# Children's Councils in Cambodia: A Brief Assessment

PREPARED BY: Kampuchean Action for Primary Education

WITH SUPPORT FROM:

o Children's Rights Foundation (CRF)

o Plan International

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# List of Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| CC | Children's Councils |
| CFS | Child Friendly Schools |
| CFSI | Child Friendly School Initiative |
| CFSS | Child Friendly Secondary School |
| CR | Children's Rights |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CRF | Children's Rights Foundation |
| DOE | District Office of Education |
| EFA | Education for All |
| KAPE | Kampuchean Action for Primary Education |
| MoEYS | Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| PB | Program-based Budgeting |
| POE | Provincial Office of Education |
| SCA | Save the Children/Australia |
| SCN | Save the Children/Norway |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Fund |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization |

# Acknowledgement

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

**Child Rights Foundation's Involvement**

The Child Rights Foundation (CRF) is a local Cambodian, child-focused, non-profit, non-political, non-religious and non-Governmental organization (NGO). Its vision is for all of Cambodia's children to grow up and to be educated in a peaceful and healthy environment so that they are able to exercise their right to live meaningful lives and to participate fully in society. To reach this end, CRF, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), Plan International, and others has been implementing projects and programs promoting Children's Rights in the educational system. Within this framework, a one and a half year project known as **Strengthening Children's Councils to Improve Quality Education,** which started in January 2009 and will end in June 2010, has been implemented in 20 target schools across three provinces including Siem Reap, Kampong Cham, and Kandal. The goals of this project are to:

- Aid key officials from MoEYS, Provincial and District Offices of Education (POE/DOE), school directors, classroom teachers, and school-community support committees in gaining knowledge and experience in topics related to Children's Councils (CC), while strengthening and taking actions to include and protect children as well as to engage and support them in the activities of CCs.
- Reach, engage and benefit children, in particular, the most disadvantaged, while engaging them in non-violent and safe schools with child friendly learning environments
- Create a model for strengthening CCs, which will be documented and widely shared among both governmental and non-governmental agencies working in the same area.

CRF has funded an independent assessment of the existing CC needs in order to (i) ensure the effectiveness and success of the project, (ii) facilitate policy review by MoEYS, and (iii) facilitate improved practice by NGO development partners and schools. It is hoped that the lessons learned from this study will enable schools and practitioners everywhere to improve the implementation of Children's Councils.

**Kampuchean Action for Primary Education's Involvement**

KAPE was engaged by CRF in March 2009 to assist in carrying out a fact-finding assessment of Children's Councils across several provinces. This not only included those where CRF is working but also those where other agencies are providing support as well as locations where there is no external support other than that from Program-based Budgets. The latter are school operating budgets provided by government to all schools based on a specific formula. Designing the assessment in this way was intended to help CRF and Government gain a broad view of how councils are being implemented in a number of different contexts.

KAPE had an interest in undertaking this assessment for several reasons. First, KAPE is also a local organization that seeks to improve both the quality of and access to basic education for children living in Cambodia. Secondly, it has been involved in the development of Children's Councils since the pre-policy period when there were few guidelines to assist in the development of such councils. At that time, KAPE called such councils Student Associations and included this intervention in its general Child Friendly School programming framework developed in collaboration with the MoEYS and UNICEF. It was in this way that CCs first developed their natural connection with child friendly schools as the Child Friendly School Initiative (CFSI) was a national pilot with broad support and engagement from the MoEYS. Finally, KAPE believes that the findings of this study and the recommendations that they have helped to formulate will be of great use in improving its current programming and fostering improved methods for on-going assessments of the councils.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Assessment

The assessment of Children's Councils undertaken by CRF and KAPE emphasized three key objectives. These include the following:

1. To investigate and describe the current situation of CCs in Cambodia in terms of policy and practices.
2. To define gaps as well as factors hindering and enabling the establishment and proper functioning of the existing CCs.
3. To devise realistic recommendations and comprehensive and effective strategies for future CC development in primary schools.

## 1.3 Implementation Context

Before 2007, there were no formal guidelines governing the design or operation of Children's Councils. In the pre-policy context, many agencies had only very loose guidelines about how such councils should work. The name of such groupings of students was not even standardized at that time and ranged widely from such designations as Student Associations, Student Councils, and Children's Councils. In 2003, the Child Friendly School Initiative developed a formal implementation manual for Student's Associations, which was used in the six provinces supported by UNICEF and one supported by KAPE. Eventually, in 2007, MoEYS with support from UNICEF developed a handbook outlining some specific policies and guidelines regarding the councils. These guidelines mainly apply to Grades 4 to 9 and closely link to the Child Friendly Schools framework. Under the latter framework, the child's learning environment is seen as spanning six key dimensions such as inclusiveness, psycho-social learning environments, etc)[1]. Children's Councils fall under Dimension 5 of the CFS framework or Engagement of Parents, Communities, and Children in education.

A key rationale underlying the establishment of CCs is to enhance the engagement of children in education while at the same time providing instruction about civic duty and helping behavior in society. That is, the councils are seen as a means to use children as a resource to improve the school while at the same time furthering their education in civics, moral development, values of compassion and cooperation, and leadership. Based on MoEYS documentation, the explicit objectives of the councils are to:

1. Develop children to be a good child, a good student, and a good friend.
2. Educate children to feel affection for their country, culture, and traditions; protect the environment, achieve a profession, and follow the teachings of Buddha.
3. Train and provide opportunities for children to know how to work individually and as a group as well as express opinions and carry out activities voluntarily for oneself, family, the school, and society.
4. Promote awareness on and implementation of children's rights & democratic principles
5. Promote awareness on how to control the spread of all diseases such as AIDS, avian flu, drug addiction, as well as prevent child trafficking, child exploitation, and child labor.[2]

As noted above, the MoEYS, in cooperation with UNICEF, created a document entitled *Child Friendly Schools Program, Dimension 5: Children's Councils Supplementary Document* to assist

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[1] CFS Learning Dimensions include: <u>Dimension 1</u> – Inclusive Education; <u>Dimension 2</u> – Effective Learning Environments; <u>Dimension 3</u> – Health, Nutrition, and Safety; <u>Dimension 4</u> – Gender-sensitive; <u>Dimension 5</u> – Engagement of Parents, Communities, and Children; and <u>Dimension 6</u> – Enabling Environments (i.e., well managed schools).

[2] MoEYS (2007) *Child Friendly Schools Program, Dimension 5: Children's Councils Supplementary Document.,* Phnom Penh: MoEYS-UNICEF, p. 1.

schools in implementing CCs.[3] This document is a set of guidelines intended to aid school directors and teachers in the planning and execution of CCs. The document outlines CC structure (i.e. roles and responsibilities of participants), criteria for electing executive members, organization of branch and sub-branch committees, activity focus and a method for evaluating and critiquing the councils. Also provided within the text are explanations of how CC programming links with CFS and Education for All policies. Currently, most POEs and DOEs have received their own copies of the CC guidelines, however, distribution to school directors and managing teachers has not been consistent.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 General Strategy for Data Collection

The research methodology undertaken by KAPE for the assessment of Children's Councils occurred on two levels. At a higher level, there was an assessment of the views of key informants at the policy level involving individuals from Ministry, provincial offices of education, and among selected NGO personnel who are involved in supporting such councils at school level. Data collection activities at this level probed general expectations among members of government and NGO planners with respect to the councils, how well things appeared to be going along these lines (in their view), and challenges faced in making councils operational. This analysis was complemented by a literature review relating to the councils, especially the MoEYS policy booklet (developed with assistance from UNESCO) governing the set up and activities of the councils.

At another level, data collection teams conducted interviews at field level, mainly among district offices of education, school directors/teachers, community members, and children themselves. The purpose of the data collection at this level was several-fold. On the one hand, researchers sought to compare the similarity between objectives/expectations expressed by key informants at policy level and those at the grassroots level. Researchers also sought to determine the level of performance of the CCs against certain performance benchmarks that were developed based on discussions with stakeholders and existing documentation. KAPE had already developed a CC assessment tool that it uses in its own supported schools and this formed the basis for the development of a standardized assessment tool that was highly suited to the needs of this assessment.

