



1. Project Data

Project ID P144715	Project Name Cambodia GPE Education Support Project	
Country Cambodia	Practice Area(Lead) Education	
L/C/TF Number(s) TF-17490	Closing Date (Original) 31-Jul-2017	Total Project Cost (USD) 38,500,000.00
Bank Approval Date 05-May-2014	Closing Date (Actual) 31-Jul-2017	
	IBRD/IDA (USD)	Grants (USD)
Original Commitment	38,500,000.00	38,500,000.00
Revised Commitment	38,500,000.00	38,500,000.00
Actual	38,500,000.00	38,500,000.00

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The Project Development Objective (PDO), as cited on page 4 of the Grant Agreement, was consistently stated in both the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) and the Implementation Completion Report (ICR) as follows:

- The objectives of the Project are to assist the Recipient to: (i) expand access to early childhood education (ECE) for 3-5 year olds; and (ii) contribute to improved access to and quality of basic education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.



For the purposes of this exercise, IEG assesses the achievement of the PDO based on the following three objectives:

1. to expand access to ECE for 3-5 year olds;
2. to contribute to improved access to basic education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds;
3. to contribute to improved quality of basic education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A formal restructuring took place on November 30, 2016 to make revisions to the second PDO indicator (proportion of children able to read 45-60 words per minute), and to an intermediate indicator (reflecting a decision to use a different instrument to rate ECE services, as the proprietary instrument originally intended was too expensive). Changes in the baseline and endline targets for the second PDO indicator were made to reflect more accurate and up-to-date measures appropriate to the districts in which the project operated (170 of the 197 districts in Cambodia), noting that the original baseline and target were set vis-à-vis national level data (an error at project preparation). The baseline was lowered (from 90% to 51.5%), but the percentage change targeted was higher (from 7.7% to 29% over baseline). Because the change had no material impact on the PDO or the theory of change, and because the level of aspired change was, in fact, greater following restructuring, there is no requirement for a split evaluation. IEG notes that the ICR was assessed on the same basis (no split), but the ICR team did conduct a split evaluation as a technical exercise that was presented in the ICR Annexes. The exercise arrived at the same ratings.

b. Were the project objectives/key associated outcome targets revised during implementation?

Yes

Did the Board approve the revised objectives/key associated outcome targets?

Yes

Date of Board Approval

15-Nov-2016

c. Will a split evaluation be undertaken?

No

d. Components

Component 1: Improving the Access and Educational Experience of Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Students (US\$ 23.8 million at appraisal, US\$ 21.5 million actual)

Sub-component 1.1: Expanding Access to Early Childhood Care and Development was intended to increase access to ECE and care for disadvantaged 3-5 year olds throughout the country by improving



current services to meet service standards, expanding new services with standards, and increasing access in rural and remote areas without ECE services. The sub-component's main activities were to include: (a) the construction of approximately 100 school buildings including formal pre-school and primary school classrooms and 500 community-based ECE pre-school classrooms; (b) the establishment of approximately 500 home-based pre-schools and 1,000 community-based ECE pre-schools; (c) the provision of intensive training for ECE national trainers; (d) the provision of training to "core and lead parents," as well as support for the country's 24 national ECE resource centers; (e) the provision of teaching and learning materials for new and existing community-based and home-based programs, and small kits of goods to "core and lead parents"; (f) the delivery of a communication campaign aimed at increasing parents' awareness about the benefits of pre-school; and (g) the provision of parental education to pregnant mothers and mothers of children under two years old.

Sub-component 1.2: Increasing Access to Basic Education Services was intended to increase access to basic education services in rural and remote areas, including for disadvantaged children and children with disabilities. The main activities planned under this sub-component were: (a) expanding Cambodia's successful primary and secondary scholarship program for poor and disadvantaged students; and (b) providing vision and hearing support to students who have poor vision and hearing through teacher training on disability screening, and an expansion of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports' (MoEYS's) on-going school health program.

Component 2: Benchmarking Student Competencies (US\$ 4.3 million at appraisal, US\$ 5.2 million actual)

Sub-component 2.1: Implementing Nationwide Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Assessments (EGRA and EGMA) sought to finance the development and provision of textbooks for reading and mathematics, as well as training to school administrators and teachers in preparation for the nationwide administration of the assessment tests. Specific activities were to include: (a) administering the assessment tests to primary school students; (b) scoring and grading the assessment tests; (c) data capturing and entry; (d) quality control mechanisms of the results; and (e) using the results of the assessments to support system-wide pedagogical and curricular improvement through the wide dissemination of results at various fora with high-level policy makers.

Sub-component 2.2: Supporting National Assessment was to provide technical support to the Education Quality Assurance Department related to the national assessments for grades 3, 6, 8 and 11, and support for the annual review of EGRA and EGMA results.

