Household Determinants of Schooling Progression Among Rural Children in Cambodia[1]

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This study examined the individual and household determinants that affected the chances of Cambodian rural children being enrolled in or dropping out of school before completing grade four. Data were obtained from interviews with 159 children aged between 12 to 18 years and their families from two rural villages in Pursat province of Cambodia. The findings revealed that boys had a higher chance of being kept in school than girls. Household economic conditions, though important for children's educational attainment, were not a significant determinant for the continuation of schooling among rural children. Other household assets such as parental education, particularly that of the father were highly related to this phenomenon. Parental attitudes towards education and intervention in the process of children's schooling significantly affected children's educational participation.

Cambodia; education; household determinants; schooling progression; children

INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing realisation that emphasis on the expansion of the overall enrolment in the education system has proved inadequate and ineffective in the achievement of the goal of education for all. Despite a great increase in enrolment growth, 872 million adults or one in every three remain illiterate and 125 million children of primary school age are excluded from the education system (Oxfam, 1999). Educational participation has been marked by wide disparities in class, gender, ethnicity and residence during the course of educational expansion (Lockheed and Vespoor, 1991).

Over the past decade, Cambodia has also shared worldwide trends in the following aspects: (a) the expansion of basic education; (b) the growing number of excluded children; and (c) the continuing disparities in educational participation. Following the shift to a free-market economy and the elimination of economic sanctions in late 1980s, the Cambodian education system, with a large injection of international assistance, has doubled its enrolment from 1.57 to 3.17 million children between 1990 and 2001 (EMIS, 2001/2002). Yet, this growth has not been able to keep pace with the rising numbers in the school-aged population, and has resulted in an increase in the number of 'out-of-school' or excluded children who do not attend school. About 10 per cent of students leave schools every year and this figure increases the number of out-of-school children. Disparities in educational participation by income, gender, and geographic residence are also obvious in the Cambodian education system (MoP, 1997). These inequalities in the educational participation are a direct consequence of household decisions as to which child is to be sent to school, decisions that are influenced by many different factors.

Several theoretical perspectives from other countries, both developing, and developed, have been put forth to explain the nature of household decisions on children's education. Consideration of

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the return to schooling, status attainment, and children's endowment are the most powerful driving forces that influence parents' decisions concerning children's schooling (Becker, 1968; 1991; Becker and Thomes 1976). However, these choices have often been constrained by the limited financial resources available to parents (Colclough and Lewin, 1993; Lloyd and Blanc, 1996; Schultz, 1993). To make things worse, a family with a large number of children may limit parental choice to provide an education to all their children (Fuller et al., 1995; Knodel et al., 1990; Parish and Willis, 1993). Despite the general acceptance of these perspectives, their applicability to the actual situations differs from one context to another.

However, relatively little is known about the pattern of educational decision-making in Cambodia. This paper attempts to test the aforementioned theoretical framework by examining the household factors, which determine the educational opportunities of children in the rural areas of Cambodia. Using data from questionnaire surveys and actual observation in two rural villages in the north-western part of Cambodia, the study addresses the question of how school enrolment and progression from one grade to another are determined by household resources, parental perceptions and expectations about children's education. It examines the effects of individual characteristics and household composition, such as the position in the birth order of a child and the number of school-aged children in the family, on the chance of being enrolled and progressing in school beyond grade four.

The next section reviews some theoretical perspectives and analytical issues concerning household decision-making on the education of family members. This is followed by a brief description of the background of Cambodian formal education system and the conditions that are found in the labour market which have a direct link to parents' expectations that result from an investment in their children's formal education. Then, the paper goes on to elaborate on the data collection and research methods that are used in the analysis. The subsequent section provides empirical findings from the survey and presents the results of analyses undertaken using logistic regression to identify the determinants of educational participation of children aged between 12 and 18 years. The concluding section provides a summary of the empirical findings and offers some reflections on specific policy intervention if the goal of education for all is to be achieved as planned.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Research on children's educational opportunities has examined different theoretical perspectives in an effort to explain the pattern of educational decision-making at the household level. The earliest and most frequently referred to research is the theory of human capital pioneered by Gary Becker (1968). The human capital framework, which provides an almost exclusive focus on the economic behaviour of individuals, offers a convincing context in which individuals are rational decision makers in maximising their wealth. The decision of individuals and families to invest in education is largely guided by the consideration of future return on schooling (Becker, 1968; 1991). Parents whose altruistic behaviour maximises the utility of any investment of the family's welfare may have to choose to invest in certain children more than others, depending on the promise of a return on that investment. In this regard, Becker and Thomes (1976) have found that parents tend to invest in the human capital of the more able children rather than the less able ones. This means that children who are performing better in school are likely to be favoured by parents making decisions about educational investment. In the same way, gender discrimination, which alters the employment market for women, has a direct impact on the lack of opportunity for girls to be sent to and kept in school. In general, this model appears to be more applicable to developing countries where the absence of a pension program increases the likelihood that parents may have to depend on children in their old age.