### 2.2. Identification and Formulation of Research Variables

The KAPE assessment team also identified specific assessment variables that operationalize the key research questions and objectives stated in the *Terms of Reference* (cf. Section 1.2 above). Table 2.1 below summarizes the identification of pertinent research variables and their links with specific research questions:

**Table 2.1:** Statement of Research Variables

| Research Questions | Variable | Variable Reference Key |
|---|---|---|
| What is the current situation of CCs in Cambodia in terms of policies and practices? | Expectations of stakeholders at policy level | A |
| | Expectations of stakeholders at grassroots level | B |
| | Assessment of current performance by those at policy level (based on agreed standardized criteria) | C |
| | Assessment of current performance by those at grassroots level (based on agreed standardized criteria) | D |
| What are the gaps as well as factors hindering and enabling the establishment and effective implementation of councils? | Participatory outcomes (children) | E1 |
| | Participatory outcomes (school personnel) | E2 |
| | Participatory outcomes (community) | E3 |
| | Resourcing issues | F |

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[3] Op. Cit.

| Research Questions | Variable | Variable Reference Key |
|---|---|---|
| | Contextual links with other development activities | G |
| | Management considerations | H |
| What are realistic recommendations and effective strategies for future CC development in primary schools? | No variables/Will be based on analysis of Variables A to H | -- |

These variables formed the basis for the development of assessment/data collection tools in which each question was cross-referenced to a specific variable.

## 2.3. Sampling Considerations

The assessment used a *judgmental sampling* strategy to identify a representative sample of provinces with operating CCs. The criteria used to select participating provinces suggested a broad demographic cross-section of the country and included (at least) (i) one mainstream rural province; (ii) one province with large urban concentrations as well as some rural ones; (iii) one province with concentrations of high-risk populations such as migrants, minorities, and high poverty; and (iv) one remote province. Based on discussions with CRF, the sample included provinces where CRF was currently working but also other provinces where CRF did not have a presence (but where other organizations do). Province selection included the following:

1. Kampong Cham (mainstream rural)
2. Kandal (rural-urban)
3. Siem Reap (high-risk)
4. Mondulkiri (remote)
5. Takeo (mainstream rural)

Within each province, researchers carried out interviews with the POE and personnel from two districts in each province. One district had active support for CC programming (either from CRF or another agency) while another did not have such support. Selecting districts in this way gave balance to the assessment and helped reveal the gaps in programming in both supported and unsupported areas.

Data collection activities also took place at the policy level and sampled representatives from the Ministry as well as those from POEs, DOEs, and among NGO personnel. This selection of key informants formed the basis of policy-level interviews (see Table 2.2). In all, 18 key informants were interviewed at the policy and implementation level.

**Table 2.2:** Key Informants at Policy-level

| Level | Number | Remarks |
|---|---|---|
| National | 1-2 | Youth Dept./Primary Education Dept |
| POE | 5 | One from each province |
| District | 10 | Two from each province |
| NGO Personnel | 4 | CRF, World Education-KAPE, SCA, SCN |
| Total | 19 to 18 | |

## 2.4 Data Collection Methodology

The assessment used a combination of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methodologies that incorporated a sampling of members at all three-stakeholder levels (national, provincial, and local). Researchers used a varied number of data collection tools including structured interviews, self-administered questionnaires, and focus group discussion schedules. In general, structured interviews and questionnaires were used with key informants at policy level while focus group discussions took place at the most grassroots level with teachers and directors somewhere in the middle. All focus group discussions were organized as homogeneous groupings of stakeholders in accordance with general methodological principles of data collection. A summary of data collection methodologies is summarized in Table 2.3 below.

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At the field level, two CCs from each of the five districts with CC programming were visited and assessed. Of the two CCs selected from each district, one was selected for its strong performance on the basis of the opinion of the POE, DOE, and/or operating NGO personnel while another was selected on the basis of generally weaker performance, again based on the nominal opinions of relevant stakeholders at province or district level. Selecting CCs in this way also helped to give some balance to the assessment in terms of successes and challenges.

**Table 2.3:** Data Collection Methodology by Key Informant

| Key Informant | Proposed Data Collection Methodology | | | Number of Sessions | Number of Key Informants | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Semi-Structured Interview | Self-Administered Questionnaire | Focus Group | | | |
| Ministry-level | X | X | | 1 | 1 | On-site |
| POE Level | X | X | | 5 | 5 | On-site |
| DOE Level | X | X | | 10 | 10 | On-site |
| NGO | X | X | | 4 | 4 | On-site |
| School Directors | | X | X | 1 | 10 | One central location |
| Teachers | | X | X | 1 | 10 | One central location |
| Children | | | X | 10 | 100 | On-site |
| Community | | | X | 10 | 100 | On-site |
| Total | -- | -- | -- | 42 | 240 | -- |

The focus group discussions also helped to inform the development of a number of case studies that give a more detailed look at how some of the councils are working.

## 2.4 Data Collection Tools

As mentioned in Section 2.1, KAPE had already developed a CC assessment tool that it uses in its own supported schools. The tool is comprised of the three interactive portions designed to assess the expectations of the CC program at the policy level with those at the local level, and finally compare those expectations with the actual current situation.

- **Semi-Structured Interviews**

Researchers conducted interviews at the policy level (MoEYS, POE, DOE and NGOs). Each semi-structured interview contained thirteen questions focusing on the interviewee's familiarity with CCs and its tie to governmental policy, existing support (in terms of both funding and human resources) and obstacles for the program and as well its accomplishments and successes. Interviews were conducted on-site at the interviewees' place of work.

- **Self-Administered Questionnaires**

Participants at both the policy level and the local level (school directors and teachers) completed universal self-administered questionnaires. Each questionnaire contained twenty-five questions designed to assess understanding of existing governmental policy and available support, ease of implementation, level of participation on behalf of key players, and effectiveness of the program to help the MoEYS reach its Millennium Development Goals. Policy level interviewees completed the surveys on-site, while local level participants completed theirs at one central location, the KAPE office in Kompong Cham Province.

- **Focus Group Discussions**

Participants at the grassroots level (student members of CC and community members) as well as the local level joined focus group discussions. Each group (students, community members, teachers and directors) addressed a range of group specific questions related to their roles and responsibilities in CCs, their perceived rational for CCs, successes and obstacles. Focus group discussions for the field level were conducted on site at the participants' schools, while researchers held local level discussions at one central location, the KAPE office in Kompong Cham Province.

Samples of data collection tools can be found in the Annex.

## 3. RESULTS SECTION

This section outlines some of the key trends in opinions by stakeholders regarding the research variables identified earlier. In general, quantitative data describes the views and opinions stated by policy level stakeholders as well as those at provincial, district, and school level (teachers and directors). Data generated by focus group discussion represents the views of children, community members, and teachers and school directors.

### 3.1 Expectations and Understanding of Policy among Stakeholders

*Prioritization of Council Objectives:* The MoEYS created clear-cut objectives for Children's Councils. These include dissemination of information concerning Children's Rights (CR), as well as bolstering patriotism among Cambodia's youth and acquiring leadership skills, among others. When asked to prioritize the two objectives that were of the highest priority for stakeholders, two important trends emerged (see Table 3.1). First, it was found that stakeholders do not place equal priority on all the stated objectives. Rather, they value some objective more than others. Another trend appeared to be that stakeholders tend to value the objective of promoting friendship and camaraderie among children (50%) while the next most highly valued objectives appears to be training children to know how to work individually (30%). Other objectives including those to promote patriotism or disseminate information about HIV and AIDS scored at a level of 10% or less.

**Table 3.1: Stakeholder Understanding of Objectives**

| Question: Which objectives are the highest priority for you? (Pick any two) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Objective | Number | % |
| 1. Develop children in terms of scions, students, and friends | 37 | 50% |
| 2. Train and enable students to learn how to work individually | 22 | 30% |
| 3. Promote awareness on and implementation of children's rights & democratic principles | 8 | 11% |
| 4. Educate children to feel affection for their country, culture, and tradition | 6 | 8% |
| 5. I don't prioritize and treat all objectives the same | 1 | 1% |
| 6. Promote awareness on how to control the spread of disease such as HIV | 0 | 0% |
| 7. Don't Know | 0 | 0% |

N=37

*Stakeholder Understanding of Guidelines:* When interviewed, a sizable majority of stakeholders said that their understanding of the guidelines for setting up councils was moderately good (81%). Only 3% said that their understanding was poor (see Table 3.2). Nevertheless, during focus group discussions with teachers and school directors, many respondents indicated that official guidelines were not helpful with respect to organizing specific activities for the councils. On the other hand, they did indicate that the guidelines were mainly useful for providing guidance about student roles, designating officers, and providing a structure for the councils.

