

# CAMBODIA

## Enhancing active student participation by using the “bottom up- approach” in the Student Council in Bunnary Hun Sen Samaki Primary School Phnom Penh

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### 1. Introduction

#### **Education in Cambodia**

Cambodia is located in the South-East Asia and join boarders with Thailand on the West, with Thailand and Lao on the North, with Vietnam on the East and with the Gulf of Thailand on the South. The Cambodia Education system has its roots in the French Colonial Empire. The first established Education system was on Primary level. After the French Colonial left, the Education system has been developed and expanded. According to the Education Congress report in academic year 2013-2014, it showed the Education system in Cambodia as:

1. Preschool sub sector, cover children age 3 to 5 years old and normally in public school, community preschool, private preschool and home based education program.
2. Primary sub sector, apply for children age 6 to 11 years old and performs in public school and private school.
3. General Secondary Education sub sector cover both lower secondary and upper secondary. The system usually applies for student age 12 to 17 years old, and performs in public and private schools (MoEYS, Report on Education in academic year 2013-2014, 2014). Ministry of Education Youth and Sport also have non-formal education for complete illiteracy people in country and it is the sub sector also.

## 2. Frame of reference

### Primary Education Context

Children's access to primary school has improved, with the enrolment rate improving from 94.8% to 98.2% with no gender disparity, repetition rates was 4.5 % and drop-out rates was 10.5 % (EMIS). The Child Friendly School Program started 2004-2005. UNICEF and Save the Children Norway (SCN) have implemented pilot activities in Kom Pong Cham province by UNICEF and Kom Pong Chhnang province by SCN. In 2005 Cambodia established a national working group to developed Child Friendly School materials for implementation. The CFS program has been implemented in Cambodia but only at primary level. Based on the good result that the program have brought we are now implementing and broaden the basic education grade 1 to 9. It is important to keep the 6 dimensions of the CFS program in mind:

1. All children can enrol
2. Effective teaching and learning
3. Health, safety and child protection
4. Gender sensitivity response
5. Participation by children, family and communities
6. Education System Support.

The Steering Committee at national level and CFS working group at sub-national level are responsible for the implementation of the CFS program. The active team are National Core Trainer (NCT) at the central and District Training level and Monitoring Team (DTMT) at the sub-national level. In purpose of reaching the achievement of the Education for all (EFA) we have other activities such as: Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) support by Global Partnership for Education (GPE). Furthermore, the Khmer text book in grade 1 to 3 has been revised and implemented in primary school level. Bilingual Education is processing for the minority group. The accelerated program has been provided to over age children to access. School improvement grants (a program that expanded nationwide in school year 2013/2014) and thousands of teachers have been trained in Effective Teaching and Learning (MoEYS, 2013).

Many schools require better quality inputs, especially schools in rural areas where the role of communities and parents has to be deepened to address cross-cutting social and economic issues at community and home levels. Teacher performance needs to be regularly monitored and assessed; there remains a gap in the number of qualified teachers needed. Many more school principals need support in leadership and management. Improving data accuracy requires further work and better harmonization between Education Management Information System and a school quality assurance system needs to be developed (MoEYS, 2013).

Primary education has been considered as a priority and the large percentage of MoEYS budget allocated to this area needs to be maintained. Good public financial management requires the demonstration of a strong linkage between resources and results.

Several development partners will continue to provide financial and technical development of the sub sector: the Global Partnership for Education will develop a program, SIDA provides support through a school improvement grant to every school and EU provides budget support which creates the possibility to increase the school operating budget through Program Budgeting (PB) funds. The multi donor funded Capacity Development Partnership Fund provides opportunities to strengthen capacity at all levels. World Food Program (WFP) will continue the School Feeding program. And other DPs and NGOs implement innovative programs which provide input to policy discussion and possible scale up (Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, 2013).

### 3. Purpose

Child Friendly School program is implemented in 6,993 primary schools in the country (EMIS). The result of CFS Schools have 3 levels such as: basic, medium and advance. The number of school reaching basic 27.29 %, medium 39.45 % and advance 33.26 %.

