mean age of the villagers was 21 years, with 50% aged 15 and under. Those with some kind of disability accounted for 2.9%; the most common disability is deafness. Krola is home to the majority of those identified as disabled. The vast majority (95%) said they were Animist,³ with very small minorities of predominantly Buddhist, but other faiths, as well. There are major differences in roles and workloads of men and women, which is described in more detail below (3.6).

The majority of households are engaged in some kind of income-generation activities (91%). The income generation activities are mostly selling rice, vegetables, and handicrafts. The average monthly income per household for the whole group surveyed was 87,000 riel, or slightly under US \$22. However, the majority of households earn an average of US \$5 or less per month (82 %). In recent times, the highlanders have slowly become involved in the mainstream cash economy. As White puts it (White, 1996):

Villagers can be seen to be gradually moving towards what they identify as 'this Khmer way'. There is a gradual shift from an exchange economy to a monetary economy which is even apparent within villages. The monetary economy and desire for cash is penetrating to even the most remote areas, with villagers traveling to markets to sell goods to Khmer traders for cash and buy market commodities (tobacco, cigarettes, medicines, MSG, clothes and packaged food are the most commonly-sought out goods [.....]). Some Khmers

3. "(...) most of the highlanders follow a holistic spiritual system, believing in ancestor spirits, guardian spirits that watch over the villages, as well as spirits that reside in the surrounding forests, lakes, mountains." (White, 1996)

described how they can see that more of the highlanders 'know how to love money'. But although highlanders are increasingly participating in the market economy their self-confessed lack of business experience places them in a vulnerable situation. (...)

Education Indicators

Education levels in the target villages are very low, with only 19% of villagers aged 15 and over having had any education at all. Only five persons had completed primary school, and none had completed secondary school. Education levels were higher for males than females; no female aged 15 and over had completed primary school, and only 44 (8.2 %) have had any education at all.

According to the survey, the overwhelming majority of villagers aged 15 and over (83.5%) spoke little or no Khmer. The majority of villagers (77.8%) rated themselves as completely illiterate in Khmer, ranging from 56.1% in Krola to 91.2% in Seung. When combined with those who can read and write only a little (semi-literate), this means that 92.8% of villagers are functionally illiterate, ranging from 85% in Krola to 97.8% in Seung. Women have lower Khmer language abilities than men, with 95.6% speaking little or no Khmer, and 91.8% completely illiterate. In an assessment of functional literacy levels, *no* highland minority women were found to be functionally literate (MoEYS/UNESCO/UNDP, 2000). The functional literacy rate for highland men in the same assessment study was found to be 5.3%. Differences in numbers between the 2000 assessment and the HCEP survey may be due to sampling methods.

The vast majority of families interviewed agreed that education is important for their children (98%), and believed that three years at school is not sufficient (94%). They also felt that it is important for children to learn about their own culture in school (94%). Most families felt that it is important for children to learn to read and write in their own language (92%), but that it is also important for them to learn Khmer (88%).

B. Elements of the Highland Children's Education Project

1. Relationship with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS)

The Ministry (MoEYS) is supportive of the pilot project on bilingual education taking place in Ratanakiri. Initially, the officials were somewhat skeptical - perhaps partly due to the issue of nation-building - that everybody should be literate in the national language. Their skepticism may also partly be due to the fact that there was little evidence available to show that bilingual education actually works.

However, during ongoing dialogues between national and provincial MoEYS officials and CARE, and with a clear aim towards fulfilling EFA goals to reach the country's marginalized highlander groups, a project document containing a clear commitment from the Ministry to trial bilingual education was produced. Various sections of the MoEYS, such as the Pedagogical Research Department, the Non-Formal Education Department and the Teacher Training Department, have been instrumental in supporting the project. While the provincial and district levels of MoEYS were initially skeptical, thanks to the success of the project, they have become increasingly interested in the bilingual approach.

2. Community School Boards and Local Ownership

Community School Boards are at the centre of the project. There are six School Board members in each village, of whom at least two are women. The selection of Board members took place by consensus decisions in plenary meetings held in the villages. In most cases, the people who are elected onto the School Board are elders who are highly influential in many aspects of village life. The effectiveness of the Board is largely determined by the status of its members as elders. The School Boards function as management committees; they have helped identify the education and learning needs in the communities, they select the community members to be trained as teachers and monitor their work, and they motivate parents to send their children to school. The Board organizes community members to build the school, as well as oversees maintenance and the development of the school grounds.

The day-to-day operations of the school are also the School Board's responsibility. Board members often serve as resource persons in classes by assisting the teachers in their work, providing their insights and knowledge into particular topics being studied, as well as by verifying knowledge and ideas that the teachers and children have documented.