**Table 3.2: Personal Understanding of Official Guidelines**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| What is your personal understanding of how the children's councils should work? | Very high | 6 | 16% |
| | Medium understanding | 30 | 81% |
| | Not very clear | 1 | 3% |

N=37

These observations need to be balanced, however, against the finding that fewer than half of the respondents interviewed indicated that they were very familiar with the guidelines and many had never seen a copy. About 17% indicated that they were not at all familiar with the guidelines and/or had never read them (see Table 3.3). In general, provincial and district level officials were

the most familiar with the guidelines followed by directors and then teachers. District-level officials and higher had received copies of the guidelines while teachers had rarely seen them, which is a finding of some concern given that teachers are the ones who play a key role in animating the councils.

**Table 3.3: Familiarity with CFS Handbook and Other Documentary Materials**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| If there are materials, how familiar are you with them? | Very familiar | 11 | 48% |
| | A little familiar | 8 | 35% |
| | Never read them | 4 | 17% |

N=23

***Implicit Understanding versus Desired Understanding:*** An interesting line of inquiry in the assessment was to compare stakeholders' views of what they do understand about how councils work with desired operating principles as understood by the researchers. In this regard, the researchers understand the councils to work best when they are self-directed by children while teachers play the role of a facilitator who does not dominate the children. In this way, children acquire an understanding of leadership and community that is participatory rather than authoritarian. However, when asked certain questions about how they think the councils should work, many stakeholders indicated that the teachers have to 'lead' (81%) rather than children, that the councils are a good means of 'controlling' the children (92%) and that students should not be allowed to disagree with the teacher or director, even if they do so respectfully (35%). In addition, many believed that participation in the councils was mandatory and that those children who do not wish to join should be 'forced' to do so (78%) (see Table 3.4). On the positive side, however, 86% of stakeholders believe that councils should encourage children to think for themselves, a response that is not always consistent with the other responding related earlier.

**Table 3.4: Stakeholder Opinions about How They Think Councils Should Work Versus Desired Understanding**

| Statement | Agree | Disagree |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Teachers need to lead the councils for them to work | 89% | 11% |
| 2. At first, children don't understand well but in time can work independently of the teacher | 95% | 5% |
| 3. The idea of councils is to encourage children to think for themselves | 86% | 14% |
| 4. An important idea behind the councils is to help teachers and directors better control the children. | 92% | 8% |
| 5. All children must participate in the councils, those who don't must be forced to do so | 78% | 22% |
| 6. Sometimes, leaders of the councils may respectfully disagree with the teacher or school director about certain things | 65% | 35% |

A finding of some disturbing significance in this assessment relates to the degree to which communities understand the role of Children's Councils or even that they exist. Of the ten communities interviewed as part of this assessment, only one was aware that the schools in their area had even organized such bodies. Thus, they were certainly not aware of how they worked or what their goals were. After receiving an explanation of the activities the government was trying to support with respect to the councils, most community members expressed support for the idea but did not really see a very obvious role for community members in their operation, other than some encouragement or perhaps some material support. Thus, it would appear that community



*A Council Meeting in the library*

members as key stakeholders in the school evince the weakest understanding or even familiarity of Children's Councils.

## 3.2 Current Performance

*Overall Assessment of Councils:* Another line of inquiry in the assessment related to how well stakeholders at all levels thought Children's Councils were working. Overall, stakeholders seemed to be evenly split although no one expressed the belief that most schools are doing an excellent job. In this regard, about 41% of stakeholders expressed the view that most schools are doing reasonably well while 57% expressed the belief that most are not doing well (see Table 3.5). In general, those stakeholders at the higher levels (Ministry and Province) had a more sanguine view of how well things were going while those in the trenches (school directors and teachers) thought that things were not going quite so well.

**Table 3.5: Assessment of Council Performance by All Stakeholders**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overall and based on your personal experience, how well do you think children's councils are working in the schools that are implementing them? | Nearly all schools are doing an excellent job | 0 | 0% |
| | Most schools are doing well but some are not doing well | 15 | 41% |
| | Some schools are doing well, but most are not doing well. | 21 | 57% |
| | Nearly all are NOT able to implement the councils effectively | 1 | 2% |
| | Don't know | 0 | 0% |

N=37

*Possibilities for Expanded Implementation:* On the other hand, a majority of stakeholders expressed hope about the future with respect to the degree to which Children's Councils could be expanded. In this respect, 78% believe that it should eventually be possible to have active councils in nearly all schools although researchers found that most schools in provinces do not appear to have functioning councils.

**Table 3.6: Degree to Which Stakeholders Believe Councils Can Be Widely Implemented**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do you think it is possible for every school in Cambodia to implement children's councils? | Yes | 29 | 78% |
| | No | 2 | 5% |
| | Not sure | 4 | 11% |

*Operational Assessment Data Reported by Children:* During assessments of 10 councils using a standardized tool developed for this investigation, it was found that most children thought of the councils as promoting Children's Rights rather than other official objectives such as patriotism or dissemination of information. These findings demonstrate a contrast with the views of adult stakeholders who tend to believe that promoting camaraderie and individual working habits are of the highest priority (see table 3.1). On the other hand, many did not speak of any long-term benefits of council programming and only a small number mentioned that they had disseminated any information outside of the school, such as on HIV and AIDS. Most children stated that the most common CC activities were (i) organizing the school, (ii) cleaning the campus, (iii) peer tutoring, and (iv) promoting good health and hygiene; in a few cases, students mentioned that they had passed along information about human trafficking and HIV and AIDS.

In terms of basic operating procedures, it was found that only about 60% of the councils chose leadership roles through elections. That is, in several instances the roles of chairperson and vice chairperson are appointed by the teacher or director. While participatory appointments do appear to be happening in a majority of the sampled schools that have councils, a sizable number are not

following a very basic MoEYS guideline. In addition, 40% of the councils interviewed indicated that they never had any monthly meetings. This finding was balanced by the observation that 40% indicated that they met twice a month and 20% at least once a month, indicating that some councils appear to have a high degree of functionality. When asked whether their councils were student or teacher-led, 70% of councils indicated that they were teacher-led while 30% felt that they were more student-led (see Table 3.6).

**Table 3.6: Council Assessment along Key Performance Indicators**

| Indicator | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Councils that choose officers by election | 60% |
| Councils never meeting | 40% |
| Councils meeting once a month or more | 60% |
| Councils that feel themselves to be student-led | 30% |
| Councils that believe that a key objective is to promote Children's Rights | 40% |

***Performance Relating to Capacity building Issues:*** Stakeholders related a number of interesting responses regarding capacity building activities. For example, nearly 21% or over one-fifth of those interviewed indicated that there is no training for teachers and school directors at all when setting up the councils. On the other hand, however, nearly half indicated that when training does occur, it is characterized by a balance between lecture and more student-centered techniques (see Table 3.7).

Investigators also found significant variation with respect to who carries out the training. In this respect, about 41% indicated the capacity-building activities are usually carried out by Ministry or province/district-level trainers while 19% indicated that NGOs do the training (see Table 3.8). A large number reported that they receive not capacity-building assistance and do their own training workshops (41%). However, due to the high turnover rate amongst teachers, many stakeholders reported that training had little impact, suggesting that high mobility among teachers is an undermining problem for capacity building efforts. Similarly, province and district-level personnel indicated that training input that they had re-

**Case Study:** Using Children's Councils as a Vehicle for Change



*Tomorrow's Leader*

Kranhyoung Primary School is located in Kampong Cham Province. In earlier days, the school had a reputation for very poor leadership with barren school grounds, litter everywhere, and filthy classrooms. In 2005, management at the school was changed and the new school director introduced the idea of Children's Councils. He saw the potential of such groups to increase local ownership of the school by using children as a human resource. With support from the District Office of Education and a local NGO, his students have done a remarkable job of transforming the school both inside and out, by using the older students as a vehicle for change. The association formed at Kranhyoung has been blessed by a number of enthusiastic young leaders who wear red armbands. The activities carried out by the school's council have not only led to a better school environment, but have also provided students with an opportunity to learn leadership skills and build their self-confidence.



*Mission accomplished.*     *Cooperation is fun.*

ceived has been light though several reported attending a three-day training session in Phnom Penh discussing the MoEYS's guideline document.

