

## **THE HIGHLAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

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CARE International in Cambodia established the Highland Children's Education Project in January 2002 in Ratanakiri Province, North East Cambodia. The primary objective of the Project was "to address the needs of disadvantaged ethnic minority groups through the establishment of community schools targeting girls and boys who have never enrolled or who have dropped out of the formal system". A second objective was later added "to provide the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) with a model for the delivery of basic education in remote areas of Cambodia to highland minority peoples".

Since its relatively modest aims at inception, the Project has evolved into a complex and ambitious educational enterprise. A number of additional projects, such as the Bending Bamboo Project, with its focus on the educational needs of marginalised girls, and the Child Friendly Secondary Schools Project, now complement the original Project and significantly extend the aims of the overall enterprise. In order to maintain coherence between all the elements CARE Cambodia has recently brought the projects and their activities together as a 'Program' and the linkages within the Program made explicit through a combined logframe, risk matrix and monitoring and evaluation matrix. These projects and their activities are now collectively called the Highland Community Education Program (HCEP).

In January 2003 the Project opened schools in six remote communities in Ratanakiri with a total enrolment of 278 students, all at the Grade 1 level and 45% of whom were girls. By February 2008 the schools had a total enrolment of 801 (44% girls) and were staffed by 42 locally recruited and trained, indigenous community teachers. In 2008 Grades 1 to 6 are in October 2008 the first graduates will access secondary education in the state schools. The schools are all bilingual with initial literacy being developed in one of two vernacular languages, Tampuan or Kreung, with the national language, Khmer, being taught orally in the first year then phased in as the language of instruction over the ensuing 3 years. The Project adapts the state primary curriculum to the local context incorporating life-skills that draw upon the knowledge and culture of community people.

A staff of 53 are currently employed in professional capacities (15 of them Indigenous) to implement HCEP which is managed through three operational units - a Teacher Training Unit (TTU), a Resource Production Unit (RPU) and a Community Support Unit (CSU). The TTU devises and delivers pre-service and in-service teacher training and personal academic upgrading to the teachers, many of whom have had very little formal education. The RPU, with input from the communities, produces the vernacular teaching resources which are vetted and approved by the MoEYS before use in the schools, and is developing a curriculum for teaching Khmer language. The CSU works to build the capacity of the Community School Boards which act as management committees, selecting teachers, monitoring the schools, and motivating parents to send children to school. This capacity building activity has been critical to the success of the CSB model and is central to the community development objectives of the HCEP.

## **1. THE HIGHLAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

This section provides background on the development of the Program, identifies its constituent projects, and summarises the findings of a recent independent evaluation of that project.

### **1.1 Background and Historical Development**

The Highland Children's Education Project ("the Project") was established, as a pilot, by CARE International in Cambodia, in January 2002, in Ratanakiri Province, North East Cambodia. The objective of the Project was "to address the needs of disadvantaged ethnic minority groups through the establishment of community schools targeting girls and boys who have never enrolled or who have dropped out of the formal system". This objective was addressed by setting up schools in six remote ethnic minority communities with teaching undertaken by locally recruited and trained Indigenous community teachers, through a bilingual model of education.

At commencement the Project was relatively small-scale, but as those involved with its implementation came to better understand the needs of the communities and to appreciate the strength of the human resources within the communities, the Project developed in complexity and scope. From being a project primarily about the provision of schooling, it evolved into a project about development through education. And while CARE remained strongly committed to continuing to work in the original six communities, the applicability of the approach to many other similar remote ethnic communities became apparent. From the start there was also the understanding within CARE that if the Project could demonstrate that a bilingual education approach was a successful way of delivering "quality, relevant education" to ethnic minority children, then this would assist the Royal Cambodian Government's education system. To this end, a second objective was added: "to provide the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) with a model for the delivery of basic education in remote areas of Cambodia to highland minority peoples".

During the four year period 2002 to 2005 the Project was covered by formal agreements with the MoEYS which allowed CARE to develop and trial its bilingual approach in the school sector. The Project over these years is generally referred to as HCEP I. In the early stages of design the Project was conceived as having only a three year life, which later, to allow for establishment, was extended to four years, with the children going through to Grade 3 before either moving into a state school or ending their formal education. However the early and obvious success of the Project, and the developing interest in the approach by the MoEYS, resulted in the decision to further extend the project as HCEP II over the years 2006 to 2008 and to take the first cohort of students through to the completion of Grade 6.

Since its relatively modest aims at inception the Project has evolved into a complex and ambitious educational enterprise. A number of additional projects now complement the original Project and significantly extend the aims of the overall enterprise. The main complementary project is known as “Bending Bamboo” and focuses on the educational needs of marginalised girls and young mothers. These projects and their activities are now collectively called the Highland Community Education Program.

## **1.2 Overview of the Highland Children’s Education Project**

The Project commenced in January 2002 with a full year being necessary to establish the schools rather than the six months initially envisaged. The preparations included finalising negotiations with the MoEYS and signing a memorandum of understanding;<sup>1</sup> setting up the office and Project infrastructure; recruiting staff; running intertwining training programs for the teacher trainers, the community teachers, the curriculum developers and the community support workers; establishing and training the community school boards and through them mobilising the communities to construct their schools; recruiting the community teachers; devising and delivering the teacher training pre-service curriculum; preparing the school curriculum and resource materials in two vernacular languages; negotiating with the Ministry for approval to use the orthographies developed for the Tampuan and Kreung scripts; and educating senior Government officials about the project and winning their support.

In January 2003 the Project opened schools in six remote communities in Ratanakiri with a total enrolment of 278 students all at the Grade 1 level, 45% of whom were girls. By February 2006 the schools had a total enrolment of 613 (44% girls) and were staffed by 37 locally recruited, Indigenous community teachers. In 2006 Grades 1 to 4 are now offered and the aim of HCEP II is to carry the schools through to the Grade 6 level by 2008. The schools are all bilingual with initial literacy being developed in one of two vernacular languages, Tampuan or Kreung, with the national language, Khmer, being taught orally in the first year then phased in over the ensuing years as both the language of instruction and as a subject within the curriculum. The Project adapts the state primary curriculum to the local context incorporating life-skills that draw upon the knowledge and culture of community people.