The Board members have expressed a strong sense of ownership of the project, so the School Board is clearly an essential factor in the sustainability equation. School Boards meet at least once or twice each month, more frequently during busy times. The parents seem to have a good understanding of the Board's role, and the principles by which they function. A major task of the Board is to liaise with parents to explain activities and motivate them to send their children to school. The Board is also the main link between the community and CARE. The Board members are paid food and transport when they go to meetings in Ban Lung, though as a general principle, they do not receive salaries.

The Boards call their own meetings and invite others to join in, if necessary. In this way, they avoid clashes with farming and other duties. They also organize community members to assist in work at the teachers' farms. The Boards are responsible for reporting any problems to the HCEP. One village, Krola, has faced several problems in project implementation, such as failing to take responsibility to monitor, discipline and motivate its teachers. Low status and low capacity of the School Board members in Krola may be a major cause.

The role of the School Boards is not necessarily the same in all villages. Also, their roles evolve over time. As the project grows and become more complex, so too does the role of the School Board. More detailed information pertaining to the School Boards can be found in Watt, 2004a.

3. Curriculum Development and Materials Production

The HCEP uses the national standard primary school curriculum as a framework. This is necessary in order for the students to be accredited and, hence, be able to proceed with their schooling

and studies at higher levels. However, there has been a clear adaptation of the curriculum in order to draw on local knowledge, and to make the curriculum relevant. It is important to note that the local curriculum has been approved by the MoEYS as giving valid competencies for further studies in the mainstream Khmer school system.



Figure 3.1 An elder teaching the school children

The needs assessment for curriculum development was done in close consultation with the communities, themselves. The School Boards played an instrumental role in identifying relevant themes. These were discussed in the communities, and consensus was reached with respect to identified subjects to be taught. The differences between the national curriculum and the local indigenous adaptation are most pronounced in areas relating to arts and livelihoods, while the mathematics part is most similar to the national standard curriculum. The content of the socio-cultural part of Tampuen and Kreung curricula has turned out to be very similar due to evident similarities in culture and the socio-economic context.

Reading materials and teachers' guides were developed in the vernacular languages based on local adaptations of the curriculum. The teachers' guides are elaborate, and contain detailed

descriptions of the learning content, as well as teaching/learning methodologies. They promote a *learner-centred* approach to the teaching/learning process. An *integrated* approach to learning - where students learn language, mathematics and content together - has also proven to be successful.

In developing the local reading materials, Khmer script has been used to write the books in Tampuan and Kreung languages. Orthography for Tampuan and Kreung languages was developed recently by the International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC). Khmer script covers the sounds found in Tampuan language, but Kreung makes use of six additional sounds and tones not represented in modern Khmer script. A special committee set up by the MoEYS and the Royal Academy identified six letters from Angkorian period Khmer no longer in use now, and assigned them Kreung sounds. The School Boards check the materials to ensure they are culturally appropriate, and the ICC serves as an expert agency to vet orthography and ensure a standardization of spellings before draft materials are sent to the Ministry (Pedagogy Research Department) for final approval.

Curriculum and materials have been produced for Grades 1 and 2, and are in the process of being developed for Grade 3. It was originally intended that students would proceed to Grade 4 under the national Khmer curriculum without any adaptations. However, due to demand from the students and communities, more adaptations may be done for Grades 4-6. A strong foundation in their own mother tongues will make it easier for the indigenous learners to acquire skills in Khmer. Fig. 3.2 shows the original model for bilingual education, where there is a gradual decrease in use of vernacular language of instruction in Grades 1-3, and an increase in the use of Khmer. This model may be revised if the project goes ahead with its additional curriculum development and adaptation for Grades 4-6.

<p>Grade 1 Vernacular language, 80% (15% math, 35% social studies, 30% language)</p>	<p>Khmer language, 20% [Oral only]</p>
<p>Grade 2 Vernacular language, 60% (35% social studies, 25% language)</p>	<p>Khmer language, 40% (15% math, 25% language)</p>
<p>Grade 3 Vernacular language, 30% (15% social studies, 15% language)</p>	<p>Khmer language, 70 % (15% math, 10% social studies, 45% language)</p>
<p>Grade 4 Khmer language, 100%</p>	

Figure 3.2 Original model for bilingual education

4. Community Teachers and Teacher Training

The HCEP has emphasized the recruitment of local highlanders as community teachers. Most of them have little formal qualifications, and have not even completed the six-year primary school cycle. However, their local knowledge base, paired with their apt ways of communicating with local indigenous learners, makes them in many ways better suited than Khmer-speaking teachers with more extensive formal qualifications.

Altogether, the project has recruited and trained 37 teachers, including five women. All are from indigenous highlander groups. The teachers are chosen by the School Boards, with encouragement from CARE to give priority to those who can speak Khmer in addition to their mother tongue. It is also a stated priority to recruit women. Nonetheless, there are few female teachers compared to males, likely because the number of village women literate in Khmer is very low. Men have more often acquired knowledge of Khmer since they tend to be more mobile, and have often been drafted in military service. Meanwhile, women often have an increased workload as

compared to men, which makes it difficult for them to take on work outside the family.

