

EK PHNOM PROJECT

HALF-YEAR REPORT JULY – DECEMBER 2017



Vot Kamol was titled an outstanding mathematics teacher at the Battambang provincial level. She teaches in grade 1 at Sdey Ler primary school, where she has been teaching since 2004. At the beginning, she faced many challenges in teaching. She struggled with classroom management and explaining mathematical concepts to students.

From year to year, Kamol's teaching has improved. She has participated in workshops run by SeeBeyondBorders since 2011, focusing on breaking down mathematical concepts and critical thinking. She now uses the techniques she learned from working with SeeBeyondBorders, and has benefited from the support provided by our mentoring program.

Kamol was selected as an outstanding teacher in mathematics, after the Provincial Office of Education (POE) conducted an observation of her teaching. Teacher Vot Komol was excited to get a certificate of admiration from POE, and gave special thanks to SeeBeyondBorders for supporting her.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This six monthly report covers the period from 1st July 2017 to 31st Dec 2017 and details the highlights, successes and challenges of the programs we are running at schools in the Ek Phnom District. Schools in Ek Phnom are now in the Maintenance Phase. Programs include: Quality Teaching, Better Schools, and Getting to School. We have made significant progress and increased the number of schools in which we work.

During this reporting period, SeeBeyondBorders has expanded to 15 new schools in Ek Phnom. We held workshops on addition and subtraction, with 80 teachers participating. Furthermore, we also appointed 32 senior mentors, who now have enlarged roles and responsibilities. We are working hard to ensure all senior mentors improve their skill and ability.

In November 2017, we began our Pilot Literacy Program. This is an innovative and integrated approach to learning literacy, whereby a multisensory learning environment is created. We believe that creating an environment that is rich in stories, vocabulary, student participation and student dialogue, helps the students to learn. The aim of this program is to investigate whether this approach to teaching and learning is effective in a Cambodian context, while also providing participating teachers with unique professional development opportunities. Results from this initiative will inform whether or not we can expand this to more schools next year.

Parental involvement and engagement in education is still strong throughout the schools we work in. For instance, parents assisted teachers to set up sport activities and to run the Health Campaign Day. They also helped to improve the school infrastructure alongside SeeBeyondBorders, under our Better Schools Program. All of these efforts helped to keep student attendance at an excellent 96% during this reporting period.

Our relationships remains strong with many external stakeholders. These include the District Office of Education (DOE), and the Provincial Office of Education (POE). The DOE has committed to run the Maintenance Phase alongside SeeBeyondBorders. We have also integrated our program activities with the POE and DOE's Annual Operation Plan (AOP). At a local level, we have excellent communication with the 27 school principals in our target schools. They are all actively involved in our programs and highly cooperative.

We are delighted to see the progress and achievements that we have made over the last six months and we would like to thank all of our generous supporters who have made this possible and enabled us to provide support to enhance the quality of education in Ek Phnom.

JULY - DECEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

- **The DOE's director in Ek Phnom district demonstrated a strong commitment to the Maintenance Phase.** In the last six months of the Transition Phase, the DOE collaborated with our programs, but they were not closely involved with SeeBeyondBorders. The DOE has now agreed to take responsibility to lead the meetings, organise the teacher mentoring and prepare and facilitate workshops. The DOE has incorporated 15 new schools into the program.
- The first Ek Phnom mentor meeting in the maintenance program went very well. **At the mentoring meeting, there was a 96% attendance rate from the 27 targeted schools.**



- **In October, we conducted a four-day Addition and Subtraction Workshop for 88 teachers (71 women) from 15 targeted schools.** The workshop was facilitated by senior mentors, and two DOE staff members. During the workshop, they learned more about student centred teaching approaches, using concrete materials for teaching mathematics, and how to break down the concepts of addition and subtraction. **98% of the participants rated the workshop at 4 or 5 out of 5, according to our observation form.**



- **In Nov 2017, we implemented a Pilot Literacy Program.** We selected two grade 1 teachers from Rohal Suonglech primary school for the trial. They shared their experiences, learnt from each other and learned new approaches to teaching literacy at the SeeBeyondBorders office for two days. After a few months, the pilot literacy program is going well. The most notable point was the improvement of classroom management. The students in the class became happier to spend time learning. The teachers feel that, having improved their skills, it is easier to teach than it was before. We look forward to reporting on the development in the literacy capabilities of these children in future reports.
- **Radio Free Asia did a report on the Health Campaign Day in Rohalsuong Lech primary school.** You can watch the video on Youtube through this link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICVmeYeLCAI&sns=fb>.
- **SeeBeyondBorders' Conditional Cash Payment Program (CCP) is continuing to provide support during the Maintenance Phase for 20 students** from lower income families at Sdey Ler and Prek Loung primary schools. As a result the student attendance rate in the CCP program was 97% in this period from July to December.
- There is now clean drinking water freely available to the students at Koemoni Pisey primary school.