**Table 3.7: The Nature of Training to Set Up Children's Councils (Training of Teachers/Directors)**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| When training occurs to set up Children's Councils, how is it mostly done? | Mostly lecturing | 9 | 26% |
| | A balance between lecturing and participant activities | 16 | 47% |
| | There are no trainings | 7 | 21% |
| | Don't know | 2 | 6% |

N=34

**Table 3.8: Training Agents for Children's Councils**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Who usually carries out the trainings when they occur? | Mostly individuals from Ministry or Province level | 12 | 38% |
| | Mostly trainers from district level | 1 | 3% |
| | Mostly trainers from NGOs | 6 | 19% |
| | Schools do their own training based on Ministry documents | 13 | 41% |
| | Don't know | 0 | 0% |

N=32

***Key Challenges:*** Stakeholders identified a number of key challenges facing the implementation of Children's Councils. Not surprisingly, the leading challenge chosen by stakeholders related to the issue of resources, particularly financial resources. In this respect, about one-third of respondents identified this issue as the leading challenge (see Table 3.9). Financial resources were needed for such things as special projects in the school (e.g., building gardens, study kiosks, etc), stationery for meetings, armbands, and other materials. Without access to financial resources, the councils were limited in how frequently they could meet or do. The next leading challenge that was identified by stakeholders related to the amount of time available to spend on the councils (19%). This response reflected the continuing shortage of teachers at primary level, particularly in rural areas, and the fact that many teachers must teach double shifts and so have little time to spend on the councils. This challenge was closely related to the next issue identified by respondents, which is that there is a shortage of personnel in the school to help support the councils (16%). With the exception of resources, most other respondents seemed to choose the remaining challenges of setting up and maintaining Children's Councils with the same frequency, indicating that they are of about the same priority for stakeholders. The issue of resources, time, and personnel availability, however, seems to overshadow most other issues.

**Table 3.9: Key Challenges in Setting Up Councils**

| | Key Challenges (The Highest Priority Challenge Chosen by Stakeholders) | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | There are no financial resources to support the councils | 12 | 32% |
| 2. | Teachers and Directors don't have time | 7 | 19% |
| 3. | There is a shortage of personnel in the schools to take responsibility for the councils | 6 | 16% |
| 4. | Children are not interested in participating in the councils | 5 | 14% |
| 5. | Other | 4 | 11% |
| 6. | Understanding of how the councils should work is still too weak | 3 | 8% |
| 7. | Communities are not interested in participating in the councils. | 0 | 0% |

N=37

## 3.3 Participation Outcomes

*Children's Participation:* Overall, researchers found the participation of children in the councils that exist to be relatively high, at least according to the reports of stakeholders at the school, district, and provincial level. In this regard, 68% of respondents reported that all or nearly all children are willing to participate in councils when they have been established (see Table 3.10). Several case studies compiled by the researchers (see below) also indicate that several schools in the sample have achieved a very high degree of activism among children. However, these observations need to be balanced against the finding that 32% of respondents reported that some children are not so willing to participate and that they must be 'forced' to do so, as noted in an earlier section. These findings should also be considered in light of council-specific assessments where 40% of councils never or rarely meet (see Table 3.6).

**Table 3.10: Children's Willingness to Participate in Councils**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| How would you describe the participation of children in the councils, where they are working? | All students are very willing to join | 7 | 19% |
| | Most students are willing to join | 18 | 49% |
| | Some are willing to join but others are not so interested | 12 | 32% |
| | Most are not so willing to join so they need to be forced to do so | 0 | 0% |

N=37

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**CASE STUDY: Children's Councils Promoting Social Activism in the Community**



*Council members present a widow with a little present at the end of their interview*



*Council members doing an interview with a household member in their local community*

MoEYS has requested development agencies to help set up Children's Councils in schools in order to strengthen children's engagement in school and civic awareness, using official Ministry guidelines. Most councils do civic-minded activities within the school, but some councils, with encouragement from the advisory teacher, have also organized field visits to the local community. A council in Kampong Cham Provinces have been engaged in trying to better understand local problems in health and livelihoods by doing field level interviews with local community members. Council members tried to find the poorest members of the community to see what their problems are. This often includes single households, widows, and other families facing difficulties in life. At the conclusion of the interview, council members present a little gift of soap or shampoo to show their appreciation. They purchase these gifts using the council's limited budget from the school. After meeting with a particular household, the council members then make a plan about how they can help. This may involve helping them plant a garden, orchard trees, repairing fences and pens, or generally helping to tidy up the household in some way. These activities are notable because they not only help local people but also give young people a sense of compassion and civic commitment to society that is difficult to communicate in the classroom. Thus, the councils are really fulfilling a special role to communicate good attitudinal educational objectives in a very concrete manner.

***Teachers' Participation:*** Teacher participation in the councils appears to be more problematic. In this respect, 43% of respondents reported that it is a 'bit difficult' to get teachers to participate in the councils while 19% reported that it is 'very difficult' to do so (see Table 3.11). These findings corroborate earlier observations that the availability of time and personnel to organize the councils are serious challenges in implementing CCs.

**Table 3.11: Teachers' Willingness to be Involved in Councils**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| In general and in your own personal experience, how difficult is it to get teachers to volunteer to help stand as an adviser to the councils? | Not so difficult | 14 | 38% |
| | A bit difficult | 16 | 43% |
| | Very difficult | 7 | 19% |

N=37

## 3.4 Resourcing Issues

***Using School Operating Budgets:*** Resourcing for Children's Councils emerged as a key issue in this assessment. CCs face two specific resourcing issues. One is financial while another is human resource-related. On the financial side, it appears that no Program-based Budgeting funds are allocated specifically for CCs in official guidelines. This has led many schools to treat the issue of setting up of councils as a lower priority than it might ordinarily be. There was some disagreement among stakeholders whether it was possible to use school operating budgets to support councils. In this respect, about 43% of respondents reported that it was 'easy' to use PB funds for council activities while 41% reported that it was not so easy. About 16% said that they were not sure (see Table 3.12).

**Table 3.12: Using Program-based Budget Funds for Children's Councils**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Can schools easily use PB funds to support children's councils? | Yes | 16 | 43% |
| | No | 15 | 41% |
| | Not sure | 6 | 16% |

N=37

***Need for External Funding:*** Another area of concern with respect to financial resourcing was the finding that 76% of respondents did not think it was possible to have effective councils without access to external funding, mostly from NGOs (see Table 3.13). Further compounding the problem, often in provinces where the population is generally poor, CCs cannot fundraise directly but are able to accept donations and to use PB funds to undertake income-generating activities. Community members are sometimes able to donate materials such as pens, pencils, paper etc. In several schools, students were taking various actions to overcome the lack of financial resources. Examples of this include micro-business ventures such as arts and craft stalls and snack selling enterprises.

**Table 3.13: Stakeholder Views Regarding the Need for External Resourcing**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do you think children's councils can work well without external support, that is only with PB funds? | Yes | 7 | 19% |
| | No | 28 | 76% |
| | Not sure | 2 | 5% |

N=37

***Availability of Technical Resources:*** On the human resource side, there exists significant understaffing in both provincial and district offices of education with respect to the availability of technical resource persons who can help schools set up councils. As noted earlier, documentary resources are also in short supply. Nevertheless, about 43% of stakeholders did report that they had access to some documentary resource materials (see Table 3.14) and 72% of those saying that they had such access reported that these materials came from the Ministry. Only a fifth reported that these resources came from NGOs (see Table 3.15). This demonstrates that the MoEYS does have

some far reach in getting materials out to provinces and districts but requires assistance in providing training support to councils to ensure that the materials are put into practice.

**Table 3.14: Trends in Access to Documentary Materials**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Are there any resource materials to help schools to implement Children's Councils? | Yes | 16 | 43% |
| | No | 16 | 43% |
| | Not sure | 5 | 14% |

N=37

**Table 3.15: Source of Available Documentary Materials**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| If there are resources, what is the source? | Ministry | 13 | 72% |
| | NGO | 4 | 22% |
| | Other | 1 | 6% |

N=18

## 3.5 Links with Other Development Activities

Research findings demonstrated a strong understanding among stakeholders with respect to links between councils and specific aspects of MoEYS policy, particularly policies relating to Child Friendly Schools and Education for All. A significant majority of respondents (86%) indicated that they saw high congruence between the implementation of Children's Councils and key themes underlying Child Friendly Schools (see Table 3.16). In focus group discussion, participants mentioned the link between the councils and Children's Rights numerous times. In this respect, it is important to note that policy makers largely see the implementation of CFS policy as a means of operationalizing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in the education sector.

**Table 3.16: Stakeholder Views Regarding Councils & Congruence with CFS Programming**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Do you see implementation of Children's Councils as fitting in with Child Friendly Schools or as a mostly separate activity | Yes, fits well | 32 | 86% |
| | Partly relevant | 4 | 11% |
| | No, mostly separate | 1 | 3% |
| | Don't know | 0 | 0% |

N=37

Another encouraging aspect of stakeholder responding relates to their knowledge of the CFS implementation framework as far as it concerns particular dimensions of the child's learning environment. When asked where they felt Children's Councils belonged in this framework, a significant number of respondents (77%) cited Dimension 5, which is also consistent with the policy documents developed by Ministry (see Table 3.17). These findings are encouraging in so far as they suggest that most stakeholders have a relatively high understanding of the policies governing councils and how these relate to the CFS framework.