A staff of 53 (15 of them Indigenous) are currently employed in professional capacities to implement HCEP which is managed through three operational units - a Teacher Training Unit (TTU), a Resource Production Unit (RPU) and a Community Support Unit (CSU). The TTU devises and delivers pre-service and in-service teacher training and personal academic upgrading to the teachers, many of whom have had very little formal education. The RPU, with input from the communities, produces the vernacular teaching resources which are vetted and approved by the MoEYS before use in the schools, and

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<sup>1</sup> *Memorandum of Understanding* covering years 2002 –2004 signed 10 June 2002

is developing a curriculum for teaching Khmer language. The CSU assists the local Community School Boards which act as management committees, selecting teachers, monitoring schools, and motivating parents to send their children to school.

### **1.3 The Evaluation of the Highland Children's Education Project**

In March 2006 an extensive and independent evaluation of HCEP I was carried out. A summary of the evaluation, extracted from the evaluation report, follows:

The first finding of the evaluation is that HCEP I has achieved its primary objective of providing quality, relevant education to the children in the six target communities to a very high standard. The educational program has been implemented in an exemplary manner and offers many lessons on how to deliver educational services to ethnic minority children. Central to the success of the Project has been the role played by the Community School Boards. Vesting genuine ownership and control of the schools in these boards is identified in the report as the single most important factor in the success of the HCEP I model.

The second finding of the evaluation is that HCEP I has provided the Ministry with an effective model of education, in this case a bilingual education model. The report suggests that, in large measure, the MoEYS, at both national and provincial levels, is favourably disposed towards many of the concepts inherent in a bilingual approach to primary education for children who speak a vernacular language as their mother tongue and know little or no Khmer. There is much that has been developed or is under development through the Project in terms of curricula, teaching materials, training courses, and approaches and procedures that potentially have a wide applicability to education across the remote highland provinces of Cambodia. One focus for the Project should be the continued development of these resources.

The third finding of the evaluation is that the mechanisms used for monitoring have included regular and detailed narrative and financial reporting, field trips for officials, workshops, and meetings. Overall, the Project has been developed in a highly professional manner and its activities thoroughly and appropriately monitored.

### **1.4 Overview of the Bending Bamboo Project**

The Bending Bamboo initiative targets girls from ethnic minority communities in Ratanakiri. These girls, many of them young mothers, are marginalized from almost all education opportunities. Despite living near government schools, they do not participate in the education being offered because of a number of constraints and barriers - namely the need to assist with child-minding tasks for their own children or younger siblings. The Bending Bamboo project will identify and work with these constraints, by turning them into resources that inform educational programs and practice. Planned activities include study-play groups, an early childhood development program, the production of a life-skills curriculum for use in both BB and HCEP II, Village Women's Committees, and a program of inservice activities for teachers in State schools to disseminate lessons learned from the BB and HCEP projects.

In 2008 an extensive action research resulted in a Situational Analysis providing a detailed insight in the real educational situation in this remote province based on quantitative and qualitative research with many parents, teachers and students.

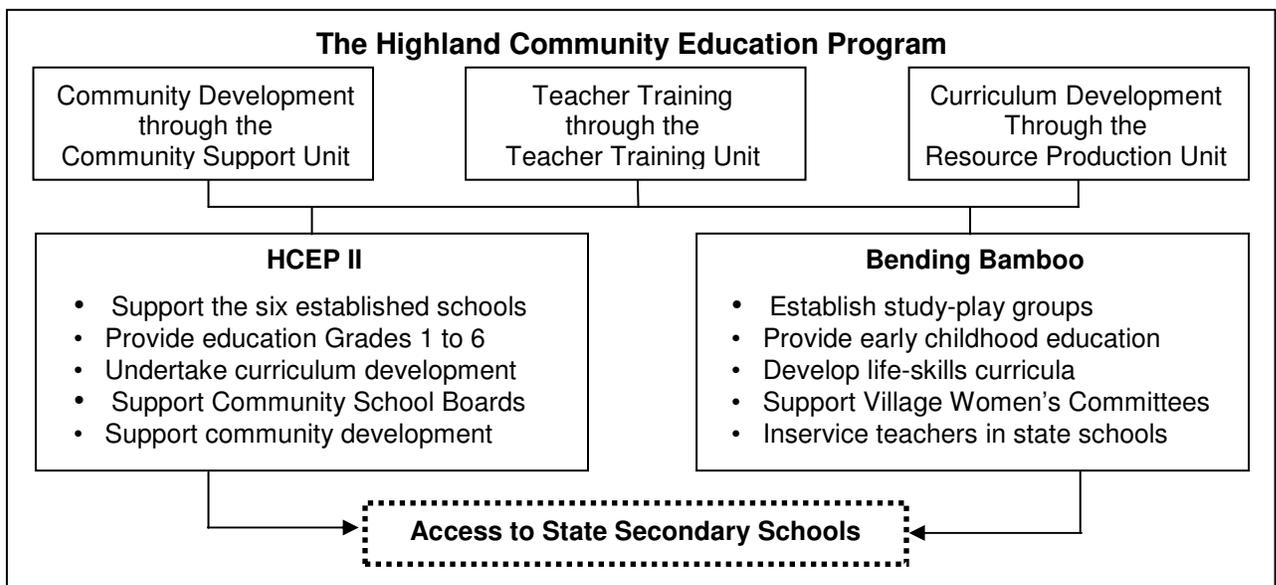
The Bending Bamboo project is now entering its second phase, which will take it to 2012 with ECD, Lifeskills and bilingual primary state schools. On going action research will be an integral part of Bending Bamboo.

The collective experience and lessons learned from CARE Cambodia's Girls and Basic Education program, particularly those of HCEP I and II - and its successful community development and participation mechanisms - inform this initiative. While HCEP I developed a model of bilingual and bicultural community school education in remote highland villages, Bending Bamboo takes the first step towards mainstreaming the HCEP I model of education into government schools in ethnic minority areas.