JULY - DECEMBER CHALLENGES

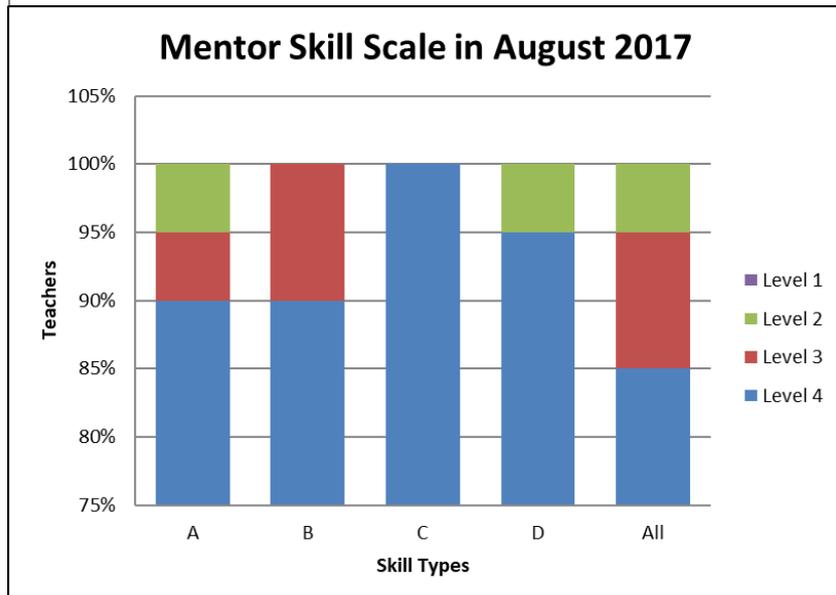
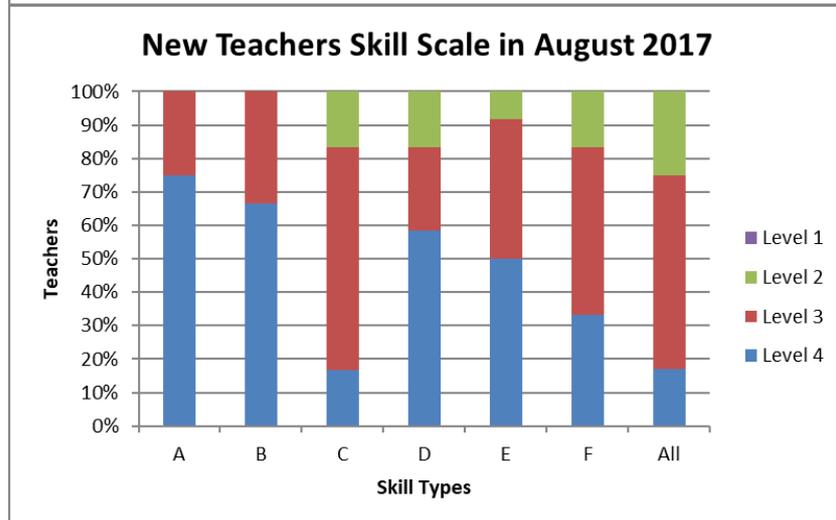
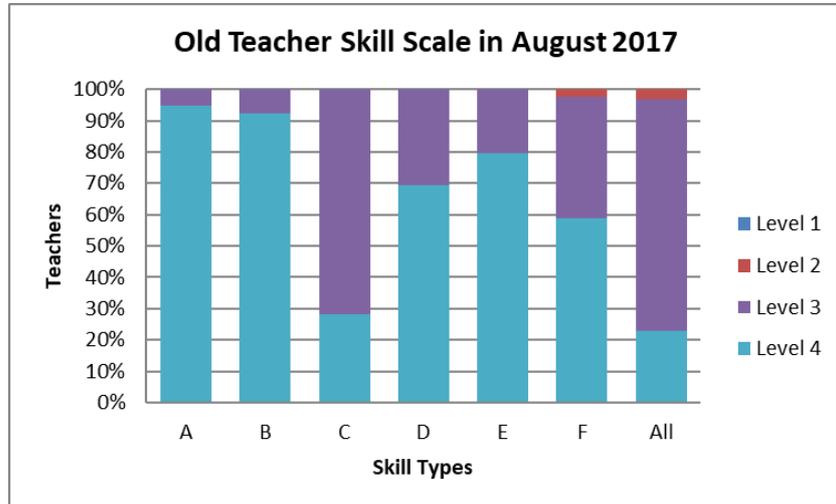
- **From July to December the overall student pass rate dropped slightly**, although there was also a decrease in exam attendance rates. According to post-test report, the pass rate for Grade 1 was 84%, a decrease from last year's 88%. At Grade 2, 75% passed which was down from 86% last year, but at Grade 3, 75% passed which was up from last year's 71%.
- **Student absenteeism was a major factor that affected the pass rate this year**. The rate of absenteeism on test days increased from 7% last year, to 9% this year in Grade 1; it increased from 7% to 14% in Grade 2; and in Grade 3 it increased from 6% to 10%. We suspect that the increased absenteeism on the test days was due to the heavy rainfall on those days.
- **During this period, the number of Mentor Development Coordinator (MDC) visits to mentors decreased**. Only 45% of planned meetings took place, by comparison to 98% in the same period in 2016. The major cause of this dropped rate was due to the MDCs spending two weeks facilitating the Problem Solving Workshops in Bavel and Angkor Thom. We are addressing this concern to ensure a higher rate of visits take place going forward. While we are aware that we need trained staff to facilitate our Problem Solving Workshops it cannot come at the expense of MDC visits to mentors.
- **In the Maintenance Phase, getting community members to engage with health lessons in Ek Phnom district continues to be challenging**. It was difficult to get communities to commit to attending the health lessons because many community members work in agriculture and have to work during the day. This problem is particularly significant during the harvesting season. We encouraged teachers to plan health lessons carefully, and to inform the parents well in advance, but this did not seem to help the situation. We are going to discuss this problem with the school principals in order to find a possible solution for upcoming events and to ensure teachers plan lessons that engage the wider community.