In particular, one component related to the rights of participation of students in the Child Friendly School program is dimension 5: *Participation of children, family, and community such as activities*

1. Collection of children's work for student portfolio and exhibition for community
2. Social activities/mobilization for interest of community
3. Student councils,
4. Strategy by which school helps families and communities.

Focus on the third core activities of dimension number 5: Student Councils, research tells us that most of schools did not manage to implement student councils well. In general, the form of the guideline is very good and in detail, but in reality it does not work/run. Batch 21 wants to highlight the norms in school and discuss why they need to change in order to create better opportunities for the school to implement democratic Student Councils. We believe by applying the concept of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) that the need for the bottom – up approach will be visible. All the processes of the Student Councils today follows the top-down approach, which means that all the activities in the Student Council are set up by the adults and implemented by adults. Referring to Roger Hart's work on participation (see figure below) we can say that we need to take a great leap forward and invite the students to take their own initiative and be their own leaders. Our aim is to show that it is possible to move from rung 2-3 (young people are decoration and tokenized) to rung 4-5 (young people assigned and informed and young people consulted and informed) on Hart's ladder on participation. We even can reach the higher rungs.

## Roger Hart's Ladder of Young People's Participation



**Rung 8:** Young people & adults share decision-making

**Rung 7:** Young people lead & initiate action

**Rung 6:** Adult-initiated, shared decisions with young people

**Rung 5:** Young people consulted and informed

**Rung 4:** Young people assigned and informed

**Rung 3:** Young people tokenized\*

**Rung 2:** Young people are decoration\*

**Rung 1:** Young people are manipulated\*

*\*Note Hart explains the last three rungs are non-participation*

Adapted from Hart, R. (1992) Children's Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre  
Created by The Freechild Project - <http://freechild.org>

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To increase and strengthen participation of Student Council Committee Members on the dimension 5 of the CFS program we refer to article 12 mentioned general principals of fundamental importance of the Convention on the Right of the Child.

Our main objective is to reinforce the implementation of Student Council from top-down to bottom-up approach and encourage student to participate in activities and make decision by their own (UNICEF & Third edition, 2007). We want to focus on development of the knowledge and practice of the School Council and the role and responsibility of every student. We hope that the future Student Council will be run by confident students expressing their value of democracy and knowledge based on the concept on CRC.

According to article 12 (Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Right of the Child page 150), "The child as a subject of rights and an active participant", the committee considers the importance of recognizing the rights of the child to express the child's views and participation in various activities. It is beneficial for the child, for the family, for the community, the school and the state for democracy to involve the child and make use of his or her capacities (UNICEF, 2007). Paragraphs 6 claims that "A world feed for children, states commit themselves in its declaration to listen to children and ensure that participation is implemented (Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Right of the Child page 152). We must respect the children's right to express themselves to participate in all matter affecting them in

accordance with their age and maturity” (UNICEF, 2007). To respect children and to see them as present citizens will help every society to build a better future for all.

In general, we aim to increase student’s participation in school and community activities so it could make students learning outcome more effectively. Article 31 in the CRC, highlights the child’s rights to rest, leisure, play, and to be involved in recreational activities and to participate in cultural and artistic life. It clearly combine the right to play and the right to be engage in play and recreation activities appropriate to the age of the child with the right to receive quality education (UNICEF, 2007).

### **Target group and stakeholders**

Our target group is the students, especially student council members (from grade 4 to 6), the school principal, teachers (from grade 4 to 6) and parents in Bunrany Hun Sen Samarky primary in Phnom Penh. The stakeholders are the community members, the District Office of Education, the Provincial officer of Education and officers at the Department of Primary Education in Ministry of Education Youth and Sport.

## **4. Methodology and activities**

According to our project plan for batch 21<sup>st</sup>, the team has done progress activities since we came back from the training in Sweden. On 5<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, the team had a meeting at Primary Education Department of MoEYS and discussed our project plan and assigned some tasks and responsibilities.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2014, we met the stakeholders at the target school. This event gather the School principal, teachers, Student Councils members, parents, officers from District of Education and officers from the Capital of Education from Bunrany Hun Sen Samaki Primary School.