### 1.5 The Highland Community Education Program: Bringing the Projects Together

Diagram 1 shows the basic structure of the HCEP with its two main projects, HCEP II and Bending Bamboo.

Diagram 1: Basic Structure of the Highland Community Education Program



HCEP II and Bending Bamboo are supported by three operational units. While the Units were set up under HCEP I and serve primarily HCEP II, it is expected that as Bending Bamboo develops, there will be considerable synergies between the central projects, for example in the areas of early childhood education and the development of life-skills curricula. Other smaller projects which complement aspects of these main projects are not shown in Diagram 1. They include:

- Scholarships for Students: overseeing the US embassy's micro-scholarships program offered to Indigenous students studying English at state high schools in Ban Lung, capital of Ratanakiri.
- Child Friendly Secondary Schools project. A three year project to improve secondary state schools according to the six dimensions of the CFS policy to create a quality education environment in schools that will absorb the graduates of the HCEP schools.

## **2. PROGRAM CONTEXT AND NEED**

### **2.1 The Physical, Cultural and Social Setting**

In the five highland provinces of North East Cambodia there are over 100,000 Indigenous people coming from over 10 ethnic groups, commonly referred to as “ethnic minorities”. Most people live in remote villages with very poor or no access to health or educational services and extremely limited access to commercial activities. In Ratanakiri the prominent groups are the Tampuan, Kreung, Jarai, Brov and Kavet who together make up around 65% of the 115,000 population of the province. The balance of the population is made up of Lao, Vietnamese and Chinese (15%), and Khmer (20%). These proportions however, are rapidly changing due to the implementation of the Royal Government of Cambodia's economic development strategy for the north east, the Triangle Development Plan. This strategy actively encourages Khmers to migrate and develop resources in traditional ethnic minority areas.

The cultures and languages of the Indigenous ethnic minority groups are distinct from mainstream Khmer culture and language. All groups in this area speak their own languages and practice their own religions. Few speak or understand Khmer, Cambodia's official national language, and those that do, have limited competence. Orthographies for some (but not all) of the more widely spoken Indigenous languages, based on the Khmer alphabet, have recently been approved. The lack of mainstream language skills of most Indigenous people compounds their marginalisation.

The primary economic activities amongst the Indigenous peoples centre on rice growing and shifting cultivation, however cash crops such as cashew, coffee and soybean are increasing in importance. In contrast, the ethnic Khmer, who constitute “mainstream” society, live in the towns or along the main roads where they are prominent in business, trading and government service.

An issue of immediate and growing significance directly impacting on the way of life of Indigenous people is that of land alienation. Enormous pressure is being placed on ethnic minority communities to sell land for private investment and the development of commercial agricultural crops. Concessions for logging and plantations continue to be granted over huge areas of Indigenous lands and land sales are often coerced. It has been noted that the villages most affected by land alienation are those where social cohesion has eroded the most. The increasing disruption caused by these activities

threatens the very existence of many communities, and if left unabated will lead to increased poverty and further marginalisation<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.2 The Educational Context

Education indicators for Ratanakiri<sup>3</sup> compare poorly with lowland provinces and the situation is at its worst amongst highland communities as the following demonstrate:

- Only 32 out of 149 primary schools in the province are complete (Grades 1-6), and these are all located in district towns where the large majority of students are Khmer children;
- an estimated 44% of primary school age children in Ratanakiri Province are not enrolled in school;
- Children of Khmer families, 20% of the population of Ratanakiri, make up 87% of the students at the Province's three high schools;
- Children of Tampuan families, 24% of the population of Ratanakiri, make up only 2% of students at the Province's three high schools;
- A literacy survey<sup>4</sup> conducted in 2002 found that only 5.3% of men and less than 1% of women in remote ethnic communities were literate.
- A baseline study conducted by CARE in 2002 in the six remote target villages found that only 5 out of 1,970 adults had completed primary education.

There are large disparities in participation by highland children, particularly beyond Grade 3, with very few moving on to secondary education. For a start there are many communities without schools. However even where there are buildings, classes are often not held because to this point few MoEYS teachers have been willing to stay at such posts. As a further barrier to successful participation the language of instruction in government schools is Khmer, and given the fact that very few Indigenous adults and virtually no Indigenous children understand the language it is not surprising that the enrolment and retention rates of ethnic minority children in Ratanakiri are the lowest in Cambodia.

Statements made during the baseline survey by community members suggest that the vast majority of the community (98%) agreed that education is important for their children. The survey concluded that the overwhelming majority of the parents highly value education if the education is adapted to their culture, and if it provides opportunities for their children to maintain their vernacular language while also learning Khmer.

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<sup>2</sup> Source: *Land Alienation from Indigenous Minority Communities in Ratanakiri*, NGO Forum, Nov 2004; *Workshop to Seek Strategies to Prevent Indigenous Land Alienation*, NGO Forum in Collaboration with CARE, Ratanakiri, 2005

<sup>3</sup> See *EMIS Statistics: 2003-2004*, MoEYS

<sup>4</sup> Survey conducted by MoEYS, in cooperation with UNDP and UNESCO

### 2.3 Why the Program is Needed

The facts given in the last two sections speak for themselves. Indigenous people in Ratanakiri and other highland provinces are marginalised because of their geographic location, their inability to speak Khmer, and their cultural and religious practices. One achievement of the Program is that it has shown what can be accomplished, and in the process, has dispelled many of the prevalent myths about the lack of interest in education by minority peoples and about learning through two languages. Bilingual education is not a new idea, and is virtually as old as formal education itself. Evidence from around the world (Thomas and Collier 1997<sup>5</sup>, Gale et al 1981<sup>6</sup>) shows that, especially for minority groups who do not have a strong schooling tradition, bilingual education produces better results than monolingual education in a second language. Supporters of bilingual education (Spolsky 1974<sup>7</sup>) insist that academic achievement is only one of several advantages of this approach. Other advantages include community support and involvement, positive impacts on self esteem and identity, as well as community empowerment.

