EDUCATION POLICIES FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN CAMBODIA

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INTRODUCTION

Cambodia is a kingdom in South-East Asia with a population of approximately 14 million. Ethnic Khmer, predominantly Buddhist, constitute close to 90% of total population. Their language is Khmer which belongs to the Mon-Khmer branch of Austro-Asiatic language family. Central Khmer is the official language in Cambodia, as Article 5 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993) states: “The official language and script is Khmer”. Along with Khmer, about 18 other languages are spoken in the country. Those languages include (with populations in brackets): 1) Brao (5,286), 2) Cham (253,100), 3) Chong (5,000), 4) Jarai (15,000), 5) Kaco’/Kachah’ (2,000), 6) Kroal (2,600), 7) Kravet /Kavet (3,012), 8) Kru’ng/Krueng (9,368), 9) Kuy (15,495), 10) Lamam (1,000), 11) Mmong/Bunong (20,000), 12) Pear (1,300), 13) Samre (200), 14) Sa’och (500), 15) Somray (2,000), 16) Stieng (6,059), 17) Suoy (200) and 18) Tampuan/Tampuon (25,000).

Civil war and Khmer Rouge regime destroyed and paralyzed almost all socio-economic infrastructure and human resources. The country fell back to a primitive society. Since the liberation of the country from the genocide regime on January 7, 1979, first of all, the Government of Cambodia has put a lot of effort to restore the socio-economic infrastructure which suffered by the three decades of civil war. The development of human resources is the first priority. Some schools have been repaired and are newly built. The government, at that time, recalled all survivors from the "Pol Pot Regime", who are literate to work as school teachers under the slogan "Literate People Teach Illiterate People". To realize this idea, the government had formulated laws, policies and mechanisms in order to promote and improve the education system in Cambodia.

LAWS AND POLICIES RELATED TO EDUCATION IN CAMBODIA

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (1993) provides equal rights and opportunities to all Cambodian citizens to receive at least formal basic education.

“The State shall protect and upgrade citizens’ rights to quality education at all levels and shall take necessary steps for quality education to reach all citizens.” (ibid, Article 65);

“The State shall establish a comprehensive and standardized education system throughout the country that shall guarantee the principles of educational freedom and equality to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity to earn a living.”(ibid, Article 66);

“The State shall provide primary and secondary education to all citizens in public schools.” (ibid, Article 68);

1 Consultant’s note: In addition to these 18 languages, also Lao, Mandarin Chinese and Vietnamese are spoken in the country (www.ethnologue.org).
2 Source: www.ethnologue.org
“The State shall protect and promote the Khmer language as required.” (ibid, Article 69);

In December 2007, the National Assembly adopted the Education Law. The Article 24 of the Law states that:

“Khmer language shall be the vehicle language and be one of subjects of core curriculum used for instruction of general education program in public schools. The private general education school must have Khmer language as one subject in their curriculum.

The language used by Cambodian learners of minority origin shall be determined by the Prakas of ministries charging for education domain….” (Article 24 of Law on Education promulgated in 2007).

In 2006, the Ministry of Rural Development drafted the National Policy on the Development of ethnic minorities3, some points of which relate to the education for those people. For example, the human resource development shall comply with the real interests and the wishes of minority people. The priority tasks are that literacy programs and non-formal education should be organized in order to strengthen local knowledge, culture and language of ethnic minorities. The literacy textbooks should be bilingual (in both Khmer and minority languages) and orthographies for ethnic minority languages should be created on the basis of Khmer script.

As one of the members of the Collective Committee of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, the Royal Government of Cambodia issued the Sub-Decree (Anukret) No. 84 ANK. BK. dated August 27, 2001 on the creation of the National Committee of Education for All.

The Committee is composed of the representatives of Ministry of Education Youth and Sports, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Planning, Council of Ministers, Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Women Affairs and Veteran, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fishery, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Religion and Cults, and the representatives of the Council for Development of Cambodia. The Committee has duty to develop the Education for All strategies, to draft policies and regulations that could support and ensure the effectiveness in the implementation of the Education for All in Cambodia.

The sub-decree also suggested the Committee to seek cooperation from communities, local and international NGOs, civil society and private sectors to take part in this movement.

In 2004, the Pedagogic Research Department of the MoEYS developed the Policy for Curriculum Development 2005-2009. Some points of the policy are particularly relevant for bilingual education and education for ethnic minorities.