Even though parents perceive education to be beneficial for the future of their children and the family, their desire to contribute to their children's schooling may be constrained by the limited resources available in the household to invest on children (Fuller et al., 1995; Walter and O'Connell, 1988; Schultz, 1993). The family-economy model offers a comprehensive explanation of the situation in which parents cannot afford to increase the welfare of their children. This model postulates that parents with low income or parents with many children have to balance between the future welfare and the immediate needs of their households, and therefore, cannot anticipate future returns on their children's schooling by risking the immediate family welfare or survival. In this instance, when the local labour markets provide income-earning opportunities, the allocation of children to productive activities at home or in the labour market is a common survival strategy for poorer families. This argument is parallel to the current debate on the negative relationship between child labour and schooling participation in many developing countries, which posits that productive activities of children at home or in the labour market often compete with their schooling participation. However, this argument is far from being conclusive. Chenichovsky (1985), in a consideration of empirical findings in Botswana, has challenged the notion that the need to retain girls for household work is a reason to withdraw girls from school. A similar line of argument is also supported by more recent findings that a considerable number of children are neither enrolled in school nor engaged in any productive activities (Buchman, 1996; Fuller et al., 1995; Mahrotra, 1996). Therefore, it is still unclear whether there is direct competition between working and schooling for young children in developing countries, as has been commonly believed.

Closely related to the household resource is the composition of the family, which may improve or suppress the resource limitation within the household. Advocating this argument is the resource-dilution hypothesis, which stresses that the number of children in a household has an inverse relationship with children's educational opportunities. This model theorises that parental resources such as time, energy, and money are finite and that these resources are divided more thinly with additional children. Thus the larger the number of siblings, the smaller the amount of money that is invested in the education of each child. Various studies in both developing and developed countries have consistently confirmed the inverse relationship between number of siblings and the education of children (Downey 1995; Knodel et al., 1990; Lillard and Willis 1994; Parish and Willis, 1993). However, Chernichovsky's (1985) study in Botswana has challenged this notion with two convincing arguments. First, he found that a larger number of school age children within a household enhances the likelihood for a child to be enrolled in school. This finding, as argued by Chernichovsky, reflects the lower demand for labour of each individual child at home when more children are available, and reduces the indirect cost of educating a child. Second, the consideration of family type suggests that the extended family could mitigate against the family size effect. Therefore, by having grandparents residing in the same household, children are more likely to be enrolled in school than those in nuclear[2] families (Chernichovsky, 1985). The extended family may be a source of emotional as well as material support, which can facilitate children's schooling.

Embodied in the resource dilution perspective is the argument that it is not the size of the family that determines children's educational participation but the birth order and the child's position in the family, which may influence his or her educational opportunity. As Parish and Willis (1993) have noted, "a large number of children in the family can lead ... to improved educational opportunities for the later born. Once they begin to work, early born children continue to send or bring resources back to the family" (Parish and Willis, 1993, pp.868-869).

[2] Nuclear family refers to a family with only parents and children present while a extended family generally includes earlier generations, i.e. grandparents.

In addition to the resource dilution perspective and parental education, family resources are listed as one of the most important factors that determine children's educational opportunities. Many studies have confirmed the relationship between the level of parental education and children's educational attainment (Chenichovsky, 1985; Lloyd and Blanc, 1996; Tilak, 1989). For example, in rural Botswana, each year of schooling gained by the head of the household appears to increase the probability that the already enrolled children are likely to continue to a higher level of education by 19 per cent, and the propensity of the impact is likely to be greater in case of female heads of households (Chenichovsky, 1985). Tilak (1989) also notes that better educated parents tend to have better access to information and these parents are more likely to have first-hand knowledge of the economic benefits of education. Hence, they are more willing to send their children to school and keep them there longer.