The Program addresses the developmental needs of vulnerable people in a changing world. It also seeks to support and encourage Government agencies to address the same needs in ways that will take the EFA targets beyond rhetoric and into practice.

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<sup>5</sup> Thomas, W., Collier, V., (1997) School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students. National Clearing House for Bilingual Education, The George Washington University.

<sup>6</sup> Kathy Gale, David McClay, Michael Christie, Stephen Harris (1981) Milingimbi bilingual education: Results in the 3Rs, in Lipscombe, R., and Burns, D., (Ed) Aboriginal Literacy: Bridging the Gap. Australian Reading Association.

<sup>7</sup> Spolsky, B., et al, (1974) A model for the description, analysis, and perhaps evaluation of bilingual education, Navajo Reading Study Progress Report No 23 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.

### **3. PROGRAM DIRECTIONS**

#### **3.1 Goal and Purpose of the HCEP**

It is policy within CARE International that all of its projects are undertaken using a “Rights Based Approach” (RBA). The HCEP is therefore founded on a philosophy and practice<sup>8</sup> that seeks to uphold the rights of individuals in a number of areas. For example, the decision to develop a bilingual program was based, in part, on principles in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in the Convention on the Rights of Cultural Minorities which upholds the right to education in the language of the child. It is on this foundation that the Program has been developed.

As explained earlier, the Highland Children’s Education Project and the Bending Bamboo Project were developed separately, but they complement each other. However the two projects are now formally linked under one Program, the HCEP, and through the logframe<sup>9</sup> share a common goal, common purposes, and common outcomes.

The Goal of the Program is:

- That through relevant life-long learning, ethnic minority communities participate in, and benefit from a rapidly changing environment.

A number of assumptions surround and qualify this goal – that the community groups are genuinely interested in life long learning, that newly acquired knowledge is used to improve the quality of community life, and that the Cambodian economy and social context will be such that there will be opportunities for advancement for these people. Alternate scenarios of community collapse and dispersal, as a result of external forces over which the people have little control, are all too possible. Education, as promoted through the schools and through the community development activities embedded in the Program (see section 4.3), are necessary if these people are going to be able to confront the realities of their rapidly changing environment.

The Purposes of the Program are:

- To maintain the participation of ethnic minority communities in a life-long learning process and to promote cultural diversity.
- To support and enable MoEYS to maintain and further develop education for ethnic minorities.

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<sup>8</sup> See *The Highland Children’s Education Project – A Rights Based Approach*, CARE Cambodia, Ratanakiri, 2004

<sup>9</sup> The logframe and risk matrix presented in Appendices 2 and 3 respectively have had all Bending Bamboo outputs removed.

The Program takes the position that education and learning should not be seen as merely the province of youth. Learning needs to be “life long” if the vicissitudes of life are to be dealt with successfully. As will be shown later, the Program takes the communities beyond schooling to establish structures that allow them to identify and address issues that threaten their way of life.

CARE recognises that ultimately education is a government responsibility and that without its involvement the educational enterprise cannot be sustained. Therefore the Program has, from the start, involved the MoEYS, and is now moving into a new phase in its relationship with Government that it hopes will lead to better educational outcomes for Indigenous people.

### **3.2 Outcomes, Outputs and Activities of the HCEP**

The two outcomes of the Program are:

- Community participation in a life-long learning process is maintained and cultural diversity is promoted.
- MoEYS maintains and further develops education for ethnic minorities.

A description of what the Program aims to achieve, follows:

- The six community schools, already running for three years, will continue to function under the management of community school boards, and by 2008 will be offering education through to a grade 6 level. These schools will be staffed by CARE-trained community teachers. State school teachers will also be appointed to the communities and they will work alongside community teachers in Grades 4 to 6. A pupil:teacher ratio of 30:1 or better will be maintained in the schools.
- The schools and the CSBs will continue to receive a high level of support from the Program teams – the TTU and the CSU. As a result of the work of the CSU there will be an increased level of debate in the communities focused on issues of concern. An increased willingness on the part of the community to seek ways to address such issues will also be evidenced.
- Curriculum development will continue to be a major activity leading towards the production of a core curriculum for at least Grades 1 to 3, and will include material for teaching Khmer to children who speak an Indigenous language as their mother tongue. All material will be culturally appropriate, fit with the Program’s bilingual model of education, and be approved for use by both the community and MoEYS. Supplementary reading material focused on human rights and other issues of concern will be produced in the two minority languages.
- Gender sensitivity will be addressed in the Program and all staff will attend workshops.

- As a move towards making the schools sustainable, a local NGO will be established to take over some of the functions carried out by CARE, as CARE progressively withdraws from 2009 onwards.
- As a further part of this process of withdrawal, CARE will work to develop the capacity of Government officials in the MoEYS, POE and DOEs. CARE will also transfer to MoEYS skills and knowledge concerning community based bilingual education, products created as part of the Program such as curricula and resources, and a package of partnerships negotiated with other external organisations and NGOs.

### **3.3 HCEP and the Royal Government of Cambodia's Education Strategy Plan**

The Royal Government of Cambodia has set out its plans for education through to 2008 in the document *Education Strategic Plan 2004-2008*. The plan gives highest priority to "equitable access to high quality basic education services guided by the National EFA Plan". The document also states that education reforms will extend and deepen current pro-poor education strategies "to further reduce barriers to education opportunities for Cambodia's poorest families. Making sure that high quality education reaches the most remote, disadvantaged and border areas is a central theme".

The HCEP is clearly in harmony with Government plans. The Program works with the poorest of communities in the remote parts of North East Cambodia bordered by Vietnam and the Lao PDR. It aims for relevance and quality in its educational activities as discussed below, and through its Program it has brought formal education opportunities to many people for the first time. The Program, which advocates the delivery of the curriculum through a "student-centred" approach, which equates to the "modern methodology" endorsed by the MoEYS during its revision of the national curriculum in 1996, has been undertaken only with the approval of the MoEYS. Program results are being closely monitored by Government. Many positive endorsements of HCEP I, coming from senior officials, are reported in the 2006 evaluation.<sup>10</sup> Since 2007 the MoEYS has started pilot schools with the bilingual education model based on HCEP in three north eastern provinces in Cambodia. In 2008 there were 20 of these schools, of which 6 are state primary schools.