Component 3: Improving Cambodia's Teaching Force (US\$ 2.5 million at appraisal, US\$ 1.8 million actual)

Sub-component 3.1: Improving Pedagogical Training sought to provide in-service Inclusive Education training to support teachers in improving classroom management practices and teaching methodologies for those with disabilities to help foster individualized instruction. Additionally, the EGRA training supported by the project was to focus on improving phonemic awareness and letter recognition among students.



Sub-component 3.2: Strengthening School Leadership sought to support the improvement of academic leadership of school principals. The sub-component was to provide in-service training and hands-on support to school principals to help them provide more effective management of and academic direction to teachers. The training was also to focus on helping school directors improve their school development planning and assessment systems.

Component 4: System Strengthening and Monitoring and Evaluation (US\$ 7.9 million at appraisal, US\$ 9.9 million actual)

Subcomponent 4.1: Strengthening System Management was to include: (a) the construction of 20 District Education Offices; (b) training to central, provincial, and district education officials as well as School Support Committee members to develop and implement a unified early childhood and primary education sub-sector monitoring system; (c) technical assistance and support to district education offices, particularly those in rural areas, to enable them to provide effective academic management support to schools; (d) semester and annual sub-sector reviews and planning; (e) development of a new student tracking system to replace the existing paper-based student record keeping practice; and (f) capacity building to MoEYS staff for financial management (including public financial management reform), procurement, and internal audit.

Sub-component 4.2: Project Management and Monitoring and Evaluation was to cover the management of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) grant, including external audit and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the progress and outcomes of the project. In addition, this sub-component was to provide necessary equipment for all MoEYS departments.

e. Comments on Project Cost, Financing, Borrower Contribution, and Dates

Project Cost: Project cost at appraisal was projected at US\$38.5 million, distributed as follows: component 1, 62% (US\$ 23.8m); component 2, 11% (US\$ 4.3m); component 3, 6% (US\$ 2.5m); and component 4, 21.5% (US\$ 7.9m). At project close, actual cost was on target (US\$38.5 million), with relatively little variation from projected cost at component level. There was no borrower contribution planned or materializing over the life of the project.

Financing: Funding was provided in full through the GPE (TF-17490) as a Program Implementation Grant. The grant, US\$38.5 million, was drawn down and disbursed in full.

Borrower Contribution: As above, there was no contribution from the borrower.

Dates: The Bank was selected by the Government of Cambodia to be the supervising entity for the grant and to assist the MoEYS in the preparation of the GPE application. The application was prepared in nine months and received GPE board approval August 30, 2013, and approval by the World Bank Board on May 5, 2014. The three-year grant agreement (a GPE requirement) became effective when signed on May 16, 2014 by the Government of Cambodia and the World Bank (acting as the supervising entity). The project followed both World Bank and GPE guidelines for preparation and implementation. There was no



mid-term review, and the project closed, as planned, July 31, 2017. There was one restructuring on November 30, 2016. At that stage, US\$ 31.53 million had been drawn down, almost 82 percent of the total available budget (US\$ 38.5m). The restructuring involved modification of the results framework, but these changes had no material effect on the PDO or the timing of project implementation or progress.

3. Relevance of Objectives

Rationale

The objectives were highly relevant at inception and continued to be so at project close.

The PAD elaborated on sustained and robust economic growth in Cambodia but noted that Cambodia continued to be one of the least developed countries in Southeast Asia (about 24 percent of Cambodian citizens lived below the poverty line in 2014). The PAD also stated that the government recognized the key role of education in national development and had developed Education Strategic Plans that focused on two key issues: the achievement of universal access to high quality basic education; and the promotion of equity in educational opportunities to increase income and employment. Over the preceding 20 years, the country had achieved improvements in net enrollments at primary and secondary levels, including improvements in the Gender Parity Index (GPI); in 2011/2012 the GPI for net enrollment was 0.99 at primary level, 1.13 in lower secondary, and 1.05 in upper secondary. Positive achievements had also occurred in the ECE enrollment rate for 5 year old children (from 24.6% in 2004 to 56.5% in 2012). In addition to improving access, the government worked to raise educational quality through national assessments. The MoEYS had stated its aim to make national assessments an annual exercise.

These improvements were supported by the GPE precursor, Cambodia's Education for All Fast-Track Initiative (EFA-FTI) Project (2008-2012), a US\$ 57.4 million grant that aimed to: (a) to increase the number of young Cambodians in disadvantaged communes who benefit from ECE through the construction of new formal pre-school classrooms as well as the development of new ECE interventions; (b) to promote universal primary completion through the construction of new primary classrooms and provision of demand-side incentives, while promoting Child Friendly Schooling initiatives to enhance educational quality and strengthening teacher professional capacity; and (c) to enable decentralized educational management and monitoring by District Offices of Education, Provincial Offices of Education, and central MoEYS staff. Key achievements associated with these efforts included improvement of the primary completion rate from 47 percent in 2004 to 83 percent in 2010, enhanced reading literacy, and acceptance of the development-relevance of ECE.