“Schools, local communities, community groups, NGOs and private education providers are expected to develop program that will enrich and broaden the national curriculum” (MoEYS - The policy for Curriculum Development 2005-2009; section 3.3).

“School in partnership with parents, their local community organizations and NGOs, develop and administer a Local Life Skills Program of between 5 to 5 x 45 minutes lessons per week to supplement the national curriculum” (ibid., section 3.4).

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3 Ethnic minorities in this paper do not refer to ethnic Khmer.
“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” (ibid., section 3.19).

The MoEYS established the office of Special Education in the Department of Primary Education. The office has duty in providing equal education to the disable children and the children of ethnic minority groups.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY - TEACHING KHMER LANGUAGE TO ETHNIC MINORITIES BY USING MINORITY LANGUAGES (LEARNERS’ MOTHER TONGUES)

"A child should first learn to read and write in the language spoken at home. When this foundation has been laid he can acquire a full command of mother tongue and other languages; without this acquisition, there is danger that he will never achieve a thorough command of any language." (UNESCO, 1953, in Fasold, 1984, 293).

As a means of communication, the language plays an important role in the society. Through language, the people are able to know the civilization and culture of any nation, their identity and the rhythm of their daily life.

Providing language education to ethnic minorities - who do not speak Khmer in some remote areas of Cambodia is a priority task of the Royal Government of Cambodia. To meet this goal the Government is looking into all possible ways to help ethnic minorities. This is done, for example, by constructing community schools, where the ethnic minority children can learn their minority languages (mother tongue) first, and then they learn to speak, read, and write Khmer. In addition, literacy classes are established, and ethnic minority people are encouraged to attend them, as well as school-aged ethnic minority children are encouraged to attend the community schools. Further, the Government collaborates with international NGOs in orthography development for minority languages and in establishing literacy classes in ethnic minority communities.

Collaboration with NGOs in orthography development for minority languages and literacy classes for highlanders in Rattanakiri and Mondulkiri

In 2002 and 2003 respectively, the MoEYS of Cambodia through the Memorandum of Understanding, authorized the International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) and Care International in Cambodia to run Education Projects in the north-eastern provinces of Mondulkiri and Rattanakiri, where there are many hill-tribes such as Bunong, Tampuan, Krueng, Brao, Kravet, etc.

The objectives of the projects are:

- To encourage literacy and numeracy instruction in Khmer within ethnic communities at the north-eastern provinces. These activities could be expanded to some western provinces.
- To push for orthography development in minority languages based on the Khmer script, including linguistic and anthropological research of other ethnolinguistic groups in order to help them to develop orthographies for their languages.
- To pilot the creation of literacy class in other provinces.
- To use materials and methods of non-formal education to educate and train minority people.
To contribute experience and techniques aiming to achieve the goal of education for all Cambodian population and, especially, for those who cannot speak Khmer and live in the remote areas so that they can be included in the context of Education for All of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and in this context, to take part on the discussion of the effectiveness and the implementation of bilingual education.

ACTIVITIES

To reach the project completion, the MoEYS, UNICEF, International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC) and Care International in Cambodia have to fulfill the following activities:

- To coordinate and cooperate with provincial authorities to run the program including research on minority languages and piloting literacy materials, teacher training and post-literacy for:
  - Training in Khmer (reading and writing);
  - Providing Khmer literacy to minority people;
- To provide necessary technical assistance for literacy programs, firstly within Bunong minority and then to other minorities;
- To provide technical assistance in piloting the learning of Khmer language and mathematics in response to the needs and interests of the hill-tribe communities, and providing materials for teacher training and materials for literacy classes. Those materials should focus on: 1) the training of Khmer language to the minority people who speak Khmer poorly and those who cannot speak Khmer; and 2) providing Khmer literacy classes from basic to advanced levels;
- To conduct field practices, implementation and evaluation of training and teaching of Khmer language for minority communities;
- To provide technical assistance in piloting minority languages (orthography and numerals) and preparing materials for teacher training and for specific minority communities.
- To facilitate in providing documents and information relating to curricula, especially report on studies and surveys) that exist in the MoEYS;
- To dispatch ministry officials to work with ICC and Care International in Cambodia on the condition of cooperation in order to direct and facilitate the relationship with those officials at rural areas through bilateral agreements;
- To facilitate the authorization of the staff, advisors, representatives and officials to conduct field visits for monitoring and evaluation;
- To facilitate and cooperate with provincial authorities on research plans on language, teacher training and the development of pilot literacy materials;
- To conduct research on languages and develop orthographies based on Khmer script for different minority languages;
- To develop materials on “how to speak Khmer” for minority people who speak Khmer poorly or cannot speak Khmer;
- To create the Khmer literacy classes from low to high level; and
- To develop text books in minority languages from basic-level classes to advanced-level classes.