**Table 3.17: Stakeholder Views Regarding Councils and CFS Dimensions**

| Which CFS Dimension does it best fit under? | Number | % |
|---|---|---|
| 1.   Access | 2 | 8% |
| 2.   Effective Learning Environments | 1 | 4% |
| 3.   Health and Security | 1 | 4% |
| 4.   Gender | 1 | 4% |
| 5.   Child, Parental, and Community Engagement | 20 | 77% |
| 6.   School Management | 1 | 4% |

N=26

## 3.6 Management Considerations

*Key Management Roles:* The implementation of Children's Councils is dependent on management and technical inputs from many stakeholders including the teacher, school director, district and provincial level resource persons, and NGO personnel. One of the lines of inquiry of this assessment was to examine the views of stakeholders at all levels to see where they feel the key management role in implementation lies. Responding patterns indicated that the advisory teacher and school director were the two stakeholder groups that a majority of respondents saw as the key roles of greatest importance. In this regard, 32% cited teachers as having a key role while 35% saw the school directors as having one (see Table 3.18). It was nevertheless a bit puzzling that about two-thirds of respondents saw the role of the director and teacher as 'supportive but not key.' It seems that this is an area where training could be useful in helping to clarify management roles when setting up CCs.

**Table 3.18: Stakeholder Views Regarding Implementation & Management Roles**

| | Role | Key Role | Not Key but Supportive | No Role |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | School Director | 32% | 68% | 0% |
| 2. | Teacher | 35% | 65% | 0% |
| 3. | Community | 5% | 92% | 3% |
| 4. | Commune Council | 5% | 81% | 14% |
| 5. | DOE | 11% | 86% | 3% |
| 6. | POE | 5% | 92% | 3% |
| 7. | NGO | 8% | 87% | 5% |

N=37

*The Availability of Assessment Tools:* One means through which Children's Councils could be strengthened refers to the need for a standardized assessment tool. No such tool was provided in the Dimension 5 Supplement document that was developed by MoEYS. When asked about the availability of a monitoring tool, a majority of respondents (67%) indicated that they had never seen or used such a tool (see Table 3.19). Those that did were mainly referring to a tool developed by a supporting NGO. Of the organizations interviewed, only World Education and KAPE indicated that they had developed standardized monitoring tools. In general, these tools are formative in nature and rely on children and teachers to do self-assessments through participatory discussions. Thus, this appears to be an area where follow-up could be highly useful, particularly with respect to clarifying expectations about how Children's Councils should work.

**Table 3.19: Stakeholder Knowledge of Council Assessment Instruments**

| Question | Reponses | Number | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| To your knowledge, is there a standardized instrument to assess the effectiveness of children's councils? | Yes | 11 | 30% |
| | No | 24 | 67% |
| | Don't Know | 1 | 3% |

N=36

*The Role of NGOs in Implementation:* Throughout the country, NGOs play various roles when providing assistance to CCs. Examples of assistance include financial aide and donations of in-kind materials and training. Although key participants have varying feelings about how strong a role organizations should play, most of the participants think that NGOs should play not a major role but an important one. When interviewed, officials at the provincial and district level frequently stated that they felt NGOs should help the MoEYS provide adult participants with training workshops and follow-up sessions six to twelve months along.

Researchers found a noticeable difference between schools supported by NGOs and those with no such support. Students of the former were far more easily able to answer questions pertaining to CCs in general than were those of the latter. One exception was a primary school in a Phnong minority community in Mondulkiri. Although the council had the outward appearance of being orga-

nized, the children found it very difficult to answer many of the questions that they were asked, even though the school had been supported by an NGO for over three years. It is not clear whether this difficulty was due to the observation that Khmer was not the mother tongue of the children or reflected real performance issues in the council.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1 General Conclusions

*Current Status of Councils:* In terms of the first research question identified in the Methodology Section of this report (i.e., describing the current situation of Children's Councils), it would appear that there is wide variation between schools in how well existing councils function. Making sweeping generalizations in this regard is somewhat complicated, however, by the fact that there is not yet a clear consensus on what a good council should look like. To fill this gap, the researchers devised an operational typology that took in some of the following characteristics:

**Table 4.1: Suggested Operational Typology Defining a Functional Council**

| Parameter | Ideal Descriptors |
|---|---|
| Content | • Children's rights<br>• Leadership skills<br>• Civic education through action research and concrete interventions in the school and community<br>• Information dissemination functions (HIV and AIDS, safety, trafficking, etc |
| Participation | • Voluntary participation<br>• Use of coaching<br>• Active engagement rather than coercion |
| Management | • Democratic selection of officers (rather than through arbitrary appointments)<br>• Facilitative role for teachers and school directors rather than a controlling 'role'<br>• Incremental progression from teacher-led to student-led bodies<br>• Active technical support from district and province |
| Training | • Avoidance of lecture-style presentations<br>• Use of standardized session plans<br>• Periodic following-up support |
| Resourcing | • Financial support with clear links to PB funds<br>• Access to technical documents |
| Assessment | • Use of a standardized tool<br>• Key assessment principles should emphasize formative evaluation and self-assessment that is participatory and discussion-oriented |

Such a typology could be further refined to form the basis of more systematic training activities. For purposes of this assessment, however, the elements of a good council outlined in Table 4.1 provide a good measure against which to evaluate how well councils are working. With this in mind, researchers found that about 30% to 40% of the councils visited are operating at a moderate to high level of functionality. This suggests that such councils are mainly student-led with democratic selection of officers; teachers and directors play a facilitative rather than a dominating role; participation is mainly voluntary because being in the council is considered 'fun'; there is access to financial resources to implement concrete activities; and the councils are instilling values of cooperation, compassion, and civic duty through concrete actions in their schools and communities. Considering that a formalized policy regarding the establishment and implementation of Children's Councils has only been in place for about two and a half years, this is not a disappointing level of achievement. Yet, one must not forget that slightly more than half of the councils in the sample are not functioning at a very optimal level as defined in Table 4.1.

***Defining the Gaps:*** In terms of the second research question identified for this assessment, researchers found shortcomings in both stakeholders' understanding as well as external factors over which stakeholders had little control (e.g., access to resources). For example, although a large number of stakeholders described their understanding of how the councils should work as 'good,' there were some indications that many did not know as much as they think they do. Many did not understand the role that teachers and school directors should play or saw their roles as somewhat authoritarian and dominating. With respect to community involvement in the implementation of the councils, researchers found that even among the 'good' councils, participation or even awareness of the councils was surprisingly quite limited.

Implementation of the councils has also been quite uneven due to a number of structural features in the education sector. These include inadequate resourcing of the councils both in terms of technical support as well as in terms of financial assistance. A large number of schools reported that it was difficult to use school operating budgets for the councils (although some apparently had anyway) and that they had little access to the technical documents that had been produced by the Ministry. Access to external resources through links with NGO programs had in many cases made a significant difference in operational functionality. It was for this reason that many educational administrators emphasized the importance of NGO efforts in this regard.

Similarly, the shortage of teachers in the country is a major obstacle for widespread implementation of CCs. This structural problem has historically been very difficult for the Ministry to address and may even become worse as enrolments start to increase after a brief decline between 2004 and 2009. Thus, it is not surprising that many stakeholders cited the lack of time and personnel as key constraints in implementing councils. This finding was linked with responding patterns among stakeholders that indicate that it is difficult to get teachers to volunteer to stand as advisory teachers. Given that many teachers in the rural areas are teaching two shifts, it is no wonder that they have no time to spend on the councils.

Finally, it should be noted that a large number of school level stakeholders also indicated that they had not been trained or if they had, that the training included no follow-up support afterwards. In reviewing the existing documentation produced by MoEYS for training purposes, researchers found that although the content is quite sound, it does not contain specific session plans for trainers to use when providing training to personnel in provinces, districts, and schools. The absence of session plans puts the burden of capacity building on trainers who may resort to lecture-oriented methodologies using a blow horn. Such training is likely to be not very effective. Furthermore, existing documentation does not contain standardized assessment tools or methods to formatively evaluate the functioning of councils. The existence of such tools is not only useful for the monitors but also helps to clarify for those being evaluated what the expectations for performance are. Therefore, the absence of standardized assessment tools is an important gap that also needs to be addressed.