The HCEP is a broad reaching program that takes an holistic view of development through education. At the immediate level it is about the provision of social services in specific communities. But the Program takes a broad and long term view that acknowledges that there are no quick solutions in this area.

Elements of the Bending Bamboo (BB) Project contribute to promoting improved health services in HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases as well as in maternal, child and reproductive health. For example the target group for BB are marginalised girls and

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<sup>10</sup> Section 4.3, *Highland Children's Education Project: Evaluation for CARE International in Cambodia, March 2006*.

young women for whom the project is establishing alternative paths into education outside the formal school system. Although still under development it is clear that the topics for its curriculum will centre on life-skills relevant to girls and young mothers - maternal health, child health and reproductive health among them. The emphasis on HIV/AIDS is also relevant to HCEP and has been a topic on which workshops have been run in the six HCEP II communities by the Indigenous CSU team as well as a topic discussed during several of the School Board Assemblies (see section 4.3). When infrastructure in this remote area improves as a result of the construction of a new airport and national road to the Cambodian/Vietnamese border, proactive HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention activities will become even more crucial. In conjunction with the Provincial Health Department and Health Net International, the Program was also involved in the provision of mosquito nets and information on malaria prevention to all households in the six communities in which HCEP works. HCEP has also produced a grade 3 book on the use of mosquito nets.

The Program clearly supports increased relevance, quality and access to education. Both HCEP II and BB are primary education projects and are clearly designed to increase “relevance, quality and access in education” to ethnic minority communities. Considering just HCEP II, the Program has already provided access to formal education where none existed before to over 600 children, this figure should rise to about 1,000 by 2008. The education provided is relevant in that among other things it uses a bilingual approach that acknowledges the importance of the mother tongue as well as the national language, it is community based and responsive, it develops its own curricula and ensures it is culturally sensitive, it introduces life-skills and issues of local concern, and it uses locally trained community members as teachers who thus share the same culture with the children. As for quality, the independent evaluation (see section 1.3) judged the HCEP I as achieving its objective of providing a quality, relevant education “to a very high standard”. School statistics (presented in section 4.1) support this conclusion. Inherent to the notion of quality are gender issues. CARE’s Education Program ensures that there is a specific focus on gender awareness and mainstreaming throughout all programming, including HCEP.

The Education Program has established a gender focal point which serves as a reference for the development of gender advocacy and awareness training, and also as a driving force to maintain gender sensitive approaches throughout all programming. A staff member within CARE’s Education Program assists staff to maintain a gender focus, and to prevent the incidence of ‘gender fade’. Gender mainstreaming throughout HCEP involves baseline and on-going data collection and analysis of sex disaggregated data and the development of indicators to monitor and evaluate gender responsive planning and implementation. HCEP conducts monthly staff training at which gender is a frequent topic. The Program aims to move beyond the understanding that gender is about equal percentages of participation in training, or access to, for example, schools. The Program hopes to increase awareness and impact upon the equal participation of women and men in decision making and development. The Program addresses attitudes which

hamper the participation of women, and training is targeting the gender awareness of HCEP's multi-ethnic staff. Additionally, teacher training workshops and School Board Assembly meetings incorporate gender issues on their meeting agendas. A practical approach as to how gender manifests itself in daily life is adopted: different workloads, male dominated decision making processes, and attitudes and behaviour that exclude women are all covered. HCEP teacher trainers monitor how teacher attitudes on gender manifest themselves in class room teaching. Do teachers pay equal attention to boys and girls? Do teachers have equal expectations of boys and girls regarding the academic performances in all subjects, such as the performance of girls in mathematics? In two of the six target villages the Program set up single sex classes in order to carry out research to see if the performance of girls would improve. At the end of 2006, this two year experiment will be evaluated. Textbooks produced by HCEP ensure that girls and boys, and women and men are equally represented, and are done so in a non-stereotypical way. As all textbooks have to be approved by community representatives before they are submitted to MoEYS, this process provides opportunities for discussions on male-female stereotypes.

HCEP's resource production initiatives dovetail neatly with the Government's current work in textbook production. From its inception, HCEP has put considerable time, effort, and resources into the production of textbooks. The books present subject matter which is both relevant and culturally appropriate as they are developed based on the advice of the elders of the communities. The books are also linked to the learning outcomes of the national curriculum to ensure that students will acquire the same skills and knowledge as students in state schools. Additionally, HCEP books reflect the student centred methodology that the MoEYS wants to implement in state schools throughout the country. The books combine mathematics, language and social studies, are produced in two minority languages and in Khmer, and include photographs and are printed in colour so that they are appealing to children. The high quality of the textbooks is guaranteed through a rigorous quality control process, involving not only review meetings by HCEP staff, but also the approval of the school boards, spelling and language checks by ICC, and the final approval of MoEYS. As the MoEYS is in the process of privatising the production of state school textbooks, the production process of the HCEP textbooks provides a quality model that could be replicated by private printing houses.

The Project has emphasised the importance of community ownership and control of education. Much of HCEP II is about development and helping people acquire the tools of information and understanding that will better allow them to assert their own rights and control the pressures that are impinging on them. It is about governing their own worlds, their own communities. One of the smaller HCEP complementary projects, funded by the McKnight Foundation (see section 6.2), is researching traditional decision making structures with a focus on conflict resolution.

## 4. PROGRAM IMPACT: OUTPUTS ACHIEVED AND ANTICIPATED

The Project has now been operational in the communities for approximately 3.5 years. This section looks back at some of the achievements<sup>11</sup> to date, and forward to anticipated outputs under HCEP II. The outputs have been organised into five areas and shown at the head of each section – the schools, staffing, community involvement, curriculum development, and the role of the MoEYS.