However, despite progress in expanding access and improving the quality of its basic education, the PAD referenced fundamental gaps in provision, including lack of access to ECE for 77.5% of Cambodia's 3-4 year-olds, and a lack of information on disparities of those who do have access in terms of child development outcomes (weight, height, and social/emotional and cognitive development) to gauge the efficacy, strengths, and weaknesses of the system. The PAD also identified ongoing disparities in access and quality between regions, income groups, and males and females. In addition, the PAD identified other challenges including



variability in the quality of teaching in primary and secondary schools, particularly in rural areas.

In addition to identifying challenges of access, learning, assessment, and teaching, the PAD identified the need for a greater volume of resources (both current and capital) to support deeper impact, noting reduction in recurrent expenditure on education due to fiscal constraints (from 19.2% of the national budget in 2007 to 16% in 2013), and also noting that the majority of spending on education (about 75 percent) had been directed toward recurrent costs. Finally, the PAD referred to poor budget planning that had resulted in underspending despite need. As such, budget formulation and execution and institutional capacity were identified as serious issues of concern.

The objectives of the project continue to be relevant going forward. For example, building human assets to facilitate economic mobility and shared prosperity is identified in the Strategic Country Diagnostic (SCD) for Cambodia (2017). The SCD noted that Cambodia can improve the quality of learning and increase educational attainment to help increase the chances of the poor and economically vulnerable to attain economic security. Investing in the early years of children and increasing the transition to and completion of high-quality secondary and tertiary education and technical/vocational education and training were identified as high priorities. In that regard, the SCD notes that, although net enrollment in primary education had increased significantly over time, lower secondary education completion rates (43 percent in 2013) remained significantly below the average for lower middle-income economies (71 percent), and only 35.9 percent of 3-5 year olds were enrolled in ECE during the 2014-2015 academic year. The 2016 Country Engagement Note (CEN) stated that Early Grade Reading tests in school year 2014-2015 showed that only 49 percent of Grade 3 children read at the national standard, while the measure at Grade 6 remained largely unchanged at 50 percent. The CEN noted momentum towards improvement in financial management in the sector and to support teacher training, partly driven by the GPE project, but also stated that to complement the GPE-funded basic education project, the government had requested Bank funding to improve outcomes in lower secondary education.

Furthermore, in each of its Education Strategy Papers (ESP), the Government of Cambodia has adopted a set of Core Breakthrough Indicators to help prioritize the most strategic interventions and better address remaining challenges. The most recent ESP (2014-2018) reflected the country's stronger focus on equity issues and further reduction of existing disparities. Each PDO indicator for this project was designed to contribute to the achievement of Cambodia's long-term ESP Core Breakthrough Indicators.

Rating
High

4. Achievement of Objectives (Efficacy)

Objective 1

Objective

Expand access to early childhood education for 3-5 year olds



Rationale

The project's logic / theory of change was robust. The project objective was to contribute to improved access and quality of early childhood and basic education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Assuming the realization of project objectives, the project would have delivered outcomes associated with increased enrollment and reduced dropout rates as well as improved teaching and learning (measured through observable teaching practices and specific learning outcomes). In addressing ECE, the project focused on the demand side (e.g., parental education and pre-school resource centers), on the supply side (construction of schools in targeted disadvantaged areas), and on quality assurance (e.g., teacher training, systematic assessment). The project also paid due attention to sustainability through, as mentioned, teacher training, but also through its focus on developing leadership and management capacity. The comprehensive approach involved many moving parts but represented an appropriate design to address educational disadvantage; creating school places alone may have increased enrollment but would be less likely to deliver enhanced learning outcomes.

Outputs

- 76 formal pre-schools were constructed by the project on the premises of existing primary schools in rural/remote areas. This did not achieve the planned number of 100, but the ICR (Annex 5) stated that the number of formal pre-schools to be constructed was reduced to 70 during preparation. 1,000 community-based pre-schools and 500 new home-based ECE programs were established.
- 125,337 children aged 3-5 were reached by project-supported ECE services, exceeding the target of 32,500. 3,861 community pre-school teachers and core parents were reached by training and materials supported by the project, exceeding the target of 1,850. 2,532 formal pre-school teachers, 128 pre-school resource center teachers, and 346 sub-national trainers were trained. The ICR noted that the ECE target indicators were for this project only, but that the budget also allowed for support to children aged 3-5 who were enrolled in the Community Pre-School and Home Based Care Programs, as well as core parents and pre-school teachers, that had been supported under the precursor project. This eventuality was foreseen in the PAD (Annex 2, para 10).

Outcomes

The key outcome indicator for this objective was "enrollment ratio of children aged 5 in the urban and rural districts where 100 new formal and 1,000 new community-based pre-school facilities are provided (disaggregated)."

The ICR commented on some confusion around two different wordings for this indicator in project documentation. One version (in the final PAD, dated March 3, 2014) was as above, referencing children aged 5. A near-final PAD, dated January 6, 2014, used the following wording: "enrollment ratio of children aged 3-5 in the urban and rural districts where new 100 formal and 1,000 community based pre-school facilities are provided." Because of this confusion, data for 3-5 year-olds was reported in the Implementation Status Reports as well as in the client's ICR (July 2017). Moreover, the baseline and target used national



level data for 3-5 year-olds because district level data was not available at the time. To deal with this, the ICR provided data at the national level for five-year-old children, for five-year-old children in the project-supported areas, and for 3-5 year old children in the project-supported areas.