How applicable is this knowledge to the Cambodian context? After a brief discussion on the Cambodian educational setting and an overview of data collection and research methodology, the remainder of the paper considers the results of the empirical findings in order to determine which factors significantly affect the enrolment of rural children in Cambodia.

THE CONTEXTUAL SETTING: EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

After independence Cambodia saw an increasing expansion of the formal education system. A strong belief existed that the theory of human capital was the most important vehicle for development and modernisation of Cambodia through formal education. The state, over the period of 16 years (1954-1970), spent more than 20 per cent of its national budget on education (Ayres, 2000). Almost all children had access to basic education at least and the number in the educated labour force rose dramatically. Then the country was plunged into civil unrest and genocide from 1975-1979 during which time education was totally abolished and the educational infrastructure and resources were destroyed or allowed to flounder. The collapse of the Pol Pot regime in 1979 signalled the rebirth of normalcy in the lives of Cambodian people. The education system was restored together with the return of the basic governmental infrastructure. Because only a handful of the educated people had survived, the restoration of the free Cambodian government created a strong demand for highly educated people.

The Cambodian education system in the 1980s was directed by the urgent need for national rehabilitation and restoration, whereas the system of the 1990s and beyond was driven by competition for status and acceptance by international institutions. Cambodia was actively moving to catch up with the world in the achievement of basic education for all citizens. The share of the education sector in total government expenditure rose slightly but steadily every year. As a percentage of GDP, it had risen from 0.9 per cent in 1997 to 1.7 per cent in 2001, resulting in the growth of the governmental share of the total cost of education from 21 per cent in 1997 to 41 per cent in 2001 (World Bank, 2003). In addition, the education sector enjoyed a considerable portion of external assistance from many bilateral and multilateral aid institutions as well as local non-governmental and international organisations. By 1997, 17.4 per cent of more than $201 million US dollars worth of technical assistance to Cambodia had been allocated to the education sector alone (Godfrey et al., 2002). As a consequence of the dramatic increase in the overall investment in education, many more schools were built and the gross school enrolment rates increased by over 100 per cent at the primary level by the year 2000.

However, as the rapid expansion of education has not been able to keep pace with the more rapid population growth, many children have remained outside the educational system. Although the number of children enrolled in the education system has increased from 1.57 million in 1990/1991

to 3.17 in 2001/2002, according to 1999 socio-economic survey[3], 1.6 million, aged between six and 18, are still not in school. Of those who are in school, 85.3 per cent are in primary education (EMIS, 2001/2002)

In addition, the system is marked by obvious regional, economic and gender disparities in educational participation. For example, the net enrolment for Phnom Penh is 81 per cent or 25 per cent higher than that in the rural areas. At the same time, the gap in enrolment rates between rich and poor households is large with only 55 per cent of children aged between six to 11 from the poorest 20 per cent of the population enrolled compared to 81 per cent of children from the richest 20 per cent of the population. Gender disparity is no less notable especially at the higher education levels (MoP, 1997). At lower secondary level (years 7 to 9), male students outnumber their female counterparts by 1.58:1 and in upper secondary level (years 10 to 12) by 2:1 (EMIS, 2001/2002).

The Cambodian education system is marked by internal inefficiency with high attrition rates, leaving the system with fewer students enrolled in higher grades. While the gross enrolment rate at primary level stands at 125 per cent, lower and upper secondary enrolment rates have declined to a mere 32 per cent and 11.5 per cent respectively (EMIS 2001/2002). The sharp decline in participation rate across grade levels is the result of high dropout rates and increasingly low completion rates among pupils as they move up the educational hierarchy.

Therefore, emphasis on educational expansion has occupied a priority position in the national development agenda of all governments throughout Cambodian history since independence with the exception of the period of the Khmer Rouge occupation. The Cambodian people have viewed education as the means to gain social mobility through employment opportunities in the paid workforce. However, the relatively small employment market makes these opportunities more competitive, which leads to a higher demand for educational qualifications if parents are to secure family welfare and children attain social mobility. Therefore, the perceptions and expectations that parents have for the education of each child, balanced with family survival strategies, may shape parental decisions on which children are to remain in school.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS

To determine the factors that affect the educational participation of Cambodian rural children, a field study was conducted in Pursat Province of Cambodia. In order to examine school factors, households that were located within a one-kilometre radius from Tonle Om primary school, were selected for the study. This research involved 159 children aged between 12 and 18 years from 76 households[4]. A parent, in most cases the mother in each household, was asked a wide range of questions which included a substantial set of items that investigated the household and educational background as well as the daily activities of each school-age child. The interviews were supplemented by informal discussions with non-family village residents and selected members of the, Village Development Committees (VDC), to gain general information about the villages, as well as to obtain opinions on educational problems as seen by the village heads and selected villagers.