The team has made an agenda and presented the topic of CRC and the background for our change project and asked for permission to implement the project in their school. Then the team suggested some activities for the school to implement such as up-date the Student Committee structure in the school, and find out the role and responsibility of each individual member.





After the school confirmed and provided permission, the CRC change agent team conducted another meeting to confirm tasks for the previous meeting and discuss how to develop training materials on CRC to the target group in the target school. They also discussed the tools for the monitoring and follow up monitoring. It was held on 5<sup>th</sup> January 2015 according to the schedule.

On 24<sup>th</sup> February 2015, Team batch 21<sup>st</sup> had conducted the training on CRC to the target group in the target primary school. 27 persons participated in the training; School Principals, Teachers at grade 4 to 6, Student Councils representative from grade 4 to 6 in morning shift and afternoon shift. This was the first training and it is aimed to strengthen the CRC knowledge focusing on 3 P's and children's participation, based on article 12 of CRC.

After the training, we conducted one more meeting to wrap up the results from the mid plan implementation and find out information for the progress report. It was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2015 at Early Childhood Education Department, MoEYS.

After coming back from the progress seminar in Solo, central Java (Indonesia) in March 2015, team batch 21<sup>th</sup> continued the project as planned. On May 2015, the monitoring follow up was conducted to see what has happened and discussed the implementation way with all members of the student council. We divided the group and met group 1 with the teachers and the principal and group 2 with all members of the student councils.

On the 27<sup>nd</sup> of June 2015, the team has conducted workshops for the school principal, all grade 4 to 6 teachers and all members of student councils from grade 4 to 6. The workshops aimed to discuss how to implement the CRC in this school in particular.



School Principal and teacher discussion on CRC implementation





Discussion with Student council members on CRC implementation

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2015, we monitored the change process and did some follow up on the tasks which were promised by the school principal and all stakeholders. We met the school principal and checked what had happened in the classroom that was reserved for the student council and the development of the different clubs.

After the monitoring, the CRC team met and discussed the result from the monitoring. Then, we decided to arrange another workshop. We developed new materials for workshop, such as translation of a version in Khmer, presentation slides, attendance sheet of student councils (club member) meeting, reporting format of club member meeting.

The training of the student councils was conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2016, and 26 student councils member from grade 4 to 6 participated. The aim was to assign new members to the different clubs and to plan for different club actions among the year. They discussed the new role and the norms for participation among each club (sport, study, and art). After the discussion they prepared the classroom corner for each club and present their ideas and their design for the material. The team has conducted a meeting to draft the report in February 2016 during the Impact seminar in Phnom Penh.



Group discussion among study club and a line to select club of participation

## 5. Results

In the first meeting, the CRC change agent team 21<sup>st</sup> got the task to review the existing documents. We developed tools for the training. We wrote the letter to the school asking for permission to implement the CRC project. We made appointment to meet the stakeholder at the target school. And we succeeded to implement the project.

An unexpected outcome is the cooperation with Plan International, Cambodia, which will support this project. This is a picture showing the first time we met all the target groups at Bunray Huns Samaki Primary school, the CRC team has got the permission to implement the CRC project from the school principal and school support committee. And they supported our aim to implement the project at their school.



The school principal also agree with the team's suggestion to up-date the structure of the Student Councils Committee representative; re-identify the role and responsibility of each member based on the Child friendly School for primary school guideline in dimension 5. The team got the baseline information for the project based on interviews we made among the participants, some questions about the current situation in the school.

After our second meeting, the training documents, the pre-test and the post-test, the PowerPoint presentation and the equipment has been completely developed.



All the target groups have attended the training. During the training they asked many questions related to the content CRC and the 3P's. They also raise some current situations based on 3P in their school and we had a discussion with them how to find the ways for students to participate in the class and in the school activities. Solutions how to involve class and school activities developed based on brainstorming and discussions. Afterwards they agreed and made commitment to apply to monitor changes of attitudes of students for those who do not involve in the activities. The School principal and the teachers understood the



CRC- concept and 3P's. They wanted to support the student activities and do follow up – monitoring to improved more participation for the students in school activities.