When training community members to teach, trainers are mindful that indigenous communities have successfully and effectively transferred complex knowledge from generation to generation over hundreds of years. This knowledge transfer has been repeatedly enacted without the aid of formal education. Thus, the teachers work with community elders to make this knowledge explicit in order to facilitate the delivery of functional education that builds on community traditions and values. The teachers also often use the local elders as resource persons in classes since they possess valuable knowledge and have authority in the community.

The teachers receive six months of pre-service training, and regular in-service training during the course of the year. The school year is divided into cycles where the teachers do three weeks of teaching, then one week of in-service training. In one school year, nine of these cycles are completed. The teacher trainers are two indigenous persons, one male and one female, who have completed their secondary education. The training is overseen by a Khmer project officer trained as a lecturer at the Regional Teacher Training College. A learner-centred, integrated teaching approach is emphasized during the course of the training.

The community teachers serve under conditions similar to contract teachers. It implies that they are neither entitled to be fully employed nor receive benefits from the Government on par with qualified teachers, but they are accepted due to a lack of local teachers with formal qualifications. The highlander teachers are paid the same salaries as contract teachers in Cambodia.

5. Ethnic Minority Staff

A majority of the HCEP staff are from the minority groups (9 are highlanders and 4 Khmer). They have received extensive training, and are invaluable assets to the project due to their intimate knowledge of the communities they work with, as well as to their fluency both in Khmer and their mother tongue. These staff members have been endorsed by the elders in the villages, which is an important factor since no major decisions in the minority

communities take place without the elders' support. The staff members serve as vital links between the project and the communities. They constitute a firm body of support in the capacity-building of villagers, and for communicating back to the project both progress and hurdles in the communities. They also provide a sense of pride to the communities, and serve as role models for village children.

C. Output Data: Education Indicators

As all target villages had never had access to schooling before, there was an expectation amongst parents that all children between the ages of 6 and 16 could enroll on the first day of school. Apart from over crowding the small classrooms, this would have provided an impossible situation for the newly trained teachers. Hence, the School Board decided on an enrolment process phased in over three years.

As can be seen from the baseline survey, education in the indigenous communities was very limited before the project started, with very low enrollment and high drop-out rates (CARE, 2003). The project has increased admission to classes substantially, and due to the adaptation of the curriculum to the learners' needs and the learner-centred approach to teaching/learning, many of the students - even in Grade 1 - have learned to read and write in their own language. Grade 1 students in mainstream Khmer schools are not expected to read and write text during their first year in school. Since education authorities were skeptical in the beginning regarding the highlander children's abilities to acquire literacy skills so fast, it is, indeed, a major achievement to show that the bilingual approach to education, in fact, works beyond expectations.

In Grade 1, 287 students (128 girls) were enrolled the first project year, of whom 206 (86 girls) were promoted to Grade 2, i.e. 72%. In the second year, 195 students (90 girls) were enrolled in Grade 1. The overall attendance of the students has been high. It should be noted that the age of the indigenous children who attended Grade 1 was higher than normal, aged 10-12 years, since they had previously missed out on opportunities to attend school. In the second school cycle, children admitted to Grade 1 were younger, aged 8-10. Bearing in mind that HCEP has a special focus on girls in education, it is noteworthy that the enrolment rate, attendance rates and

drop-out rates of girls are better than the national and provincial averages. However, more girls than boys drop out of classes.

Enrolment in Grade 1 the second year has proven to be lower than for the first cohort. It may partly be due to the fact that in the first cohort, children were mostly aged 10-12 and the parents clearly were of the opinion that the older children can and should study. There is more doubt among parents as to whether younger children aged 6-7 are capable of learning so well. Hence, more motivational tactics from the School Board may be needed to encourage parents to send their children to school. Also, there was a change in the school calendar for the second cohort of Grade 1, which made attendance more difficult due to planting/harvesting seasons. The calendar has been adjusted for the third cohort in order to make it better suited to the agricultural seasons.

The project has employed portfolio assessment to determine the promotion, or otherwise, of children from one grade to the next at the end of each academic year. This process is overseen by members of the School Board, and it culminates when they organize a meeting with parents to communicate the decisions made about their children. Data pertaining to enrolment, promotion and drop-outs are also monitored by the inspector from the Provincial Office of Education, who pays regular visits.

D. Impact on People's Quality of Life

According to a mid-term evaluation (CARE, 2004a), all persons interviewed were enthusiastic about the benefits of the project for their villages. Principal among these benefits is the knowledge they perceive the children have gained. They have seen the children gain basic literacy and numeracy skills in Kreung/Tampuen and Khmer, as well as traditional livelihood skills such as raising chickens and weaving chicken nests. They are proud of the fact that the children have been able to do all this in their own language.