Data obtained from this field research were coded into categorical and dummy variables and processed by logistic regression analysis. Logistic regression was the most appropriate statistical tool to assess the influence of independent variables on a dichotomous dependent variable (Garson, 2001). Because the dependent variable in this study (enrolment) was coded as a dummy variable, logistic regression was employed to examine factors (independent variables) that

[3] Socioeconomic Development Survey of Cambodia, 1999.

[4] An effort was made to select girls aged 12 and over among the dropout group to avoid girls who may have re-enrolled as ten was found to be the most common age for the enrolment of rural girls.

determined the likelihood of a child to remain enrolled in school beyond grade four or to drop out of school before reaching grade four. A list and description of dependent and independent variables may be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptions, means and standard deviations of variables

Variables	Name	Description and Code	Mean	S.D.
Dependent	Enrolment	1 = child is currently enrolled in Grade 4 or above 0 = child has dropped out before completing Grade 4	0.47	0.50
Independent				
Individual Factors	Child Sex	1 = male, 0 = female	0.41	0.49
	Child's age	Age of the child ranging between 12-18 years	15.01	1.93
	Age at start	The age at which a child first started school	8.78	1.26
	School-age children	Number of children aged 6 to 18 residing in household	3.82	1.29
	Child's birth order	The position of the child in order of birth.	2.23	1.06
	Academic performance	A child's academic performance rated by parents: 1 = poor, 2 = average, 3 = above average, 4 = very good	2.16	0.85
Household Factors	Land	Number of hectares the child's family owns, in intervals: 1 = 0-1, 2 = 1-2, 3 = 2-3, 4 = 3-4, > 4 hectares	2.53	1.00
	Cattle	Number of cattle owned by the child's family in intervals: 1 = 0-1, 2 = 2-3, 3 = 4-5, 4 = 6-7, 5 = 7 or more cattle	2.54	1.01
	Parental education	The highest educational level obtained by a parent. 0 = Illiterate, 1 = Literacy education, 2 = Primary education, 3 = Lower secondary education, 4 = Upper secondary education, 5 = University	1.82	1.06
Parental perceptions	Parental career expectation	1 = if parents expect the child to obtain formal job 0 = if parents do not expect child to obtain formal job	0.42	0.49
	Parental financial expectation	1 = if parents expect financial help in old age 0 = if parents do not expect financial help in old age	0.85	0.36
	Parental involvement	1 = for each action selected - Checking Children's book - Supervising Child's homework - Consulting with teachers about educational matters	0.58	0.49

FINDINGS

Factors at individual level

In Table 2, Model 1 shows characteristics of the individual child such as age, sex, birth order and the total number of school-aged siblings that he or she has and incorporates them into the analysis to explore the determinants of enrolment at the individual level. The findings reveal that age is not an important factor in school participation, despite its negative coefficient. However, sex appears to be important in determining a child's educational opportunity. Boys tend to enjoy a better chance of staying at school longer than girls. The results from the logistic regression analysis in Table 2 show that as a girl, the chances of her staying on in school to the completion of grade four declines by over 80 per cent ($p<0.01$). This confirms the national trend that girls are disproportionately under represented among pupils who continue to secondary education.

According to the resource dilution hypothesis, children who are born into a family with a larger number of children should have less probability of staying in school until the end of grade four than those who are born into families with fewer siblings. However, in the current survey of the Cambodian sample, this hypothesis does not hold true. When the number of school-aged children is included in the analysis as an independent variable, no significant relationship is found between the number of school-aged children in the household and their chance of staying on in school.

Nevertheless, a child's birth order has been found to have a significant implication on his or her schooling opportunity. The later born children in the family have a significantly greater chance of

being in school towards the completion of the primary education cycle. The younger children in a household are more likely to have an advantage as they are generally released from household chores to do their schoolwork instead.