At the national level, enrollment for five-year-old children increased from a baseline of 56.49% to 66.3% as of July 2017, exceeding the target of 59.49%. Enrollment for five-year-old girls increased from 49.50% to 65.50% as of July 2017, exceeding the target of 51.50%.

The following are presented as output indicators in the ICR but are included here as outcome indicators:

In project districts, the initial and final average enrollment ratio for children aged 3-5 years was, respectively, 27.5 and 31.0, representing a 3.5 percentage point increase across that age range in project districts. The ICR stated that the enrollment rate increase was greater in the project districts than in non-project districts by about 20 percent, suggesting that the project likely had a role in the increased enrollment.

The enrollment ratio of children aged 5 in project districts increased from a baseline of a ratio of 56.49 to 67.98 as of June 2017, not reaching the target ratio of 71.00.

The enrollment ratio of girls aged 5 in project districts increased from a baseline of 53.50 to 69.36, exceeding the target of 67.20. The ICR stated that the enrollment of girls in project districts increased at twice the rate as in the non-project districts. The ICR also stated there were no other ECE-related projects in Cambodia and, as such, the increases were likely, at least in part, to be attributable to the project.

Given the success in enrolling girls in project districts, there was no discussion in the ICR about the underperformance of boys' enrollment (if the overall target was not met and the target for girls was exceeded, then non-performance must have related solely to boys' enrollment).

Rating

Substantial

Objective 2

Objective

Contribute to improved access to basic education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds

Rationale

Targets associated with the PDO indicator (enrollment in lower secondary level) were realized and exceeded for all students as well as for female students. All intermediate targets were at least met, and some were exceeded. In some instances (e.g., number of teachers completing training on disability screening), efficiencies were achieved while delivering in excess of targets.

Outputs



- 33 primary schools were constructed.
- 142,655 students received project-financed scholarships, exceeding the target of 133,000.
- 5,640 teachers completed training on disability screening, exceeding the target of 2,000. The ICR indicated that training was conducted in schools, which facilitated greater levels of attendance given the low per diem.
- The average age of students entering grade 1 decreased from a baseline of 6.9 years to 6.8 years by project close, achieving the target.
- 20 District Offices of Education were constructed, achieving the target.
- 3,000 schools received first aid kits and manuals.

Outcomes

The key outcome indicator for this objective was "lower secondary enrollment rate (disaggregated by gender)." The lower secondary enrollment rate for males increased from a baseline of 35.1 to 41.9 by project close, far exceeding the target of 37.1. The rate for females increased from 37.4 to 46.4, far exceeding the target of 38.1.

In addition, the dropout rate of scholarship recipients was significantly lower than the national average, i.e., 9.4 percent at the national level compared to 2.0 percent for scholarship recipients in the project districts during 2014-2015. The ICR did not provide a gender breakdown for scholarship recipients but did note that substantial decreases in dropout rates for the most disadvantaged students played an important part in increasing the lower secondary enrollment rate.

Rating

High

Objective 3

Objective

Contribute to improved quality of basic education, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds

Rationale

One of the relevant PDO indicators (percentage of primary teachers applying effective EGRA teaching methods as defined by classroom observation criteria) was met by the end of the project, and all intermediate / output targets were achieved. The other relevant PDO indicator (percentage of students in Grade 3 reaching 45-60 words per minute on the EGRA) was not met at the point of the final Implementation Status Report, but endline data (after project close) indicates that it was ultimately met.

Outputs



- The EGMA was rolled out in 5 provinces as planned.
- 66% of formal pre-schools and 35% of community-based pre-schools were rated as level 5 overall on the adjusted early childhood education environment indicators through classroom-observation evaluation, exceeding the target of 30%.
- A system for learning assessment at the primary level was put in place and its utility established. National Assessments for grades 3, 6, and 8 were implemented (once during the project period for each grade), and the results were published.
- 2,474 principals completed leadership training, exceeding the target of 1,600. This was in part achieved through additional funding made available by the Capacity Development Partnership Fund to support expansion of the training.
- 32,719 teachers were recruited or trained, surpassing the target of 6,000. The ICR noted that the original wording of this indicator in the PAD was “number of additional qualified primary teachers resulting from project interventions,” but that this core sector indicator was revised in November 2016 to “teachers recruited or trained,” although the baseline and end target remained the same.
- Across the ECE and primary levels, an average of 18.5 provinces implemented unified sub-sector planning and monitoring systems, exceeding the target of 12. (The number reported was the average across primary education and ECE.)