At the end of the follow up monitoring and discussion, the student councils decided to create three different clubs and the idea was supported by the school principal and the teachers. A study club, sport club and art club have been developed and selected member from the student councils were chosen to represent each club.

The team suggested to develop training materials to support the club member's implementation of their rights and responsibilities and the bottom-up approach. The school principal decided to give one class the responsibility for decorate the club's room. The school principal and the teachers had developed terms of reference and agreed to support each club.

After monitoring on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2015, we observed that the school has identified the new student council's member for year 2016. The room chosen for the clubs has been adding the defending mental of the window to secure the material. But we discovered that the newly assigned student council was not ready to take the steps to decide about the clubs. So we had to develop another training workshop to guide them in how to implement the participation in particularly and to guide them how to elect and select leaders for the clubs (Sport, Art and Study club) and once more to discuss and motivate the bottom-up-approach as a tool to implement participation.

Before the training, team 21 translated our project plan into Khmer to clarify for the school, prepared power point slides, hand outs, draft ToR of each club, model attendance sheet of each club meeting, reporting format of the meeting during they have met.

27 student councils members have participated in the training. They have selected the club leaders and members. The leader of each club has been selected based on election among the student councils of grade 4 to 6. The new role and ToR of each member has been agreed among the club member and finally each corner of the classroom have been designed by the students based on club function and free choices, designed by themselves. The planning of each clubs, their needs, activities and content has been developed and agreed among member for implement the ToR.

## 6. Discussion and Reflection

Refer to the outcome: Student Council will be run by confident student expressing their values of democracy and knowledge based on the concept on CRC, the team has almost completed the activities for the first output, but one activity is left, collecting line data for the first monitoring.

On the second output, the team has just started the first training for increasing the participation in the school and have many activities left, such as improve the student councils to push their member in active listening, active participation, doing drama, doing role play and group work.

The last output is not on time to be implemented yet. In terms of monitoring activities the team should find existing document and develop monitoring tools for the bottom-up approach, then we are ready to collect data and analyse it.

We have found that the school principal provides strong support to our project and follows his commitments and promises. The teachers have also done their task and supported our implementation. This support to our project is very important and gives us a better potential for improving the CRC, particularly the participation of every student. We have seen an increasing motivation among the students, they are happy to improve their roles and to understand how participation can help them and even if they lack of materials and equipment, they feel good about starting implementation their rights at their school.

The parents' reflection to this project is very important. They are committed to support each club such as sport equipment for the sport club, music equipment for the art club, and books for study club.

CRC change agent team 21 do hope that the club implementation CRC of student councils of Bun Rany Hun Sen Samaki will implementation the role and activities what they have set in each club plaining with effective. And we expect that, they will get beneficiary with new sharing knowledge and have improved physical and mental development.

In general, we observed that our target group in this project have commitment to involve and implement our project and they seem very happy to be part of the project. The CRC team also has commitment to implement this project to change negative ways, which differ from the theory in the implement hand book of CRC.

## 7. Way Forward

Team batch 21<sup>st</sup> will also do monitoring till the end of school year, and wrap up the lesson learn from their implementation. Team will prepare one sample of each club and designed specific term of reference for sharing to stakeholder. We will write a proposal to disseminate our result from the implementation in one target school to Primary education department, provincial education officer in charge of primary education level, DoE level and some primary school who wish to implement our model.

# Appendix 1

## Club .....attendance sheet format

No	Name of member	From class	October				November				December				Total
			1 <sup>st</sup> week	2 <sup>nd</sup> week	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	4 <sup>th</sup> week	1 <sup>st</sup> week	2 <sup>nd</sup> week	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	4 <sup>th</sup> week	1 <sup>st</sup> week	2 <sup>nd</sup> week	3 <sup>rd</sup> week	4 <sup>th</sup> week	

# Appendix 2

Reporting Format for club..... meeting

Date .....

Number of participant:.....

Meeting agenda:.....

1-.....

2-.....

3-.....

Results reflect to agenda:

1.....

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2.....

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3.....

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Reporter

Leader of club member