Model 2 included two additional variables that reflected educational characteristics of the children. Because the age of a child and the age at which a child first started school may have been highly related, age was excluded from the analysis to avoid multi-co-linearity. The results of the analysis revealed that children who were first sent to school at a later age (older than six or seven years old, the normal starting age) appeared be much less likely to stay enrolled to complete grade four of primary education than children who were sent at the recommended age. Thus, starting school at a later age is a negative factor that mitigates against children's academic survival.

Table 2. Coefficient and odds ratio of determinants to enrol above Grade 4 (Models 1-3)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
Independent Variables	**Logit**	**Odds Ratio**	**Logit**	**Odds Ratio**	**Logit**	**Odds Ratio**
Age	0.188	1.207	__	__	0.530	1.700
	(.131)				(0.241)	
Sex	-1.774**	.170	-2.079**	.125	-2.184**	.113
(Female)	(0.398)		(0.544)		(0.675)	
Child's Birth Order	.888**	2.429	0.137	1.147	.626	1.870
	(0.248)		(0.258)		(0.400)	
Number of school age children	-0.242	0.785	0.095	1.100	0.062	1.064
	(0.145)		(0.201)		(0.233)	
Age of starting school	__	__	-1.659**	0.190	-2.060**	0.128
			(0.319)		(0.488)	
Academic Performance	__	__	1.525**	4.597	1.844**	6.320
			(0.389)		(0.473)	
Land size	__	__	__	__	0.703*	2.020
					(0.317)	
Cattle Ownership	__	__	__	__	0.155	1.167
					(0.330)	
Parental Education	__	__	__	__	0.888**	2.429
					(0.330)	
Constant	-2.950	2.399	4.653	3.864	2.407	4.266
-2 log likelihood	175.745		92.331		75.960	
P = <	0.0001		0.0001		0.0001	

****** P<0.001, one-tailed test, ***** P<0.05 one-tailed test; Standard Error are in parentheses.

Likewise, children's performance, as perceived by their parents is another critical factor affecting the academic progress of a child. The results of the logistic regression illustrate that the more highly the parents evaluate the child's performance in school, the greater the chance that the child will stay on in school beyond grade four. Interestingly, children's birth order becomes insignificant when the performance variable is included in the analysis, leading to the conclusion that parents are more willing to commit resources for the educational development of a child who excels in school regardless of the child's birth order. This result confirms the earlier argument that has been put forward by Becker and Thomes (1976), which postulates that parents reinforce inequality among siblings by investing disproportionately in the human capital of academically better-endowed children. This may also explain why Cambodian girls have fewer educational opportunities than boys.

Factors at the family level

The attempt to accurately measure the economic status of rural households is hampered by the very nature of the subsistence economy of rural areas. This study has tried to make an estimate of the economic condition of rural households by examining two indicators: the size of the area that is farmed and the number of cattle owned by the families. It is worth noting that land and cattle

are the most important assets for rural farmers in Cambodia, a country where farming methods are backward and bulls and buffaloes are widely used as primary sources of wealth and power.

Model 3 of the analysis shows that area of farmland that the family owns is positively associated with greater likelihood of children remaining in school beyond grade four. If a child born into a family that owns more than one hectare of land, the chance of being enrolled and kept in school doubles compared with children of small landholders or farmers. The same model, however, does not indicate any significant relationship between number of cattle owned by the family and children's education. In other words, the children from a family who owns many cattle may have to drop out of school to look after cattle just as children from a family who owns few or no cattle, but who are too poor to pay for the cost of education. It is, therefore, inconclusive that household economic resources are an exclusive determinant of the educational participation of a child. Other factors may have greater explanatory power concerning the differences in children's educational participation.

Extensive literature has shown that parents who are educated themselves have more enlightened attitudes towards education and provide their children with a more stimulating environment for education than parents with less education. This study has also confirmed this argument. As shown in Table 2, Model 3 derived from the logistic regression analysis, for every additional level of education attained by either of the parents, a child is 2.4 times more likely to be enrolled in school beyond Grade 4.

Table 3 shows Models 4, 5, and 6. Model 4 includes two additional variables, which test whether the expectation gained from educating their children has motivated parents to invest in their children's schooling. The conceptual framework that is discussed in the previous section has hypothesised that parents who expect financial help in their old age are more willing to send children to school. In order to avoid multi-co-linearity and because parental expectation of financial assistance in old age may be related to a child's performance in school, the educational variables, age of starting school and academic performance are excluded in this model. The analysis has found no effect from parent's expectation of future financial remittances on current decisions to invest in children's schooling. It is also worth noting that parental concern for financial assistance in old age has no relation to their current economic status. Eighty-five per cent of the parents in the study expect financial help from their children and the magnitude of that expectation does not differ widely between parents of different economic strata. The expectation of future dependence on children is common in the Cambodian setting, where a government welfare system has never existed.