Outcomes

There were two PDO outcome indicators relevant to this objective. The first key indicator, "percentage of students in Grade 3 reaching 45-60 words per minute on the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)," rose from a baseline of 51.5% to 68% (according to data generated after project close), surpassing the target of 66.5%. The second key performance indicator, "percentage of primary teachers applying effective EGRA teaching methods as defined by classroom observation," was achieved at 63%, well above the target of 50%.

The EGRA component was designed based on a rigorous evaluation conducted before the project. Initial results of the EGRA tests in 2010 and 2012 showed that changing the way that reading is taught had large and measurable effects on reading skills. The Bank provided quality control of these results through an ex-post analysis. The Bank was able to replicate most of the findings, thus showing that the practices improved literacy and reading with tangible, observable results. EGRA was conducted to assess the reading speed of Grades 1, 2, 3 and 6 with a total of 1,440 students in the 36 target schools of the six target provinces (i.e., Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Mondulkyri, Kandal, Preah Vihear and Battambang) where Grade 2 teachers had received training on the EGRA methodology during the first year of the project. The revised baseline, which used the test results of the 2015 end-of-year test conducted with 350 randomly selected schools in the country, indicated that the reading fluency of Grade 3 students was 51.5%. For monitoring support, testing, and assessment, 358 schools in 17 districts of seven provinces were targeted. The first-year test results from the target schools showed that 64% of children in Grade 3 could read with understanding at 45-60 words per minute, increasing to 68% for the final-year results, against a project target of 66.5%.



Rating
Substantial

Rationale

The project's interventions were logically connected to its intended outcomes. In support of the attribution of results to the project, the ICR usefully noted that there were no other ECE-related projects in Cambodia during the project period and, as referenced elsewhere, the project covered 170 of the country's 197 provinces and 84% of Cambodia's ECE age children. Output and outcome targets were met and, in many cases, exceeded. With one objective highly achieved and two substantially achieved, overall Efficacy is rated Substantial.

Overall Efficacy Rating

Substantial

5. Efficiency

The ICR made a strong effort to identify efficiencies associated with the project. In that regard, the ICR heralded the contribution of the community-based construction model to project efficiency and effectiveness. It is notable that the community-based approach came about only because bids received to undertake the more conventional approach to building demonstrated that school construction costs were higher than originally budgeted. The choice faced by the project managers was to find another way, or to build fewer schools than planned. In adopting the community-based approach, unit costs dropped, schools were completed in a more timely fashion, and quality control was more effective (given local buy-in), resulting in a better product.

The project team explained that a time lag in switching from the planned to the community-based approach delayed building completion, ultimately impacting the timing of indicators on enrollment. The project closed in July 2017, but targeted enrollment was reached at the start of the new school year, i.e. November 2017. This lag is reflected in project status reports, where progress towards Development Outcome and Implementation Progress are rated Moderately Satisfactory for all five reports between May 2015 to the final reports in June 2017.

The ICR undertook a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) to evaluate the net economic benefits and internal rates of return (IRR) of the expansion of the ECE sub-component of the project, working from the findings of research (Naudeau et al., 2010) concerning the beneficial effect (particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds) of quality ECE and development interventions on cognitive ability, years of schooling attained, and subsequent earnings. The analysis conducted for the ICR found the net present value (NPV) of the ECE expansion component to be estimated at US\$ 1,171.6 million under the baseline scenario (applying a real discount rate of 5% across 2.2 years of schooling), and corresponding IRR of 14.17%. Three other



cases were also analyzed in sensitivity testing. In the worst case scenario, where the ICR team assumed that the improvement in learning outcomes turned out to be much lower, at only 0.5 years of secondary schooling, the NPV was reduced to US\$ 64.8 million and the IRR to 6% (which is still greater than the 5% real cost of capital). The ICR concluded that the CBA exercise demonstrated substantial economic benefits accruing from the ECE component of the project.

The ICR also presented a CBA for the scholarships aspect of the project. Preliminary evidence suggested that the scholarships resulted in a decline in dropout rates for the disadvantaged recipients of the scholarship, from 55% to around 25%. The ICR noted, given the conservative assumptions employed for the baseline scenario, that the sub-component was economically viable. The NPV was estimated at US\$ 956.6 million, with an IRR of 8.7% (noting a discount rate of 5%).

The ICR ran two other cases as part of its sensitivity analysis. In Case 2, the team assumed that the strength of externalities value was 4.5%, or half that of the estimated 9% baseline level, which resulted in a decrease in the NPV to US\$ 70.7 million, and the IRR to 5.3%. In the most pessimistic Case 3 and final scenario, the team assumed that there were no human capital externalities arising from higher educational attainment of disadvantaged students, in which case the NPV declined to US\$ 710.6 million, with an IRR of 1.5%.

The ICR (para 36) stated that the project targeted children "from disadvantaged communities," and 19.2% of community pre-schools and 12.8% of formal pre-schools were constructed in ethnic minority communities. The project's targeting mechanism, however, was not made clear in the ICR, raising questions about allocative efficiency. The ICR also provided examples of minor shortcomings in implementation inefficiency, including delays in restructuring due to complex procedures in GPE-funded projects (para 66), and issues related to high turnover of core parents and meeting places (para 63).