In all villages, parents being interviewed said that the children had become *better behaved* since the schools started. They respect their elders more as they learn the right (traditional) way of doing things. The lives of the teachers have also changed. They no longer spend much time working with their families, but have been singled out to have special responsibilities. Other villagers respect them more than before, they have a salary for their work, and the school children help them to cut wood and plant rice.

Many villagers, in particular parents, have changed their attitude towards education, from being rather skeptical to send their children to school to becoming aware of the *importance of education*. The School Boards have been instrumental in raising this awareness. Most parents now want their children to go to school so that they can have access to the education and knowledge that for so long has been deprived them.

The School Board members in Paor Kei Chong observed an improvement in *health and hygiene*, and a slight reduction in illness throughout the village, which they attribute to the project.

In Krola village, the School Board members said that their own lives have changed, as they have more responsibilities than in the past. They have learnt how to *lead* people and to how to motivate children to attend school. They feel that the other villagers respect them more than before.

In Paor Kei Chong village, the School Board members felt that the village has become more *cohesive* as a result of the project. While they have always had traditions of mutual assistance and common community work, the school has provided a focus which has resulted in people working together more than before. Children are given more attention, and are helped more than before

Female teachers have to some extent become *role models* for the girls. Since the status of teachers in the community is rather high, this also contributes to raise the status of girls and women, in general.

The students have learnt about numeracy and simple calculations, and have used this knowledge when they go to the market to buy goods to ensure *correct payment*. Earlier, it was rather common that they were cheated on the total amount of their purchases since they were not skilled in adding up the total sum of the goods that they had bought.

In Ratanakiri, there are an increasing number of controversies regarding the ownership of land. There have been cases where people have been hoaxed into giving up land rights and been cheated. Often, the hoaxes happen because the villagers are illiterate or not able to understand information that the legal documents contain. The documents are written in Khmer, so it clearly puts the ethnic minority groups at a disadvantage since very few know how to read Khmer. The project has enabled many highlander children to read and understand Khmer, and hence, has empowered them to

understand legal documents. Thus, in the future, they will be in a position to help their families to enforce their land rights and defend themselves against hoaxes. In the meantime, project staff trained in the new Land Law inform School Boards, accordingly, in order to prevent land loss.

The HCEP has focused on capacity-building of the villagers, and in particular, of School Board members. Being key persons in the village, they influence most activities and decisions in the communities. This *increased knowledge* developed among Board members, thus, spreads into the rest of the community.

Internationally, there is a trend towards focusing on the relationship between education, social development and human rights. Based on a number of important international declarations, forums and conventions, a core is formed at the intersection between these areas which can be called a *rights-based approach* to education (Watt, 2003). The indigenous peoples of Ratanakiri are certainly disadvantaged and marginalized in many ways. The HCEP, which is based on respect for indigenous cultures, will enable indigenous peoples to preserve their languages and traditions within a modern and global context. The HCEP aims at strengthening the rights and *empowering* indigenous communities, as well as individuals, through education. It should have an important impact on people's lives in the long run.

E. Cultural Harmony

The project has made every effort to be sensitive to the local cultures of Kreung and Tampuan. This includes the needs assessment, curriculum development, materials produced, teaching methodologies, interactions with School Boards and other areas of the HCEP. The project works with the Cambodian authorities to provide opportunities for the indigenous people to integrate into the whole population, rather than by doing so through forced assimilation.

There is clearly a balance to be struck between preserving old traditions and knowledge, on one hand, and being a part of 21st Century's quest for globalization on the other. The Community Boards have indicated that they do want to preserve their identities and culture. However, they also recognize that there is a large body of knowledge out there which they want to take part in, and not least of which, have their children partake. In the development process, some indigenous culture may be lost or changed, but the Boards did not feel threatened about this.

In general, villagers interviewed did not foresee major problems with community social dynamics as a result of their children being educated. However, many admitted that it would be a strange situation if the young people were more educated than their elders. They generally see education as a positive factor, as these young people will be able to act as resources for their village, and will share their knowledge with their parents and siblings. The elders in Paor Kei Chong village said that these young people are the elders of the future, and that they will need to be educated in order to provide strong leadership and preserve their traditions. However, villagers who were interviewed also said they would like opportunities for the older members of the community to study, as well.

It can be noted that there are a number of poor Khmers living in the province who are impoverished in many ways, with very limited access to education and land, and with low income. There may be some resentment from this particular group of Khmers towards the ethnic minority communities since they may feel left behind, notice that education is provided for the minorities, and observe that land ownership of the highlanders is enforced. It is probably too early to detect much discontent, but issues such as equal access to education and land rights for all groups need to be addressed in Ratanakiri province in order to avert future conflicts between ethnic groups.