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4 Bilingual education in this paper means a system which uses a minority language (the mother tongue) in instruction first, so that the second language (Khmer) can be acquired.
ACHIEVEMENTS

Ministry of Education Youth and Sport:

- Partnership with UNICEF, ICC and Care International in Cambodia in developing teaching and learning materials, selecting literacy teachers, developing non-formal education curriculum in Bunong, Kreung, Brao, Tampuan and Kravet languages.
- Partnership with Save the Children – Norway in translating students’ Grade 1 text books from Khmer to the Kuy language in order to help Khmer speaking teachers to understand key words of Kuy language that could help them to teach Khmer language to Kuy children in Grade 1 of public schools in province of Preah Vihear.
- To set up a committee that is composed of the representatives from the Pedagogic Research Department, the Department of Non-Formal Education and the Royal Academy of Cambodia. The task of the committee is to provide technical support and advise the ICC and Care International in Cambodia in the bilingual education process and to approve all related teaching and learning materials as well as methodology.
- To Conduct a number of meetings with UNICEF, ICC and Care International in Cambodia on the orthography development of Bunong, Brao, Tampuan, Kreung and Kravet languages based on the Khmer script and orthography.
- To conduct the field trips to Mondulkiri and Rattanakiri provinces in order to visit, monitor and evaluate bilingual literacy classes and giving advice for improvement.
- To correct and approve all literacy manuals in Bunong, Kreung, Brao, Tampuan and Kravet languages.
- To correct and approve the translated texts from Bunong, Kreung, Brao, Tampuan and Keavet languages into Khmer.

ICC and Care International in Cambodia:

- To conduct meetings and workshops in order to discuss how to encourage student involvement in literacy classes.
- To establish the literacy classes operating in the evening.
- To establish bilingual libraries at villages and in the main offices of ICC and Care International in Cambodia.
- To conduct meetings to discuss the problems encountered by both literacy teachers and students.
- To produce and print literacy books.
- To conduct meetings with MoEYS officers in order to correct literacy book for final MoEYS approval.
- To conduct in house training to the teachers of literacy classes.
- To conduct surveys in order to get the opinions of the students and villagers on the literacy classes.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of the education projects using ethnic minority languages in order to acquire the official language in Rattanakiri and Mondulkiri provinces, and experiences from other countries involved in educational activities using the learners’ mother-tongue have demonstrated to nurture interest in education and literacy in both the mother tongue and the national/official language. Providing bilingual literacy and educational options for ethnic minorities of Cambodia may be an
excellent way to increase interest and participation in education, and may be an excellent way to 
promote education quality and to achieve education for all in Cambodia.
ANNEXES

ANNEX I

ICC ACHIEVEMENTS (July to September 2006)

a. **Non-Formal Education**

Teaching and learning material production
- **Kreung:** correcting Kreung book 4 - Completed 25 lessons; pictures for the folktale - Completed 16 pictures and colored 1 picture; checked and corrected materials about digging wells.
- **Brao:** corrected Brao books 4-6; pictures for the folktale - completed 11 pictures; translating materials about digging wells
  - completed 50%; translating material about building latrines - completed 20%
- **Tampuan:** wrote the story about traditional Tampuan wedding; pictures; 11 book covers; translated materials about digging wells; 18 short stories written; 4 books ready for printing
- **Khmer:** pictures for Tampuan reading (TPR) book 1- Completed 79 pictures; correcting the TPR book - Completed 10 lessons; correcting Khmer sections of Krung, Brao and Tampuan books; pictures for story books - completed 6 pictures; one short story written; correcting Khmer- Brao dictionary; translating material about addictive drugs.

b. **Literacy classes**

- Brao: 2 classes that study Brao book 7; two classes that study Khmer book 1; four classes that study Khmer books 3 and 4.
- Krung: 7 classes that study Khmer book 1; 4 classes that study Khmer books 3 and 4.
- Tampuan: There are 4 classes that study Tampuan book 5 and math book 1; two classes that study the Khmer books 3 and 4.
- Women's numeracy groups in 4 villages studying numbers 70-1000, using scales and money.