Efficiency Rating
Substantial

a. If available, enter the Economic Rate of Return (ERR) and/or Financial Rate of Return (FRR) at appraisal and the re-estimated value at evaluation:

	Rate Available?	Point value (%)	*Coverage/Scope (%)
Appraisal		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable
ICR Estimate		0	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Not Applicable

* Refers to percent of total project cost for which ERR/FRR was calculated.

6. Outcome



The relevance of the PDO is rated **high**, as the project directly engaged with critical aspects of public policy, and the objective remain highly aligned with government and Bank strategy. Efficacy is rated **substantial**, reflecting high achievement of Objective 2 and substantial achievement of Objectives 1 and 3, with the majority of intermediate and outcome targets met or exceeded. Efficiency is rated **substantial**, reflecting additional outputs achieved through innovative approaches (e.g., community-based building resulting in savings against traditional procurement models, and in-school training saving on per diem costs) as well as calculated returns to investment in ECE and in the scholarship scheme. These ratings reflect only minor shortcomings in the project's preparation and implementation, resulting in an Outcome rating of Satisfactory.

a. Outcome Rating
Satisfactory

7. Risk to Development Outcome

The ECE agenda and the broader enhancement of educational outcomes form a fundamental part of the development agenda of the Government of Cambodia; the ICR stated that ECE budgets have been increased since project close. The project had strong advocacy and ownership through the MoEYS, which has institutionalized many of the project activities including, for example, the scholarship program, which was taken over and expanded by government after one year of project activity. The EGRA program is also institutionalized and is being spread out across the country. The M&E unit established within MoEYS under the program remains, and there is a commitment to integrating M&E into programs that follow the standards and process of the project's framework. The ICR was candid in identifying key risks gleaned during the ICR mission, including the challenge of meeting ever-increasing demand for ECE with quality pre-school teachers and adequate teaching and learning materials/equipment and classrooms; reaching disadvantaged children in remote areas with limited transportation; meeting the need for school director training despite reduced funding following project completion; and ensuring scholarships for grades 4-6 recipients after their transition to grades 7-9 (there is currently no guarantee such students will be awarded scholarships in grades 7-9). However, given the level of government commitment, the overall risks are limited.

8. Assessment of Bank Performance

a. Quality-at-Entry

The project was prepared quickly to take advantage of available opportunity. Despite the speed of design, project objectives were aligned with the Bank's country strategy and fundamentally connected with national education policy and strategy in Cambodia. The project had a robust theory of change. The design was elaborate, reflecting lessons learned such as those from a contemporary World Bank policy note that presented the results from an evaluation of three large-scale ECE programs that had moved beyond an initial pilot phase. The authors of that paper (Bouguen, Filmer, Macours, and Naudeau, 2012) recommended that future engagement adopt a multi-faceted approach with a strong emphasis on ensuring implementation



(e.g., address demand-side constraints, such as implementing communication campaigns aimed at increasing parents' awareness about the benefits of pre-school, reviewing the content and relevance of the preschool curriculum for the 3-5 year old target population, and raising monthly teacher wages and ensuring their regular payment). The PDO was clearly stated, and the key indicators were appropriate. The overall risk rating in the PAD (p. 19) was "moderate," with capacity at the MoEYS considered the most pressing risk, although MoEYS' familiarity with the financing modality, and its involvement in the earlier EFA-FTI grant in Cambodia, were considered positive. The project drew on institutional and implementation arrangements established in its previous operation, e.g. the Project Management Committee (high level committee established by the MoEYS) and Project Management Team (led by a Secretary of State and comprised of Directors General and directors of various departments of the MoEYS). This experience and lineage enabled rapid approval of strategic directions and facilitated intra- and inter-departmental collaboration.

However, at the preparation stage, there were inconsistencies in project documentation that ultimately led to the restructuring referenced elsewhere in this review. In addition, certain baseline and target values for intermediate indicators were set with reference to this specific project, although it was anticipated that the activity (and therefore the results) would also cover children enrolled in other programs. As such, relevant baseline and target values for some intermediate indicators had little meaning. It was also the case that the initially planned instrument for rating ECE services – the ECERS-R – was proprietary and considered to be too expensive to use, and a different instrument had to be sourced.

Quality-at-Entry Rating Moderately Satisfactory

b. Quality of supervision

In line with lessons learned and taken into account by the team, the project team maintained a close relationship with the MoEYS and was actively involved in supporting project implementation. The team conducted regular supervision missions and consistently reported on financial management and procurement progress. The Bank team also worked with the Project Management Unit team to build capacity. The ICR (para 65) noted that "once community construction was fully adopted by the MoEYS, the [Bank] team provided technical support to ensure quality site supervision and to build an improved monitoring mechanism for ensuring on-time mobilization of sufficient skilled labor in each community."