F. Gender Perspective

Women in the indigenous societies of Kreung and Tampuen in Ratanakiri generally are in a somewhat better position than women in mainstream Khmer society, in particular in relation to decision-making processes in the family. However, women's position in many ways lags far behind men's in terms of status and power structures. Van den Berg (1998) recorded that the total working hours per day were 9.5 hrs for men, but 14.5 hrs for women. She writes:

Women and girls living in highland communities have very distinctive tasks from men and boys. Both sexes are performing agricultural work, men slightly more than women. However, the reproductive work, cleaning the house, looking after children, fetching water, carrying firewood, cooking, etc. are solely women's duties. These activities take up a lot of women's time and energy on top of their agricultural work. Women spend the whole day working in their fields and at home. Their leisure time is significantly less than that

of their husbands and male family members. Moreover, since women are the ones to carry water and collect firewood, environmental changes may make their reproductive activities even more difficult.

A reason for girls not attending school is that girls are needed to help their mother with her work on the farm and around the house. Women give as reasons from dropping out of literacy classes that they feel embarrassed by their lack of knowledge in comparison to men, and others frequently mentioned that they were too busy or could not stop thinking about their work at home and in the field while attending a training.

In the baseline survey (CARE, 2003), pronounced differences in attitude were noted between villages regarding gender issues. Although the majority of families disagreed with the statement, “It is more important for boys to go to school than girls,” a significant minority (30%) believed this to be true. Poor people, such as the indigenous groups, are often ready to bear the costs of sending boys to school, but less willing to spend time and money to educate girls. The HCEP gives girls opportunities to attend classes without having to venture out of the village, which is a major advantage for the families and girls, themselves.

To address the issues related to gender disparities, such as unequal opportunities and workload, the HCEP has adopted gender mainstreaming strategies in teacher training. Women are strongly encouraged to work as teachers, and all teachers receive extensive pre-service and in-service training where gender issues are constantly raised. It was recorded in an evaluation (CARE, 2004a) that female teachers have become role models, and since teachers have a rather high position in the community, the status of women may also increase as a consequence.

Gender equality can be achieved only through raising social awareness among both women and men. The HCEP has given training to the School Boards on gender issues. Elders on the Boards are often conservative men, and they are the most influential decision-makers in the community. Therefore, the HCEP will need to constantly train the School Boards on gender issues and relate this to workload, tasks, and rights for both men and women. However, in a traditional society such as among the indigenous highlander groups, there is a long way to go before real changes in status, decision-making and workload take place.

G. Monitoring of HCEP Activities

Monitoring of teachers takes place inside and outside the village, as well as in or out of the classrooms. Every four weeks, teachers come to the provincial centre of Ban Lung for in-service training. The teacher trainers will then follow up, and support each and every individual teacher. They may also identify issues to be raised during the in-service training programme, and write reports upon return to Ban Lung. In the villages, teachers are supported and monitored by the School Boards. Since most of the Board members are elders and illiterate, they monitor the attendance of teachers by putting large seeds into a tube every time the teacher is absent. These recordings are later put down on paper by project staff.

The project staff write reports for every training session and every village visit, so there is extensive written documentation on activities underway. Monitoring results are discussed in staff meetings, and care is taken to revert to the communities and School Boards in order to amend activities and improve the quality of the project. The MoEYS sends inspectors to monitor classes, and also regularly monitors other activities through close consultations between the HCEP and the Ministry.

H. Cost Considerations

The HCEP is a pilot project with limited funds at its disposal. The main expenditures cover staff costs, training, teaching materials and equipment. The total budget for three years can be seen in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Total budget of the HCEP (in US\$)

Year	2002	2003	2004
Total Budget	190,374	237,104	209,000

School buildings in the form of a simple two-classroom structure have been constructed in all the villages. The community members, themselves, contributed by supplying wooden materials and labour, while the project paid around US \$500 to each school to buy corrugated iron sheets for roofing and some other equipment. There is no electricity in the villages, so no electrical appliances were acquired. Since the community, itself, has contributed substantially to the construction of the school building, there is a sense of ownership and commitment to utilize it.

One School Board (Team Leu) made the observation that when the school building is in place, curriculum and materials have been developed, and teachers are trained, then they may be in a position to continue education activities on their own. However, the Board members reflected further on the issue, and pointed out that there are two areas where cash payment is needed: teacher salaries and student materials. Since the community has a very limited supply of cash, it is unlikely that education can continue without some support from outside the village.

The salary of a local teacher is currently US \$28 per month, and the cost for student materials per student per year is US \$18. Hence, a community with 40 students enrolled in the school needs to pay around a minimum of US \$1,000 per year in direct costs to sustain its primary education activities. It may not seem much for a whole village for a whole year, but in the context of a poor, marginalized village in Ratanakiri, it can prove to be an insurmountable amount. Clearly, Government support is needed in the long term. In the short term, other sources may hopefully contribute to extend and replicate the HCEP model among the highland groups of Ratanakiri.