Parents who anticipate that their children are likely to get formal-sector jobs as teachers, policemen, and civil servants that require at least a high school education, need to be more willing to commit time and money to their children's schooling. This hypothesis is tested in Model 5 of the analysis. The model shows that parents' expectation of their children's future careers has a strong positive influence on children's current educational participation. Children whose parents expect them to obtain jobs in the formal sector in the future are four times more likely to have completed grade four than those whose parents expect their children to earn a living in self-employed businesses as barbers, hair-dressers, and retailers.

Another important and influential factor for consideration is the parental attention or ignorance, as reflected in their daily actions with regard to their children's schooling. Questions that have been asked include whether children have ever been told to work hard in school, if their books have ever been checked, their homework supervised or if their educational prospects have ever been discussed with teachers by their parents. The field observations reveal that parental ignorance about their children's schooling is widespread at the household level. More than half of the children (52.8 per cent) in the survey sample have never received any monitoring by their parents.

This has made parental attention a significant factor in determining the schooling participation of the children. As might be seen in Table 3, Model 6 shows that additional actions that are taken to intervene in children's education increase the chances of a child being in school beyond Grade 4 by 81.7 per cent. In addition, the survey has shown that parent-teacher interaction tends to be weak. Less than 30 per cent of all parents in the survey have ever consulted teachers about their children's education.

Table 3. Coefficient and odds ratio of determinants to enrol above Grade 4 (Models 4-6)

	Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
Independent Variables	**Logit**	**Odds Ratio**	**Logit**	**Odds Ratio**	**Logit**	**Odds Ratio**
Age	0.139	1.149	.265	1.303	0.263	1.301
	(0.156)		(0.146)		(0.145)	
Sex	-1.982**	0.138	-1.914**	0.147	-1.937**	0.144
(Female)	(0.504)		(0.449)		0.451)	
Child's Birth Order	0.920**	2.510	0.999**	2.714	0.987**	2.682
	(0.308)		(0.268)		(0.276)	
No. of school age children	-0.139	0.618	-0.198	0.820	-0.293	0.746
	(0.177)		(0.162)		(0.164)	
Land size	0.611**	1.842	0.635**	1.887	0.588**	1.801
	(0.230)		(0.224)		(0.225)	
Cattle Ownership	-0.186	0.688	-0.329	0.720	-0.303	0.738
	(0.224)		(0.212)		(0.221)	
Parental Education	1.198**	3.312	__	__	__	__
	(0.276)					
Financial expectation	0.939	2.558	__	__	__	__
	(0.784)					
Career expectation	__	__	1.450**	4.262	__	__
			(0.448)			
Parental Involvement	__	__	__	__	0.597**	1.817
					(0.165)	
Constant	-6.650	3.109	-6.137	2.727	-5.453	2.623
log likelihood	132.924		151.607		148.515	
P = <	0.0001		0.0001		0.0001	

****** P<0.001, one-tailed test, ***** P<0.05 one-tailed test; Standard Error are in parentheses.

CONCLUSION

The study has revealed that boys' education is seen more as an investment and is more favoured by parents. Further, their chance of staying in school long enough to finish primary education and beyond increases if they are younger children in the family. Those who have been sent to school at the age of six or seven are the ones who perform relatively well academically. This suggests that encouraging parents to send children to school at the recommended age is likely to enhance children's academic performance which, in turn, increases parents' willingness to invest in children's schooling.

Household economic resources are necessary, but they are not the most important determinants of children's educational opportunities. Other influential factors have considerable weight in explaining the pattern of educational decisions that are made in Cambodian rural households. The factors, which may determine children's educational opportunities, are: parental education, parental expectation of children's future paid employment, and parental involvement in their children's educational process that is seen by their interest and intervention in the educational progress of their children. It is observed that Cambodian parents tend to have low levels of daily interaction with their children's education. Parent-teacher relationships have also been found to be weak. If educational expansion is to meet the goal of education for all eligible children effectively and efficiently, then parents' participation in their children's education must be increased. This

necessitates that educational institutions and teachers take a more proactive approach in the interaction between parents and the community.

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