## 4.2 Recommendations

Based on the preceding evaluation of the Cambodian MoEYS's CC program, the researchers make the following recommendations:

1.  In order for them to work effectively, Children's Councils need to be better resourced financially. Specific measures that may be undertaken in order to improve resourcing include the following:
    a.  Creation of a specific budget line in PB operating budgets that explicitly mentions the councils as a legitimate area of funding by a school.
    b.  Provision of financial incentives to teachers to volunteer to stand as advisory teachers. MoEYS has been discussing the possibility of merit-based payments for teachers for many years. Including activities in which teachers support councils could be one very useful criterion for the provision of merit-based payments.

      c.  Put in place specific guidelines that provide resource persons (see below) at province and district level with travel money to visit councils periodically.

2.  Increase access to technical resources of quality for school and communities. Specific measures to bring this about include:

      a.  Appoint specific resource persons at province and district level who will be responsible for technical support to the councils. These individuals should undergo an intensive training that prepares them to provide more than one-time assistance but on-going support to schools.

      b.  Reprint all existing technical manuals and distribute widely, not just for provincial and district offices

      c.  Revise technical manuals so that they include explicit session plans that will promote training methodologies that are participatory and hands-on. These session plans should include a foundational workshop but also a series of follow-up workshops to assist resource persons in providing supplementary support after the foundational workshop has been completed. The session plans should also include additional sections for describing implementation protocols and suggesting practical student-run activities.

3.  Develop a standardized assessment tool for the regular self-assessment of councils. Such tools will not only be helpful to those monitoring the councils but will also make more explicit the desired outcomes and expectations of the councils to children, teachers, and school directors. Other important characteristics of these tools include the following:

      a.  Assessment tools should be based on operational typologies that outline in very concrete terms what a functional council looks like.

      b.  The tools should use principles of formative assessment and be discussion-oriented

4.  Develop an incremental implementation plan for the roll out of Children's Councils throughout the country. Avoid a country-wide implementation approach in a short period of time, as this will only promote the existence of councils in name only. It will likely be difficult to implement the measures mentioned above all at once and resources will likely continue to be scarce. It is best, therefore, to aim for a more realistic plan of implementation based on the available resources. Such a plan should include the following characteristics:

      a.  Select a limited number of schools for implementation based on some important prerequisites such as availability of teachers, strong leadership, and good community engagement. Implementation of councils in such schools is most likely to succeed.

      b.  Once a number of demonstration sites have been established, use them as a training resource for further replication in surrounding schools.

5.  The current guidelines from the Primary Education Department for Children's Councils are very helpful in the information that they provide but also tend to be rather abstract and theoretical in terms of their content. It is recommended that the current guidelines be revised along the following lines:

      a.  It was already mentioned in Recommendation 2 (c) that the current guidelines should include explicit session plans that outline how school personnel should be trained. This recommendation also applies to the current suggestion to revise the guidelines.

      b.  The mandated council structure under the current guidelines requires the creation of eight different sub-groupings of students (e.g., Discipline Group, Library Group, Security & Safety Group, Finance/Admin Group, Dissemination Group, Sports, Art, & Culture Group, Environment & Life Skills Group, and Youth Club Group). This is an unrealistic and complex division of labor for the councils, especially in schools that are just starting to set up their councils. It is recommended that the number of groups be reduced in order to decrease complexity. For example, the councils could focus on simply two or three areas such as Environment, Culture, and Social Outreach.

      c.  There are currently no provisions for accommodating diversity between schools. All councils must do the same things, have the same sub-groups, and work in the same way. It is recommended that the council guidelines introduce some degree of choice in the make-up and activities undertaken by the councils, depending on local needs and capacity. For example, the selection of sub-groups from a list could be one way of accommodating choice and individual preferences in different schools.

d. There are three annex sheets in the current guidelines: Activity Monitoring Sheet, Good Student Monitoring Sheet (weekly), Good Student Monitoring Sheet (monthly). In order to effectively use these sheets, there need to be explicit guidelines about how these sheets are to be completed, what are the criteria in identifying good students, and how should the information be used. At the top of p 11, there is a short description of the criteria for defining a good student, but these need to be greatly expanded. Thus, it is recommended that more explicit guidelines be developed for completing and using the current annex sheets. In addition, it is suggested that a formalized assessment tool be included in the annex as per Recommendation 3.

# Annexes

## Children's Councils in Cambodia: A Brief Assessment

Kampuchean Action for Primary Education

**1. FORM A: KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONNAIRE**
**2. FORM B: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW**
**3. FORM C: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE (SAMPLE FOR TEACHERS/DIRECTORS)**
**4. ORIGINAL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Annex 1**

__FORM A__: **KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONNAIRE**

***Directions:*** *Please fill in the information about yourself in the box below and answer the following questions by placing an X in the appropriate box or filling in any blanks. Any information that you provide will be kept confidential. Please remember that there is no right or wrong answer to these questions, only what you think.*

---

Name: _____  Sex: ___  Age: ___  Date: _____

Province: _____  Affiliation (Please Circle One):
        *Ministry  POE  DOE  NGO  Teacher  School Director*
        *Please indicate details:*
_____

*I understand the purpose of this assessment and consent to complete this form without coercion or hesitation.*
Signature: _____

Completed by District and School Level Personnel Only

District: _____  Commune/Khan: _____  School Name: _____

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| No | Question | Variable Reference |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | There are many objectives that Children's Councils are expected to achieve. For you personally, which two of the following objectives are of the highest priority? Write a check (√) in any two boxes for the official objectives stated below.<br><br> Develop children in terms of: "scions, students, and friends".<br><br> Educate children to feel affection for their country, culture, tradition, environment and professional training and to obey Buddha's teachings.<br><br> Train and enable students to learn how to work individually and in teams and to volunteer their opinions when implementing activities with a sense of responsibility for themselves, their families, schools and society.<br><br> Promote awareness on and implementation of child rights and democratic principles.<br><br> Promote awareness on how to control the spread diseases such as HIV/AIDS and bird flu and drugs, human trafficking and children (especially girls) exploitation.<br><br> I don't prioritize and treat all objectives the same.<br><br> Don't really know. | A-B |
| 2 | What is your own personal understanding of how the children's councils should work?<br><br> Very High  Medium Understanding  Not very clear | A-B |
| 3 | Do you think that it is possible for every school in Cambodia to implement children's councils?<br><br> Yes  No  Not sure | A-B |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | If you said 'No", why don't you think so?<br><br>_____ | |
| 4 | Based on your own personal understanding, can schools easily use PB funds to support children's councils?<br><br>   Yes     No      Not sure<br><br>If you said 'Yes', what kinds of activities do schools use their PB funds to support?<br><br>_____<br><br>If you said 'No', why not?<br><br>_____ | F |
| 5 | Do you think that children's councils can work well without external support, that is, only with funds from PB and communities? (PUT 5 FIRST)<br><br>   Yes     No      Not sure | F |
| 6 | How major a role do you think NGOs should play in supporting children's councils?<br><br>   A key role     An important role but not key      Don't really have a role to play<br>   Don't know | A-B |
| 7 | Based on your understanding of the children's councils, with which of the following statements do you agree/disagree regarding the role of children in the councils. Check one box for each statement | A-B |

| Agree | Disagree | Don't Know | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Teachers need to continually lead the councils for them to work effectively. |
| | | | At first, children don't understand well how to manage the councils but in time can work independently of the teacher. |
| | | | The idea of the councils is to encourage children to think for themselves and not always defer to adults. |
| | | | An important idea behind the councils is to help teachers and directors better control the children and do what they want them to do. |
| | | | All children need to participate in the councils and if there are any who don't, they need to be made to do so. |
| | | | Sometimes the leaders of the student council may respectfully disagree with the teacher or school director about certain things. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8 | In your own experience, how would you describe the involvement of each of the following implementers at school level? Please check one box for each implementer. | A-B |