Networking, Sustainability and Expansion

A. Cambodia and Policies on Bilingual Education in the Region

The HCEP model could be adopted to provide education for ethnic minorities elsewhere in the country. These experiences may enable the MoEYS to formulate its language and education policies for minority populations. As mentioned earlier (2.4), Cambodia is in the process of developing and approving various policy plans for education relating to bilingual education and education for ethnic minorities. Cambodia has, in fact, the opportunity to lead the way in South-East Asia in terms of putting education policies in place that take into account the rights of bilingual education for minority groups. The Government has approved a Khmer-based writing system for some of the minority languages, which is an important step in making the use of local languages and mother tongue-based bilingual education a part of the Government system of education.

This section sums up the trends regarding the use of local languages in basic education in South-East Asia and China. In most of these countries, local languages are used in education, but the extent varies significantly. China provides the most elaborate forms and widest range of models of education in local languages. Larger languages of wider communication (LWC), as well as smaller local languages, are used at various levels of education, in some cases up to the university level. However, not all minorities in China receive equal support, and many ethno-linguistic minorities are not any better off than most minority groups in South-East Asia.

Yet, no country in South-East Asia has such elaborate systems as China for including local languages in education. Of all eleven nations discussed in this article, mother tongue-based bilingual education can actually be found only in China, although there are promising pilot projects in other countries, such as those in Cambodia. In Malaysia, mother tongue-based bilingual education is provided only in major languages such as Mandarin Chinese and Tamil. Generally, *bilingual education* in South-East Asia means education in the national language and English. Cases of this can be found in Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, and to some extent, Malaysia. Oral use of local languages is fairly common in all countries. There is no documented evidence from all countries, but it can be assumed that if minority students do not

understand the medium of instruction, and if the teacher and students have another common language, that language is used for classroom interaction and explaining the subject matter. A recent study from Tanzania and South Africa found that, despite the official language policy, teachers and students use languages with which they are most comfortable (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004).

The table below and following section is adopted from Kosonen (Kosonen, 2004a).

Table 4.1 Use of local languages in various systems of education in China and South-East Asia.

(Note ‘LLs’ = local languages, ‘Man’= Mandarin Chinese, ‘Tam’= Tamil)

Country	Local languages used in primary education	Local languages used in non-formal education	Local languages used in adult education	Local languages used orally in classes	Mother-tongue based bilingual education	Languages used as mother tongues in bilingual education
China	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	LLs, LWCs
Brunei	No	No	No	-	No	
Cambodia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	LLs
Indonesia	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	No	
Lao PDR	No	No	No	Yes	No	
Malaysia	Yes	Yes	-	-	Yes	Man. Tam.
Myanmar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Philippines	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	LLs
Singapore	No	No	No	-	No	
Thailand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Viet Nam	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Gia Rai, Hoa

(Benson 2003, 22) uses the concept of “foot-in-the-door” strategies, meaning “*measures that can be taken to facilitate a gradual process of change in classroom languages and interaction.*” Such strategies include the authorized use of oral mother tongue in classrooms, the use of the mother tongue in pre-schools, short-cut transitional bilingual education, the mother tongue as a school subject, and NFE and literacy programmes in the mother tongue. Further language development in minority languages and continuing participatory development of reading materials in local languages could be added to this list, as well. In most South-East Asian countries, some foot-in-the-door strategies are apparent. For instance, in Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand, a gradual process towards potential mother tongue-based bilingual

education is taking place. In these countries, as well as in other parts of the world, such a process has usually started with community and NGO efforts in adult and pre-primary education, and has been non-formal in structure. As a result, the formal system may include local language components in the curricula, mainly using these languages orally in classrooms or teaching them as subjects. Yet, this has paved the way towards true bilingual education, or even to a change in the national language policy, as for example in Papua New Guinea (Klaus 2003; Litteral 1999; Nagai 2001; Siegel 1997).

In most South-East Asian countries, governments support in principle the use of local languages in education by means of legislation, such as by constitution or through education laws and policies. However, these principles are not always implemented. In many countries, an evident mismatch in policy and practice exists, most notably in Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam. In Viet Nam, for example, government officials often talk about bilingual education that includes minority languages. Yet, in fact, the practice is more like using local language orally in classrooms or teaching local languages as subjects with a fairly obvious goal of assimilating minority students into the majority population (Kosonen, 2004b; Save the Children-UK, 2002).

Regionally, there is an increased interest in the use of local languages in education. Minority communities, themselves, are active in contributing to the use of their mother tongues in some form of education. This can be seen in an increasing number of countries with educational pilot projects using local languages. International organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF, as well as various donor agencies, are also focusing more than before on the use of the mother tongue in education.

The non-formal sector uses local languages more widely than the formal sector does. Civil society and non-governmental organisations implement most educational activities using local languages, usually a form of non-formal education. In some cases, such endeavours have become a part of the national system of education, either formal or non-formal. Cambodia seems to be heading this way.