The Bank team took the initiative to restructure the project, although the process ran into bureaucratic challenges associated with trying to accommodate different systems (i.e., government, GPE, and Bank). Also, due to the issues arising with baseline and target setting as referenced in Section 8a, data reporting challenges arose, although the restructuring addressed these. That said, IEG notes that the restructuring was approved only seven months before project close and at a point when a large majority (US\$ 31.53 million) of the available budget had been drawn down. In addition, no mid-term review was conducted; such an exercise may have promoted earlier intervention.

Quality of Supervision Rating Moderately Satisfactory



Overall Bank Performance Rating

Moderately Satisfactory

9. M&E Design, Implementation, & Utilization

a. M&E Design

The PAD (p. 13) noted that MoEYS would execute the project (including M&E), and that implementation arrangements would build on the previous experience of the Ministry in project implementation with the World Bank-financed Cambodia Education Sector Support Project and the EFA-FTI Grant. The development of M&E capabilities was central to the project's design. Component 4 of the project sought, *inter alia*, to "support the enhancement of early childhood and primary education sub-sector results-based management under the Public Financial Management Reform Program" (PAD, p. 13). This was to involve strengthening system management (e.g., construction of District Education Offices; training for central, provincial, and district education officials and others to develop and implement a unified early childhood and primary education sub-sector monitoring system; development of a new student tracking system to replace the existing paper-based student record keeping practice; etc.). An M&E unit was established within MoEYS. The program aimed to improve government reporting mechanisms on the quality of preschools as well as to report accurately on enrollments and attendance. The ECE services system aimed to measure the level of services at the school level. On the other hand, and as noted elsewhere in this review, despite overall sound design and strong ambition, two PDO indicators had initial baseline data mistakes that presented challenges for data collection during the project cycle.

b. M&E Implementation

The ICR reported that challenges were encountered in attempts to root M&E activities in the system; however, these were ultimately overcome by the third and final year of the project. The new M&E unit developed capacity as the project matured and established the now successful ECE M&E framework. The EGRA system for measuring literacy was used to inform policy regarding learning outcomes and to inform the content of the teacher training program. Data was collected and reported on a gender-disaggregated basis. Challenges regarding the definition of indicators and associated data collection were ultimately overcome via project restructuring. The shift from the proprietary ECERS-R system to a less expensive model worked out, as the new model functioned well and produced data that assisted understanding of what interventions did and did not work.

c. M&E Utilization

The project-level experience of the Ministry, as well as the support provided by the Bank based on a close working relationship, meant that the MoEYS used the M&E data in informing program development and policy direction. For example, based on the success of the scholarship innovation, the Ministry adopted the approach at the national level and injected additional funding into it. The demonstrated success of the ECE (as supported by M&E) has also resulted in significant additional demand and investment of exchequer



resources. The M&E results also helped the government to prioritize spending on improved quality, as well as on better targeting of program resources. The government observed that the project has produced an efficient, effective mechanism for school, district, and provincial offices to measure their own performance and prepare annual plans with realistic targets based on actual performance, and that it also has enabled central-level overview and identification of trends and more focused distribution of scarce resources where they are most needed.

M&E Quality Rating

Substantial

10. Other Issues

a. Safeguards

Social: The World Bank's safeguard policy OP 4.10 on Indigenous Peoples (IPs) was triggered because some identified potential project areas were inhabited by IPs. A Social Assessment was conducted in March 2013 which showed support from the communities for the implementation of the project. An Indigenous Peoples Planning Framework (IPPF) was prepared and disclosed on August 11, 2013 on the MoEYS website and on August 22, 2013 via InfoShop. The PAD (pg. 22) noted that the IPPF was designed to guide a social safeguards specialist who would be hired under the Project Management Committee. The specialist was to be required, among other responsibilities, to hold a half-day public consultative meeting prior to the appraisal of each activity that would involve civil works. The PAD noted that there would be no acquisition of land under the project, no relocation or loss of shelter, no loss of assets or access to assets, and no loss of income sources or means of livelihood, and as such, the Bank's OP 4.12 on Involuntary Resettlement was not triggered. The ICR noted the following results relevant to IPs: 96 (19.2%) community pre-schools out of a total of 500 were constructed in ethnic minority communities; 9 (12.8%) of the 73 formal pre-schools constructed were located in ethnic minority communities; 120 (4.8%) school directors who attended the school director training program were from schools serving ethnic minority communities; 62 (5%) community pre-school teachers trained were from ethnic minority communities; and 4.5% of the teachers who were applying effective EGRA teaching methods and 6% of the students in the project target areas who could read 45 – 60 words per minute were from ethnic minority communities.