| | Plays a key role | Not a key role but supportive role | No role to play |
|---|---|---|---|
| School Director | | | |
| Teacher | | | |
| Community Mem- | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | bers<br><br>Commune Council<br><br>DOE<br><br>POE<br><br>NGO | | | | 22 |
| 9 | Do you see the implementation of Children's Councils as fitting in with Child Friendly Schools or as a mostly separate activity?<br><br>    Yes, fits in well with CFS policy      Partly, it is relevant in some respects but not others      No, mostly separate from CFS      Don't Know<br><br>If you said 'Yes' or 'Partly', which dimension do you think it falls under?<br><br>    Dimension 1      Dimension 2      Dimension 3      Dimension 4      Dimension 5<br>    Dimension 6 | | | | A-B-G |
| 10 | Are there any resource materials to help schools implement children's councils?<br><br>     Yes      No      Not sure<br><br>(If you said 'No', go to Question 12.)<br><br>If you said 'Yes', what is the source of these documents? Check all that apply.<br><br>    Ministry      NGO      Other: _____ | | | | C-D-F |
| 11 | If there are materials, how familiar are you with them?<br><br>    I am very familiar with them      I am a little familiar with them<br>    I have never read them | | | | C-D-F |
| 12 | When training occurs in a school to set up children's councils, how is it done?<br><br>    Mostly lecturing<br>    A balance between lecturing and participant activities<br>    There are no trainings<br>    Don't know | | | | C-D |
| 13 | In your experience, who usually carries out the trainings when they occur?<br><br>    Mostly individuals from Ministry or Province level<br>     Mostly trainers from district level<br>    Mostly trainers from NGOs<br>    Schools do their own training based on Ministry documents<br>    Don't know | | | | C-D |
| 14 | In your view, what are the key challenges facing implementation of children's councils. Choose the most important challenge by placing a '1' in front of the leading challenge, a '2' in front of the next leading challenge, and a '3 in front of the next leading challenge.<br><br>__ Teachers and Directors don't have time to spend on the councils because they are busy with other work<br>__ There are no financial resources to support the councils<br>__ Understanding of how the councils should work is still too weak | | | | C-D |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | __ There is a shortage of personnel in the schools to take responsibility for the councils<br>__ Children are not interested in participating in the councils<br>__ Communities are not interested in participating in the councils.<br>__ Other: _____ | |
| 15 | Overall and based on your personal experience, how well do you think children's councils are working in the schools that are implementing them?<br><br>Nearly all schools are doing an excellent job<br>Most schools are doing well but some are not doing well<br>Some schools are doing well, but most are not doing well.<br>Nearly all are NOT able to implement the councils effectively<br>Don't know | C-D |
| 16 | What resources and materials does each school receive and do you feel schools use these materials effectively?<br><br><u>Resources/Materials Provided</u><br>Resource Documents<br>Financial support<br>In-kind materials like stationery, pens, paper, snacks, etc.<br>Uniforms<br>Identification tags<br>Other: _____<br><br>How effectively do you think these materials were used?<br>Very Effectively    Moderately Effectively    Not So Effectively | C-D |
| 17 | According to your own observations, did participation in Children's Councils increase students' involvement in the education system in terms of their:<br>a. Race?        Yes        No     Don't Know/Not sure<br><br>b. Ethnicity?    Yes        No     Don't Know/Not sure<br><br>c. Religion?     Yes        No     Don't Know/Not sure<br><br>d. Gender?      Yes        No    Don't Know/Not sure<br><br>e. Class Status?   Yes        No    Don't Know/Not sure | E1 |
| 18 | How would you describe the participation of children in the councils, where they are working?<br><br>All students are very willing to join<br>Most students are willing to join<br>Some are willing to join but others are not so interested<br>Most are not so willing to join so they need to be forced to do so | E1 |
| 19 | In general and in your own personal experience, how difficult is it to get teachers to volunteer to help stand as an adviser to the councils?<br><br>Not so difficult    A bit difficult    Very difficult | C-D-E2 |
| 20 | THIS QUESTION FOR SCHOOL PERSONNEL ONLY<br>Did the set up of a children's council at your school happen because you were told to set one up or because you wanted to do it yourself anyway?<br><br>We were told to do it    We wanted to do it ourselves    A little bit of both | E2 |

| 21 | In your experience, how involved are the following implementers in setting up and supporting children's councils? | | | | | E1, E2, E3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Fully Involved | Partially Involved | A Little Involved | Not at all Involved | |
| | POE DOE NGO Directors Teachers Children Community | | | | | |
| 22 | In your experience, who has the biggest burden in managing the children's councils?<br><br>The school director     The responsible teacher     The children themselves<br>Don't know | | | | | H |
| 23 | To your knowledge, is there a standardized instrument to assess the effectiveness of children's councils?<br><br>Yes     No     Don't Know<br><br>If you said 'Yes', who developed this assessment tool? _____ | | | | | H |
| 24 | Children's councils are supposed to have elections to choose the leadership. How would you describe these elections?<br><br>They are meaningful exercises<br>They are meaningless exercises because children choose who they are told to choose<br>They are meaningless exercises because children don't understand what they are doing<br>Don't know | | | | | H |
| 25 | According to Ministry guidelines, there are supposed to be 8 subgroups within a council to look at various issues such as culture, environment, health, etc.? Do you feel this is too many subgroups, too few, or just right?<br><br>Too many     Too few     Just right     Don't know | | | | | H |

| Research Question | Variable | Variable Reference Key |
|---|---|---|
| To find out the current situation of school CCs in Cambodia in terms of policy and practices. | Expectations of stakeholders at policy level | A |
| | Expectations of stakeholders at grassroots level | B |
| | Assessment of current performance by those at policy level (based on agreed standardized criteria) | C |
| | Assessment of current performance by those at grassroots level (based on agreed standardized criteria) | D |
| To define gaps as well as factors hindering and enabling the establishment and well functioning of the existing CCs. | Participatory outcomes (children)<br>Participatory outcomes (school personnel)<br>Participatory outcomes (community) | E1<br>E2<br>E3 |
| | Resourcing issues | F |
| | Contextual links with other development activities | G |
| | Management considerations | H |
| To come up with realistic recommendations, and comprehensive and effective strategies for future CC development in primary schools. | No variables/Will be based on analysis of Variables A to H | -- |

# Annex 2

## FORM B: Key Informant Interview

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***Directions for Facilitator:*** Please refer to the directions accompanying this interview guide in order to receive instructions about how the discussion process should be facilitated as well as how each question should be clarified and answers recorded.

Name of Primary School(s)    _____      Name of Facilitator: _____

_____      _____

_____      _____      Persons Interviewed:    No. _____

_____      _____      *Affiliation, circle one*:

_____      _____      Ministry, POE, DOE, NGO,

     _____      *School Director, Teacher*

Province/City:      _____

District/Khan      _____      Date of Interview: _____

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**Introductory Statement:** Today, I would like to hear about your expectations and observations of Student Councils. There are several areas that I would like to discuss with you including those relating to level of involvement on behalf of participants, resource and materials issues, as well as your overall thoughts concerning their success. In all the things that we will discuss today, I want to stress that there is no right answer, only what you think. Also, I want you to know that everything you say or write will be kept in this room and not shared with others.

| Number | Interview Questions | Variable |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | a.    What expectations did participants have for the creation of children's councils? Did you have any idea what the councils were for before hand? <br> b.    How have these expectations changed? | A, B |
| 2. | a.    Could you give some background on what the Ministry's expectations for Children's Councils are and why they were created? <br> b.    In general and in your opinion, how well are these expectations being realized? What do you base your judgments on? | A-B |
| 3. | In your opinion, what other policies and/or programs of the Ministry do Children's Councils also support? | G |
| 4. | a.    In general and according to your knowledge, was training generally provided to set up Children's Councils? <br> b.    If yes, what type of training did participants receive before and after the set up of Children's Councils, including assistance for school directors, teachers and students? <br> c.    Do you think that this training was effective? | F |
| 5. | What help or support was available to address questions participants had after the training had taken place? | F |
| 6. | What changes, if any, did participants make to the process of creating and implementing Children's Councils that you feel added to the success of the program? | C-D |
| 7. | What types of resources or materials, if any, have been available for participants? | F |

| 8. | In the future, the addition of what resources or materials would bolster a successful Children's Council? | F |
|---|---|---|
| 9. | How did communities respond to the implementation of Children's Councils and what was the level of their involvement? If they were involved, what kinds of activities did they do with the councils? | E3 |
| 10. | What relevance do you think participation in Children's Councils has outside school for children? For community members? For schools? | C-D |
| 11. | What role, if any, do you see NGOs having in the implementation of Children's Councils? | H |
| 12. | In your opinion, what would improve the implementation of children's councils? | C-D |
| 13. | In your opinion, what would you say are the key challenges for implementing Children's Councils in terms of participation? In terms of management? In terms of resourcing? | C-D |

Statement of Research Variables

| Research Question | Variable | Variable Reference Key |
|---|---|---|
| To find out the current situation of school CCs in Cambodia in terms of policy and practices. | Expectations of stakeholders at policy level | A |
| | Expectations of stakeholders at grassroots level | B |
| | Assessment of current performance by those at policy level (based on agreed standardized criteria) | C |
| | Assessment of current performance by those at grassroots level (based on agreed standardized criteria) | D |
| To define gaps as well as factors hindering and enabling the establishment and well functioning of the existing CCs. | Participatory outcomes (children) Participatory outcomes (school personnel) Participatory outcomes (community) | E1 E2 E3 |
| | Resourcing issues | F |
| | Contextual links with other development activities | G |
| | Management considerations | H |
| To come up with realistic recommendations, and comprehensive and effective strategies for future CC development in primary schools. | No variables/Will be based on analysis of Variables A to H | -- |

# Annex 3

## FORM C1: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

*Directions for Facilitator:* Please refer to the directions accompanying this interview guide in order to receive instructions about how the discussion process should be facilitated as well as how each question should be clarified and answers recorded.