### 4.1 The Schools

**Output** *Six functioning Community Schools managed by Community School Boards and attended by village children Grades 1 to 6.*

Schools have been established in six communities in Ratanakiri - at Seung, Paor Lung Khung and Paor Kei Chong where the language spoken is Tampuen; and in Mais, Team Leu and Krola where the language spoken is Kreung. Access to the communities from Ban Lung where the Program office is situated, is difficult, especially in the wet season. With the exception of two Seila constructed buildings that pre-date the Project, wooden framed and bamboo clad buildings with rammed earth floors and corrugated iron rooves were all built and outfitted by the communities. The Project assumes that the communities will continue to respond, constructing additional classrooms as the need grows annually through to 2008.

The initial recruitment of students into Grade 1 was difficult with the communities seeking to enrol all children from 6 up to 16 – an impossible task for the inexperienced community teachers. The solution reached by the school boards was that the first cohort would be made up of 10 to 12 year-old children, and that the entry age would be progressively dropped. In 2006 children commenced school for the first time at the official state recognised age of six years and this will be the case from this point on.

In each of the communities new cohorts of children have entered school every January since 2003. From 2003 to 2006 Grade 1 enrolments for both boys and girls in four of the six schools have consistently been 100% of all those eligible. Krola, with about 80%, and Seung, with about 90% have been the exceptions. Enrolment figures since inception are given for each of the schools in Appendix 1. By February 2006 enrolments totalled 613 (267 girls; 346 boys) with the distribution across the grades being 172 in Grade 1, 142 in Grade 2, 159 in Grade 3, and 140 in Grade 4 (see Appendix 1). HCEP II plans to continue enrolling new cohorts into Grade 1 each year and taking all schools through to Grade 6 by 2008. The first students will then be eligible to enter state secondary schools in 2009.

The Project keeps accurate records for the schools and is able to track each child's progress since initial enrolment. A group of six primary state schools in Ratanakiri were

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<sup>11</sup> Achievements, as identified in the independent assessment of the HCEP I - *Highland Children's Education Project: Evaluation for CARE International in Cambodia, March 2006.*

nominated by the Ratanakiri POE as a control group against which the progress of the Project schools could be measured. Data to be kept included enrolments, attendance, and rates for promotion, repetition and drop-out. Data collected through EMIS allows comparisons to be made with averages for primary schools at the national and provincial levels. Promotion, repetition and drop-out rates for the latest years available are shown in 1. It can be seen from this table that the average figures for promotion, repetition and drop-out at the national primary school level (2003/2004), the Ratanakiri Province level (2004/2005), and the Project community school level (2005) are of much the same order. This is a good result for the community schools when it is realised that the Ratanakiri statistics will be biased by the inclusion of the town schools and this effect will be even greater for the national statistics with all the urban schools included. While the Project Grade 1 repetition rate is significantly higher than that for Ratanakiri and for the national system, the drop-out rates are much the same in all three cases. It is noteworthy that the Project Grade 2 and 3 promotion rates are better than those for both the national and Ratanakiri averages. This is all the more impressive when it is realised that the Project is working in the remotest areas where schools do not even exist, and that the statistics of Ratanakiri include the main population centres, where the majority of the students are Khmer. As noted in the logframe one of the targets for the Project is that the retention rate for the community schools will increase by not less than 10% by 2009.

#### **4.2 Teachers and Teacher Training**

**Output** *A stable force of CARE-trained community teachers increase in competence.*

**Output** *State school teachers work effectively in the community schools (Grade 4-6).*

**Output** *A Pupil to Teacher ratio (PTR) of 30:1 is maintained in all community schools.*

Once the decision was taken to use a bilingual model of education, it became necessary to recruit teachers who could speak the language of the children as well as some Khmer, and who had basic literacy. As no trained teachers were available this meant recruiting and training people from the local communities. One of the strengths of this approach is that the community teachers are not only able to communicate with the child in his or her own language, but they also share with the child the cultural and social life of the community.

A teacher training course was established which, under HCEP I, involved six months of pre-service training and nine one-week inservice workshops each year. Tasks and assignments for the trainees aim to develop their skills as teachers and also to raise their own level of academic competence, particularly in language and mathematics. Under HCEP II, in response to the pressures on teachers, all of whom have difficulties being away from their communities at workshops for extended periods, more of the training, both inservice and pre-service, will be conducted on-the-job in home communities by the CSU and TTU teams.

In 2008 there are 42 community teachers working in the schools. As women make up only 22% of the teachers it would be desirable to increase their numbers, however the reality is that there are few women in the communities who are literate and therefore able to take on this role.

In spite of their low academic standards the teachers have, on the whole, achieved positive results. One of the aims for the teacher training inservice course is to bring teachers up to a Grade 9 standard of numeracy and Khmer literacy. A further requirement, added for HCEP II, is that all community teachers meet a set of “teacher competencies” to an 80% level by 2009. However, the low academic standards of the teachers and their varying degrees of fluency in Khmer, is a problem as the children move up through the grades. Under HCEP I all teaching was done by the community teachers but the plan for HCEP II is to seek to attract and retain 18 state-trained teachers by 2008, to work in Grades 4 to 6 alongside community teachers. The state-trained teachers will also be required to achieve an 80% level against a set of teacher competencies. The MoEYS has agreed to work with CARE to establish conditions under which it will be possible to recruit, train, deploy and retain Khmer-speaking teachers in these remote ethnic villages.

The community schools currently have an overall pupil:teacher ratio (PTR) of 17:1 which is only half the target of 30:1 and far better than the 2004/2005 national PTR of 53:1. Given the context, this is a quite reasonable figure for the schools to try and maintain. From the perspective of providing a “quality” education, the lower the PTR the better. From the perspective of achieving HCEP targets, maintaining a PTR of 30:1<sup>12</sup> should present no problem.

### **4.3 Community Involvement**

**Output** CARE provides training, technical and administrative support to the Community Schools to a level satisfactory to the School Board, teachers, parents and students.