JULY - DECEMBER OUTCOMES AND EVIDENCE

Quality Teaching Focus Area

Aim: Develop confident and competent communities of teachers committed to quality teaching and ongoing professional development

- The second skills scale evaluation for the 2017 academic year was conducted in August. The result demonstrated that old mentee teachers have developed their skills. **97% of old mentee teachers achieved level 3 and 23% achieved level 4 across all skill types.** This marks a significant improvement since February 2017 when 90% of old mentee teachers had reached no higher than level 3.
- The new mentee teachers have also improved their skills. **All new mentee teachers have now achieved at least level 2, and 75% have achieved level 3.** This also marks an improvement since February 2017, when 91% of new mentors had achieved level 2, and 55% had achieved level 3 across all skill types.
- **Mentor teachers have also developed their skills, with 85% having achieved level 4 in the August 2017 skill evaluation.**



Getting to School Focus Area

Aim: Increase participation and attendance in an educational environment that is fun, healthy and accessible to the whole community

- **Our sport scale evaluation in seven schools has indicated significant improvement this year. Coaches built up their skills in running sports lessons.** 59% of coaches reached level 3 and 41% achieved level 4, compared to last year, 86% were at level 3, and only 8% had reached level 4 in sports. According to questionnaires with the students, they enjoy taking part in sports lessons, and so they come to school more regularly as a result.
- The Conditional Cash Payment Program has kept the recipient students' attendance at a high level and improved student learning results. During this month, the CCP students' attendance rate averaged at 97%. **All of the CCP students passed their end of year tests, and have continued into the higher grade.**
- The teaching of health has improved in two schools this year. 80% of teachers achieved level 4, a significant improvement since 2016, when all of the teachers had reached only level 3. This demonstrates a notable improvement in the teachers' ability to deliver health lessons to students in a creative and enjoyable manner. According to questionnaires on health, taken by students, the health program reduced student absenteeism because they understood more about taking care of their health, and therefore fewer students experienced illness. **Schools have committed to carrying on this important health curriculum in the future, even without support from SeeBeyondBorders.**

Better Schools Focus Area

Aim: Stimulate sustained community engagement in the long term physical and educational development of Cambodian schools

- **There is now clean drinking water freely available to the students at Koemoni Pisey primary school.** SeeBeyondBorders provided the school with a water filter, and members of the local community provided water containers for each classroom. This will benefit around 200 students.
- **A Toilet Construction at Sdey Ler Primary School has been successfully completed.** The school principals led meetings on planning and fundraising. The parents, authorities and the SeeBeyondBorders' staff were actively involved in this project. The project was funded by a donor, SeeBeyondBorders, and the local community, who provided \$150 to help provide access to clean water in the school. At least 200 students and 12 teachers will benefit from this project.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

The contribution you make to SeeBeyondBorders makes a substantial difference to the lives of some of the poorest and most vulnerable communities in Cambodia.

A large proportion of Cambodia's teachers and parents grew up in a world where the chance of a decent education was almost entirely eradicated. The result is that many of those teachers have not received the basic schooling and advanced training needed to help lead and inspire current and future generations.

Alongside the bleak historical context, the education system remains grossly underfunded despite the proven correlation between education, development and the eradication of poverty. With salaries of less than \$150 a month, teachers tread a fine line between the ethical code of teaching and the need to survive.

The programs offered by SeeBeyondBorders and supported by **you** enable teachers to make the right choice, building their skills and capability, encouraging students, parents and members of the community to engage with and play a role in strengthening education from a community level. Education is creeping up the national agenda, and in the meantime, SeeBeyondBorders is enabling teachers and communities to create their own positive educational impact. Thank you for your continued support.

This project is in part funded by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program.

Change begins with education