Names of Facilitators: _____ Persons Interviewed: (Total): ____ Fem: ____

Province/City: _____

District/Khan _____ Date of Interview: _____

**Introductory Statement:** Today, I would like to talk to you all a little bit about your experiences in Children's Councils. We are seeking to understand your expectations and impressions of already established programs as well as finding ways to make improvements. All input is helpful and will not be shared with anyone outside this room. Thank you.

| No | Questions | Variable Reference |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | What were your expectations for Children's Councils in terms of implementation before schools began participating? <br><br> Facilitator Notes: <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> Discussion guide: Are teachers aware of the goals and expectations of the Ministry for CCs? Have they ever read any of the documentation developed by the Ministry (might be interesting to get a show of hands)? How well do expressed expectations match those, which are officially spelled out in MoEYS documentation? | B |
| 2. | How closely, do you feel, are actual activities in your schools meeting these expectations? Moreover, what factors are contributing to schools' success at meeting your expectations? <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> Discussion Guide: How well do what policy makers envisioned for Children's Council match what they've personally seen? Who is pulling their weight; Who is not? How would they rate what is happening (get a show of hands of those who think things are going very well, satisfactory, not so well)? Why do they think their expectations are being met or not met? | C |

| 3. | In what way would you adapt the program to help schools better meet your expectations? | C |
|---|---|---|
| | _____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br><br>Discussion Guide: What needs to be changed in the structure or design of Children's Councils? Why does this have to be changed? What would replace what there is now? Ask specifically about potential weaknesses such as the profusion of sub-groups within the councils and whether these are realistic or not? Are elections meaningful? Do students really fulfill their roles as officers or does the teacher play a top-heavy role? | |
| 4. | What other policies do you think that the Children's Councils are meant to fulfill? Based on your own understanding, what is the link between these other policies and Children's Councils?<br><br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br><br>Discussion Guide: Before mentioning the link with Child Friendly Schools (Dimension 5), see if teachers can identify this link on their own. Is there a link with PB funding? Should there be? | G |
| 5. | How well are Children's Councils resourced both in terms of technical materials and financial resources?<br><br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br>_____<br><br>Discussion Guide: Were they trained about Children's Councils before being asked to implement? Have they ever seen any documentary materials about CCs? Do they get any financial resourcing from the government for CCs? From the community? From NGOs? How necessary is this resourcing? At this level, how important do informants find material aids: guidelines (i.e. the Supplementary Document, February, 2007) as well as physical tools that will help both adult and child participants. | F |
| 6. | What do you see your role as the teacher in the implementation of Children's Councils? What do you do exactly? | E/H |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | 29 |
| | Discussion Guide: Success of Children's Councils is partly dependent upon how well all players understand their roles and the roles of other players. By discovering how they learned to play their roles, we can find gaps in their understanding that may cause deficiencies in accomplishment. What exactly do teachers see their role as being? Do they shift more and more responsibility to children as time goes or do they play a dominating role throughout? What things can they entrust children to do on their own and what needs to be done by the teacher? | |
| 7. | How have NGOs aided Children's Councils in your schools? Are they vital to their success? Why or why not? | F |
| | Discussion Guide: Aid can extend beyond material goods like notebooks, paper, and food, to facilitating training or offering assistance in other capacities. Sometimes, though, too much aide can hinder progress. Who helped, what did they do, was it an appropriate contribution? | |

# Annex 4

## Terms of Reference

### An Assessment of the Existing Children's Councils in Cambodia

**I. Rational**
The Child Rights Foundation (CRF) is a Local Cambodian Child-focused, non-profit, non-political, non-religious and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). Our vision is for all of Cambodian's children to grow up and to be educated in a peaceful and healthy environment so that they are able to exercise their rights to live meaningful lives to participate fully in society.

To reach this end, CRF in partnership cooperation with the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) have been implementing projects/programs promoting Child Rights in Education System. Of which a one and half year - project **"Strengthening Children's Councils to Improve Quality Education**" , started from January 2009 to June 2010,  is implemented in 20 targeted schools of Angkor Chum district, Siem Reap Province, Dambae district, Kampong Cham province and Ta Khmao district, Kandal province with the following objectives:

- Key Officials from MoEYS, Provincial Office of Education (PoEYS), and District Office of Education (DoEYS), School Principals, Classroom Teachers and School-Community Support Committee gained knowledge and experience on topics related to Children's Council (CC) strengthening and take actions to include and protect children in particular the most disadvantaged, and engage and support them in the activities of the CC.
- Children, in particular the most disadvantaged, are reached by, engaged in and benefiting from non-violent and safe school with child friendly learning environment.
- A model for strengthening CC documented and widely shared among government and NGO agencies working in the same area.

In order to ensure the effectiveness and success of the project an independent assessment of the existing CCs needs to be necessary conducted.

**II. Objectives of the Assessment**
The objectives of the assessment are as follows:
1. To find out the current situation of school CCs in Cambodia in terms of policy and practices.
2. To define gaps as well as factors hindering and enabling the establishment and well functioning of the existing CCs.
3. To come up with realistic recommendations, and comprehensive and effective strategies for future CC development in primary schools.

**III. Consultant Qualification or Experience Required**
One credible independent consultant will be selected. The minimum qualification and experience required are:
- Relevant post graduate background;
- Relevant work experience in the field of child rights, child participation and child protection;
- Knowledge and experience of Cambodia education system and situation especially in CCs;
- Proven competence in performance review/assessment and working with village populations, students and teachers;
- Experience in the design of methodology and tools;
- Experience in management and good organizational skills;
- Good interview and analytical skills;
- Good communicating with children;
- Excellent report writing skills;
- Fluency in English.

- **Attachments**
- Curriculum Vitae of the proponents and contact details
- Referees
- Sample of previous performance review

## IV. Consultant Task and Activities
The consultancy is envisaged as a process that will consist of a number of clearly defined tasks.

## Task 1:
The consultant will be to meet with relevant CRF staff during initial meeting at CRF Office in order to develop:
   a) a common understanding of the TOR among the consultant and CRF where the current text appears unclear,
   b) a broad timetable for carrying out the performance
   c) address any logistical or administrative issues

## Task 2:
The consultant will prepare a work plan which will include information about the proposed methodology, tools and timeline etc. These tools need to be fully described and annexed to the work plan.

## Task 3:
The consultant is responsible for preparing the draft of the evaluation in English and presenting to CRF. The final report will be reviewed by him/her afterward.

## V. Deliverables
Final report of the evaluation will be provided in electronic form with 3 hard copies.

## VI. Methodology
The consultant will come up with the proposed methodology for the performance review such as data collection methods proposed to be employed during the performance review. This should include performance review matrix that identifies the key questions to be addressed and how they will be answered by the way of which methods. Child participation and child friendly method must be use for this performance.

## VII. Implementation Arrangement
A desk review of information sources should be the first part of the process followed by the design of the indicators and data collection tools. Next, the consultant will involve field visits to the sample-side selected provinces. During the visits there will be discussions, interviews (formal and informal) and meetings with CRF, in-service teachers, students, community, and other stakeholders. Then will follow the data analysis and the drafting and finalization of the report.

The consultant will be responsible for being self sufficient as regards logistics (office space, administrative support, telecommunication, printing, transport, etc.).

## VIII. Time Frame
Preparation and signature of the Service Agreement is expected by 25th February, 2009. The final report is expected by 25th March, 2009.

## IX. Procedure:
Interest consultants or companies with experience in this kind of assessment should submit their application, CV with the experience or proposal to CRF Office located at #71N, Street 402, Sangkat Tumnup Teuk, Khan Chamcar Morn, Phnom Penh or via email to crf2002@online.com.kh by 20th February 2009.