c. **Village libraries**

- Bilingual library opened in the main ICC office (50 people have been issued with library cards, 40 of whom have already borrowed books; 80 books in all have been borrowed)
  - Village libraries have been monitored and are functioning well.

d. **Testing**

- Brao: 2 villages were tested on Brao books 6 and 7.
- Krung: 1 village was tested on Krung book 6; five villages were tested on Khmer book 1; one village tested on Khmer book 3.
- Khmer: test paper for Math written

e. **Monitoring**

- All classes monitored
**Teacher training**

- Tampuan: teacher training book 5 and Math book 1 (3 sessions) - 8 teachers and 1 monitor participated, topics covered: how to teach the box lesson, story lesson, using scales, measuring length by the modern and tradition ways.

- Brao: Training in Mathematics to Brao teacher - 14 students (including 2 females) participated, topics covered: addition, subtraction, addition and multiplication.

(Source: ICC Quarterly Report during July to September 2006)
ANNEX II

HIGHLAND CHILDREN’S EDUCATION PROJECT (HCEP) OF CARE CAMBODIA

Central to the HCEP is the ideal of community schools - schools where the community is largely responsible for governance and day-to-day operations. The community 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 school are run by Community Board – 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.

The Project commenced in January 2002 with a full year being necessary to establish the schools rather than the six months initially envisaged. The preparations included finalizing negotiations with the MoEYS and signing a memorandum of understanding; setting up the office and Project infrastructure; recruiting staff; running training programs for the teacher trainers; the community teachers; the curriculum developers and the community support workers; establishing and training the community school boards and through them mobilizing the communities to construct their schools; recruiting the community teachers; devising and delivering the teacher training pre-service curriculum; preparing the school curriculum and resource materials in two vernacular languages; negotiating with the Ministry for approval to use the orthographies for the Tampuen and Kreung based on Khmer scripts.

In January 2003 the Project opened schools in six remote communities in Ratanakiri with a total enrolment of 278 students all at the Grade 1 level, 45% of who were girls. By February 2007 the schools had a total enrolment of 776 (420 girls) and were staffed by 42 locally recruited community teachers. In 2007 Grades 1 to 3 are now offered. The schools are all bilingual with initial literacy being developed in one of two vernacular languages, Tampuen or Kreung, with the national language, Khmer, being taught orally in the first year then phased in over the ensuing years as both the language of instruction and as a subject within the curriculum. The Project adapts the state primary curriculum to the local context incorporating life-skills that draw upon the knowledge and culture of community people.

The table as below shows the original model for bilingual education for Kreung and Tampuen minorities in Rattanakiri province of Cambodia.

| Grade 1 | Vernacular language, 80% (15% math, 35% social studies, 30% language) | Khmer language, 20% [oral only] |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Grade 2 | Vernacular language 60% (35% social studies, 25% language) | Khmer language, 40% (15% math, 25% language) |
| Grade 3 | Vernacular language, 30% (15% social studies, 15% language) | Khmer language, 70% (15% math, 10% social studies, 45% language) |
| Grade 4 | Khmer language 100% | (Source: CARE-Highland Community Education Program-October 2007) |
Education in Cambodia is controlled by the state through the Ministry of Education in a national level and by the Department of Education at the provincial level. The Constitution of Cambodia establishes that the state shall protect and upgrade citizen's rights to quality education at all levels, guaranteeing that all citizens have equal opportunity to earn a living (Article 66). The state shall adopt an education program "according to the principle of modern pedagogy including technology and foreign The indigenous ethnic minorities of Cambodia still maintain their traditional beliefs whereas the nonaboriginal ethnic minorities which include immigrants and descendants adopted the Khmer culture and language. Ethnic Groups In Cambodia. Rank. Ethnic Group. Share of Population of Cambodia. 1. Khmer. girls, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups will be introduced. The second priority policy is to increase the quality and efficiency of the education services. A major proposal is to increase teacher remuneration and introduce quality oriented priority. The education system in Cambodia. The ministry has focused on the target groups that need the most assistance for them to have access to education: students from poor families, girls, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups. Strategies to achieve equitable access to education such as increasing the schoolâ€™s operational budgets for schools, deploying more.