**Output** Ethnic minority communities debate development and human rights issues.

**Output** Communities have increased capacity to address human rights issues (including gender equity, protection against land grabbing), HIV/AIDS, management of natural resources, etc. by lobbying commune council and Government, village networks, and partnering with NGOs.

The Rights Based Approach of the HCEP (see section 3.1) is the basis for the principle of participation in decision making processes at the community level. This principle leads on to what is now regarded as the foundation of the HCEP model<sup>13</sup> – the Community School Boards (CSBs) that manage the schools and vest “ownership” of the schools in the community. Each school has a board of not less than six members (with a minimum of two women), who are chosen by community members using traditional decision

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<sup>12</sup> For the purpose of the PTR, the community teacher/state-trained teachers teams in Grades 4 to 6 will count as 1.

<sup>13</sup> The evaluation report includes quotes referring to CSBs as “crucial”, “the pivot”, “the foundation”, “the bones”.

making processes. The CSB manages the school and carries out a number of vital functions including selecting teachers, identifying community needs for education and managing the day-to-day operations of the school. The CSB is also involved, along with teachers and Project staff, in the annual portfolio assessment used as the basis for determining whether a child should be promoted to the next grade. Regular meetings and training sessions held at the village level have been fundamental to the success of the CSBs. These meetings are conducted by Indigenous members of the Community Support Unit and provide the opportunity for discussion of wider community development issues such as land alienation or HIV/AIDS. The HCEP aims to hold a minimum of six meetings per CSB per year through to 2009. There are also “assembly meetings” which are held three or four times a year when the members of all school boards, teachers and Project staff come together to discuss issues of common interest concerning their schools and their communities. The village meetings and the assemblies provide a public forum for the members of the CSBs to assert their rights and those of their communities.

#### **4.4 Curriculum Development**

**Output** *Production and MoEYS approval of culturally appropriate curriculum materials in two minority languages as per the new bilingual education model.*

**Output** *Supplementary reading material is developed which explores issues to do with development, human rights and the changing environment and includes ethnic minority community views on these issues. MoEYS approves the reading material.*

The Project schools are bilingual with initial literacy being developed in one of two vernacular languages, Tampuan or Kreung, and with the national language, Khmer, being taught orally in the first year then phased in as the language of instruction over ensuing years. The bilingual model for teaching adopted by the Project plans for 90% of initial instruction to be undertaken in the vernacular with the remaining 10% of the time being spent on teaching the children to speak Khmer. Basic literacy skills are thus mastered first in the vernacular.

The curriculum has four main subjects: Vernacular Language, Khmer Language, Mathematics and Social Studies. Maths is taught using the MoEYS maths curriculum in the vernacular in Grade 1, and in Khmer from Grade 2 onwards. Drama and the Performing Arts, and Health and Hygiene are integrated into the other four subjects. It is important to note that the Project is based on the state primary curriculum but adapts it to the local context incorporating life-skills that draw upon the knowledge and culture of community people. It is anticipated that as the Bending Bamboo Project develops, it will

begin to have an impact on curriculum development<sup>14</sup> within HCEP II, in particular, on issues concerning early childhood education and life-skills.

The CSBs play important roles in curriculum development. In accordance with the wishes of the communities as expressed in the baseline survey, the HCEP bilingual model of education aims for cultural and language maintenance and not simply a rapid transition to the national language.<sup>15</sup> This position logically leads on to the involvement of the community, either directly or through the school board, in advising what is appropriate and relevant to include in the curriculum, for example as themes in the social studies strand or as content in vernacular readers. School board members have been involved in this way from the beginning of the Project. They also vet material once it is in draft form and involve themselves as resource persons in the classrooms, for example teaching how to make and play traditional instruments.

The Resource Production Unit produces the vernacular teaching resources for the teaching program with valuable linguistic assistance provided through partnership with International Cooperation Cambodia (ICC). To date 41 titles have been produced in addition to officially approved Junior Picture Dictionaries, in both Tampuen and Kreung. The communities were involved in deciding on appropriate themes and stories and vetting material as it was drafted. Each Reader was also approved by the MoEYS for use in schools. Although there are now 41 titles for the three grades this is virtually the only literature available in the vernacular for use in schools and additional teaching resources are planned.

Curriculum development is one of the central elements of HCEP with significant potential for the material being produced to be used generally by the state system for ethnic minority education. The HCEP School Curriculum is well documented through to Grade 3, however continuing work will be necessary over the next three years to take the curriculum through to Grade 6. The ultimate aim is to bring all the material together as a core curriculum for ethnic minority children, which, with suitable adaptations to allow for local input, could be used with a number of different ethnic minority groups across the highland provinces.

The RPU is also developing a Khmer language curriculum, a curriculum designed to teach Khmer to students who speak a vernacular language as their mother tongue. The aim is to produce curriculum overviews in English and Khmer for Grades 1 and 2; a complete set of teaching and learning resources to support the overviews such as laminated pictures, conversation texts, and stimulus pictures; a curriculum matrix which identifies topics, objectives and resources across all teaching blocks for the academic year; and Khmer Readers for Grades 2, 3 and 4 (19 titles so far). All of this work is well advanced. If funds are made available under this proposal the material will be developed

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<sup>14</sup>The Program document, *A bilingual curriculum for primary education in Community Schools in Cambodia*, gives a very thorough description of the total curriculum including pedagogical principles, bilingual model, content, and expected learning outcomes by subject and grade.

<sup>15</sup> HCEP II also argues for in a long bridge for pedagogical reasons: a firm grounding in the mother tongue will result in higher academic achievements.

further – to Grade 3 or Grade 6. The finished curriculum could then be used by teachers in monolingual state schools that have a high level of Indigenous enrolment especially if teachers receive inservice training on teaching methodology.

All curriculum development and resource production work has been undertaken in a professional manner. A detailed quality control manual organises the work flow of the RPU from conception to final approved product. Throughout, the aim has been the production of high quality resources. There are now even possibilities for commercial development of the readers, the core curriculum, the BB life-skills material and/or the Khmer language curriculum.