B. Networking and Partners

There is an intimate relationship between the CARE-supported project and the MoEYS, which is a key factor not only for implementation, but also for long-term sustainability of the project. The MoEYS has gone from a skeptical point of view on bilingual education to throwing quite enthusiastic support

behind it. The provincial education authorities have shown more resistance than at the national level, but through detailed information and advocacy, resistance has turned into support. A significant factor has been that the results from the pilot project on bilingual education show that it actually works and, thus, provide education opportunities for deprived indigenous minority groups. Continuous, extensive communication and collaboration with the Ministry at national, provincial and district levels is necessary to ensure continued government support and commitment.

Cambodia is a country with a noticeable presence of national and international NGOs, more than in most other countries. In Ratanakiri, CARE works with Health Unlimited in areas of HIV/AIDS prevention and education, as well as in giving support to improve hygiene by building latrines, for example. No latrines currently exist in the villages, so the HCEP and Health Unlimited share costs for their construction, and use the same approach of cost sharing to build village wells. Another NGO, the International Cooperation for Cambodia (ICC), has served as an expert agency. Together with the MoEYS, it devised the writing system for the vernacular languages using Khmer script.

It should also be noted that without the firm financial support of AusAID, Canada Fund, John Martello/Tower Capital Fund, Direct Aid Program, and UNICEF, the project would not have been possible.

C. Strengths, Fragility and Sustainability

The project has many strengths, in particular, the five major interlinked components that are described in Chapter Three. Also, as an innovative model of bilingual education, the HCEP has proven that young, marginalized people from isolated ethnic minority groups, in fact, can learn to read and write their own mother tongue *and* the national language surprisingly fast given suitable conditions for learning. In the long term, most or all bilingual education in Cambodia will be the responsibility of the MoEYS. NGOs such as CARE have an important role to play in initiating pilot projects, producing valuable experiences and developing models on which the Government can build. However, for bilingual education to become a valid part of the education system, it must be part of the national policy plan on education, *and* the policy plan must be implemented in practice with sufficient resources in the form of allocated funds, proper trained personnel and other necessary resources. It will take time, but Cambodia has a unique opportunity to pave the way for bilingual education in South-East Asia.



Figure 4.1 School Children in Grade 1

Community Ownership and Commitment

The firm involvement and dedication of a broad assembly of stakeholders such as community members, School Board, elders, teachers, HCEP project staff, other NGOs, and government staff at national, provincial and district levels is a major strength of the project. Also, the HCEP has taken an integrated approach to education in the community context, and involved the stakeholders in a participatory way. Community participation in most villages works very well. The school seems to have become a focus for the whole community, villagers have devoted a lot of time and work to it, and it maintains a significant position in the village. Excellent leadership from the School Board is also a key factor. The community schools are managed and run by the communities, themselves, based on local needs and locally adapted curriculum/materials. The HCEP has been successful in fostering a sense of community ownership of the project. School Boards have internalized their responsibilities, and act semi-autonomously using CARE staff as a resource, but not as a driving force. An evaluation in Paor Kei Chong village (CARE, 2004a) showed that parents were adamant that the school project would continue in their village, with or without inputs from CARE, as long as there were teachers. In Team Leu village, the Board mentioned that they

would be able to continue many of the activities on their own, though they would need financial support to pay teacher salaries and produce teaching/learning materials. (See also Chapter Three, H)

Heavy Workload

The project has resulted in an increased workload for families (particularly mothers) of school children, School Boards and communities. In most cases, this is perceived as an investment, not as a burden, since families will be compensated in the future when their children are better able to contribute to the family. Nevertheless, there has already been an impact as children are occasionally absent from school in order to help their parents in the house or fields. Workload is also to some extent related to the efforts of other NGOs present in the community. In Krola village, where several NGOs are active, community members expressed a feeling of almost an “overload” of work and activities (CARE, 2004a). Wisely, the community will not allow other organisations to work in Krola if the activities are similar to what existing NGOs are offering. However, if the NGO activities have a different focus, the community may accept it.

Communication Issues

Communication is at the centre of any project. There are oral and written communications, as well as informal ways of transmitting messages. Communication is especially demanding for a project such as the HCEP, since four languages are spoken, English, Khmer, Kreung and Tampuan. Messages are often conveyed in the sequence English – Khmer – Kreung/Tampuan and Kreung/Tampuan – Khmer – English, and there is always a risk that content may be altered or ‘lost in translation.’ However, the most difficult part may not be the language issues, but rather, the innate socio-cultural factors that we all carry with us. A western way of communicating messages is somewhat different from Khmer, which is again different from Kreung or Tampuan. The HCEP has probably succeeded quite well under these challenging circumstances. However, there should be a continuous and systematic monitoring to ensure that all stakeholders have a common understanding of the issues and messages.

Capacity of Teachers

Weakness in the capacity of the local teachers may be a concern. None of them are experienced teachers with formal qualifications, and few have completed even a primary school cycle. On the other hand, they come from

the communities, themselves; carry with them intimate knowledge of the villages; and receive six months of pre-service training and continuous in-service training. Constant training of the village teachers will be needed to build their capacities and upgrade their skills.