Environmental: The PAD (pg. 23) defined the project's potential environmental impact as likely to be "minor, site-specific, and short-term in nature, for which mitigation measures can be readily designed." As such, the project fell under environmental category "B." An Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), which included an Environmental Management Plan and Environmental Codes of Practice, was drawn up to mitigate potential issues. The guidelines contained, for example, contractor specifications to address environmental and sanitation issues, including construction dust and noise control, waste and construction site management, etc. The ESMF was to be included in bidding documents, and site-specific environmental management plans were to be required for each construction site prior to the commencement of work. The ESMF was publicly disclosed via the MoEYS website and in Khmer language in community libraries throughout the country, as well as via InfoShop on August 22, 2013. The ICR stated that, in accordance with OP4.01 on Environmental Assessment, the project ensured that all activities, such



as cutting trees for construction of school buildings and voluntary donations (e.g., land, trees), were properly recorded by school committees and made available for review. Issues arising were recorded by site supervisors, and contractors and engineers had to comply with the project's environmental protection framework and implement the environmental management plan as shown in the contract agreement. The ICR also stated that the MoEYS could not identify a suitable candidate to take on the environmental specialist role (despite advertising the position twice); instead, 30 project staff were trained by the Bank's safeguards specialist to fill this role, resulting in an increase in the capacity of all relevant staff which is expected to provide a substantial foundation for subsequent interventions. However, because of the absence of a safeguards specialist, the planned full assessment of both social and environmental safeguards implementation (by July 2017) was not completed.

b. Fiduciary Compliance

No significant issues were reported. Financial management was rated Satisfactory throughout implementation. Procurement was rated Satisfactory in all Implementation Status Reports with one exception (June 2016), when it was rated Moderately Satisfactory due to delays in construction that were quickly identified and dealt with.

c. Unintended impacts (Positive or Negative)

The ICR noted a number of unanticipated outcomes, including the following:

- The MoEYS has maintained the M&E Unit developed to monitor the project and is using the M&E system to inform its ongoing work.
- The use of a community-based model (which was not in the original project design) for the construction of schools and home-based ECE generated ownership and buy-in, and benefited the communities financially, particularly disadvantaged communities. Further, the community-based approach engendered a focus on supporting children with disabilities.
- The community-based construction model enhanced the capacity development of communities in terms of financial management, procurement, and team management.
- The project generated significant demand for ECE and a commensurate response from government in terms of funding and policy.

d. Other



11. Ratings

Ratings	ICR	IEG	Reason for Disagreements/Comment
Outcome	Moderately Satisfactory	Satisfactory	High relevance together with substantial efficacy and substantial efficiency combine for an overall Satisfactory rating.
Bank Performance	Moderately Satisfactory	Moderately Satisfactory	---
Quality of M&E	Substantial	Substantial	---
Quality of ICR		Substantial	---

12. Lessons

The ICR presented a number of valuable lessons and recommendations that are summarized here: the sense (particularly in the context of a project with a short timeframe) in building on the foundations and achievements of past efforts to facilitate implementation readiness and deliver results; the advantage in ensuring client / implementing agency ownership to increase the sustainability and cohesiveness of interventions; and the need to ensure accuracy, consistency, and agreement on the wording of indicators, baselines, and targets during project preparation.

IEG notes the above and emphasizes the following:

In the absence of reliable baselines and targets, the value of even well chosen indicators is compromised. In this case, there was confusion regarding the definition of certain baseline and target values that led, eventually, to a restructuring. In addition, some of the targets were set with reference to a subset of eventual beneficiaries such that certain of the results suggest spectacular performance which, in fact, is not the case.

A mid-term review (MTR) provides an opportunity to take stock, and to identify and mitigate risks and challenges. In this case, there was no MTR, possibly because of the short project life-span of three years; however, a formal MTR may have resulted in an earlier restructuring (and possibly eased some of the bureaucratic hurdles encountered) and in more accurate reporting over a longer time period.

When seeking to address the quality of education and secure learning outcomes, it is important to address relevant demand and supply side constraints. This project adopted a multi-factored approach that involved, for example, construction, training, community involvement, standardized testing etc. In so doing, the project built on available learning that suggests a one-sided approach is less likely to deliver results in a development context.



13. Assessment Recommended?

Yes

Please explain

The emphasis on enrollment and quality, and particularly the project's innovative efforts to enhance teacher training, may be of interest to IEG with reference to proposed FY19 work on education quality.

14. Comments on Quality of ICR

The ICR was well written and provided a concise take on a project that had many moving parts. The ICR also included a strong focus on efficiency and, having eschewed a split rating approach, undertook a split rating as a technical exercise that was appended to the ICR. On the other hand, the manner in which the data issues associated with the restructuring were presented is somewhat confusing, particularly regarding PDO 1. In addition, the ICR could have been a little more candid regarding shortcomings in Bank performance at entry, notwithstanding the rapid preparation of the project. Also, the ICR included a discussion/rating of Relevance of Design and a Risk to Development Outcome rating, neither of which are required under the new ICR guidelines. The ICR could have better explained the manner in which the project engaged with disadvantaged populations. The project covered almost the entire country and therefore engaged with people of varying levels and types of advantage / disadvantage. The activities under sub-component 2 were specifically aimed at disadvantaged persons (including children with disabilities); however, the extent of specific disadvantage focus is less apparent elsewhere.

a. Quality of ICR Rating Substantial