#### **4.5 Role of the MoEYS**

**Output** *A local NGO with a governance board is progressively established.*

**Output** *CARE transfers to MoEYS staff skills and knowledge in training, methodology, community participation, monitoring, and bilingual education.*

**Output** *CARE transfers to MoEYS a package of education products including core curriculum, textbooks, materials, methodologies and guidelines for grades 1 to 3.*

**Output** *CARE organises a regular series of thematic “lessons learned” workshops with MoEYS and local NGO staff including field visits.*

**Output** *CARE builds MoEYS capacity in program coordination by handing over a coherent, comprehensive and relevant set of formalised partnerships for Indigenous/bilingual education.*

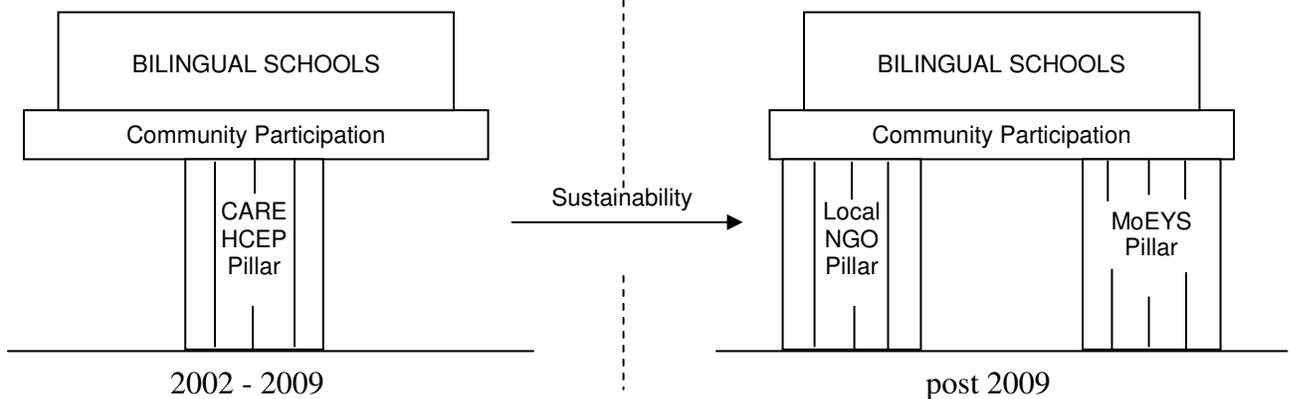
The HCEP was initiated by CARE in order to identify the educational needs of ethnic people living in remote area communities and to develop ways of meeting those needs. It was a pilot program and although the initial phase (HCEP I) has shown that a community-based approach to bilingual education is both desirable and feasible, there is still a lot more work to be done before it can be claimed that the Program has brought about major changes in the provision of services to ethnic minority peoples in the highland areas. As indicated in earlier sections, the Program will continue to research, develop and trial new approaches through both HCEP II and Bending Bamboo. However the most important task for the Program now is to support the MoEYS to engage in the provision of educational services to ethnic minority peoples. The aim for the Program is that the HCEP model will be adopted and sustained by MoEYS, including the retention of a significant degree of community participation and control. The outputs listed above are all activities that the Program will undertake as a means of accomplishing this task.

The Program has provided detailed written reports, frequent meetings, workshops, presentations to the Ministry, and arranging for monitoring and field trips so that MoEYS and POE officials have been able to see for themselves the direct evidence in the schools of children’s progress. Material developed for use in the classroom is vetted by and gains the approval of the Ministry. In this way the Ministry gains greater knowledge of the Project and its aims, for example, that life-skills are part of the curriculum. Another strategic decision has been to adapt the state curriculum and not dismiss it as being of no relevance. The Project has been at pains to demonstrate that the HCEP is not about being a program run by an international NGO working in isolation and holding scant

regard for Government. In order to be transparent CARE negotiated with the POE to second a senior officer to the Project for three days a week and report on the Project to the Ministry. All of these strategies have had positive effects to the extent that the MoEYS and the POE are now very supportive of the Program and open to direct involvement in bilingual education.

One of the central issues for the Program has been that of sustainability – what will happen to the schools when CARE withdraws, as inevitably it must. This issue was well addressed in recent meetings<sup>16</sup> using the model that the sustainability of the HCEP approach rests on two pillars. This model has been adapted and in Diagram 2 shows the schools resting on a platform of “community participation” borne up over the period 2003 to 2009 by a “CARE/HCEP pillar”. However, for sustainability, this pillar is replaced, progressively after 2009 by two other pillars – “a local NGO pillar” and a “MoEYS pillar”.

**Diagram 2: Model for Sustainability of Community-Based Bilingual Schools**



As indicated in the logframe, a local NGO is to be established by CARE before December 2009. The NGO will, over time, maintain community participation in the existing six schools and in some limited curriculum activities such as curriculum updates and the production of supplementary reading materials. The local NGO will also serve as a link between the communities and the MoEYS. For example, it will seek MoEYS approval for curriculum updates. CARE will hand over to MoEYS a functioning model, including the six existing community schools, a package of educational products, training, and a set of partnerships and mechanisms designed to maintain, improve and replicate the HCEP model. However, CARE will not be able to fully withdraw in three years. This is why the sustainability strategy for the next three years is to prepare for a progressive withdrawal *after* 2009.

<sup>16</sup> HCEP Strategic/Logframe Workshop, CARE Office, 17-19 April 2006

## **5. DURATION OF PROGRAM & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

HCEP II covers the three year period, 2006 – 2008. However, by its very nature, the Program should not be viewed as time-limited. The schools are meeting a need and should continue beyond 2008. The aim is that the schools will be “localised” and supported by an invigorated state school system that encourages community based education and which has adopted many of the principles, practices, teacher training and curriculum approaches of the HCEP. Unlike most NGO projects, bilingual education for ethnic minorities is not meant to have an end date. Sustainability therefore requires that a relevant bilingual education *system* is in place and running before CARE fully withdraws - this in turn implies that CARE has to mobilize donor resources over a longer period of time.