Educational Inequalities

Inequalities may possibly increase within the village, as well as between those villages that have access to children's education and those that do not. The effects of these inequalities may not be immediately apparent, but may emerge over time. Villagers seem relatively naïve about the possible downsides of education. It is not realistic to expect that there will be no tension between educated youth who are able to interact with the outside world, and their traditional societies. In particular, elders have expressed some concern that the educated youth may gain more knowledge than they, themselves, have, and upset the 'balance of knowledge' in the community. This will be mitigated to some extent by the incorporation of the local culture into the curriculum, but is still something which the HCEP should keep in mind for future planning and community development work.

Financial Sustainability

It has proven rather difficult to obtain funding for the project. Up to now, the main donor is AusAID, with supplementary funding from other sources. It will be necessary to secure funding, which is not yet certain, if the project is going to continue capacity-building, and developing/adapting curriculum for Grades 3-6 of the six-year primary school cycle.

D. Future Outlook and Recommendations

Future project activities should build on successful elements and achievements of the project: fostering community ownership, building School Board capacity, strengthening the capacity of project staff and local teachers, continuing adaptation of curriculum and materials, and extending collaboration with the MoEYS.

Additional Capacity-Building of Human Resources

Additional and continued capacity-building may be needed. Most project staff and all the teachers come from the indigenous highland groups, which is a strength since they are well aware of local conditions, customs, and culture. However, Kreung and Tampuen are marginalized groups living on

the fringes of Cambodian society with limited knowledge of Khmer language and culture. The education level of the teachers is also low. Hence, continuous training and capacity-building of project staff, teachers and Community Board members is needed to upgrade their knowledge and skills.

Additional Education Opportunities

During interviews with Community Board members, it became apparent that the adults and elders felt somewhat left behind when the young receive their education (CARE, 2004a). There is clearly a need for adult non-formal education programmes in the communities. The villages may be well positioned to extend learning opportunities to other parts of the community through Community Learning Centres (CLCs), which have proved to be an effective way in many countries to facilitate community learning and promote lifelong education for all. Existing school buildings can serve as CLCs, and be used for a variety of activities such as adult literacy classes, post-literacy activities, skills training, income generation for poverty alleviation and other continuing education programmes. Building on experiences from the current bilingual education project, activities in the CLCs should be based on real, identified needs in the communities. Women of all ages are important target groups since their educational needs have often been given low priority by the communities. CARE may create links with other NGOs and the Non-formal Education Department to explore possible collaboration and to draw on their resources.

Endorsement of Bilingual Education in National Policy Plans

Cambodia is in the process of endorsing its Education Strategy and Policy documents for the period 2004-2009. (See Chapter Two) The positive experiences from the Ratanakiri project have to some extent had an influence on the drafting of these documents due to the close working relationship between the HCEP and parts of the MoEYS. It is to be hoped that there will be references and commitments to bilingual education in the documents in order for Cambodia to reach out to all segments of the society, including ethnic minority groups, and to attain its EFA goals.

Extension to Cover Whole Primary Cycle

The HCEP is a pilot project which was originally intended to be implemented for three years only. However, students and the indigenous communities have observed positive results: Young students have acquired literacy and

numeracy skills in a short time since, among other factors, education was provided in their own language and Khmer, and the teaching/learning process has been learner-centred. Therefore, there is a demand from the communities to extend the project, continue with capacity-building, and develop/adapt curriculum and materials for Grades 4-6. Funding for this possible extension needs to be identified.

Expansion to Cover More Communities

The HCEP is a pilot project with limited geographical outreach since it currently covers only six villages. It would be beneficial to expand bilingual education to cover more villages in Ratanakiri to gain more experience, and to reach out to other isolated communities. Collaboration with the provincial and district offices of MOEYS is ongoing, and the outcome of this collaboration will decide if and how the Ministry will be able to expand the bilingual education model to other areas.

Awareness-Raising Through Internet

It may be useful to produce an attractive and well-maintained website to display activities and experiences on bilingual education in Ratanakiri. The Internet is a valuable tool in reaching out to a vast online community, and may be used for fund-raising and informational purposes. Developing and maintaining a website is a relatively cheap endeavor, and the benefits can be substantial. There are no other comparable means by which you can reach out to a worldwide audience at such low costs.

Regional Teacher Training College

Ratanakiri Province is home to a variety of ethnic minority groups with their own educational needs in terms of language and culture. These educational needs are often different from those seen in many other parts of Cambodia, and relate to local conditions. The HCEP has observed that lack of qualified teachers hailing from the highland groups is a major obstacle in order to provide effective education to children in the province. Thus, an important issue to pursue is the establishment of a Regional Teacher Training College in Ratanakiri to recruit local students, and to train them with a special focus on bilingual education and education suited to the needs of the area's ethnic minority groups. Establishing such a college is obviously not the task of CARE, but it is mentioned in this report since its presence would likely lead to major educational improvements in the impoverished province.

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