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| 1. Project Data: | | Date Posted : 12/22/2004 | |
| PROJ ID: P059971 | | Appraisal | Actual |
| Project Name: Kh-education Quality Improvement | Project Costs (US\$M) | 5.55 | 5.43 |
| Country: Cambodia | Loan/Credit (US\$M) | 5.0 | 4.87 |
| Sector(s): Board: ED - General education sector (79%), Central government administration (19%), Sub-national government administration (2%) | Cofinancing (US\$M) | | |
| L/C Number: C3283 | | | |
| | Board Approval (FY) | | 00 |
| Partners involved : World Food Program, VSO, DFID | Closing Date | 03/31/2004 | 03/31/2004 |

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2. Project Objectives and Components

a. Objectives

The objective of the Education Quality Improvement Project (EQIP) was to develop and put into practice a participatory approach to school quality improvement and performance based management . The Project Appraisal Document (PAD) also indicates that the approach should be "shown to be effective for extension to other provinces, " and the Development Credit Agreement (DCA) indicates that the approach should be "used for demonstration purposes." It is noted that neither ICR nor the PAD gave operational definitions of "performance based management." The record shows that the pilot project which preceded EQIP made payment installments based on good financial accounting, but no such performance requirements were mentioned for EQIP .

b. Components

1. Quality Improvement Grants Program (Estimated, \$3.95 million; Actual, \$3.6 million)
2. Institutional Strengthening (Estimated, \$0.72 million; Actual, \$0.07 million)
3. Project Management (Estimated, \$0.88 million; Actual, \$1.26 million)

c. Comments on Project Cost, Financing and Dates

The financial allocation was fully disbursed, but because of a change of the value of the US dollar against SDRs, expenditures totalled \$4.87 million instead of the estimated \$5.0 million. The amounts of IDA allocated to the three components is different in the ICR (Annex 2) compared to the PAD amounts and the actual expenditures in components 2 and 3 differ widely from the PAD estimates (component 2, 33% below; component 3, 50% above) without explanation. Also, Annex 2 inappropriately enters amounts for cofinancing . The Project was completed on time.

3. Achievement of Relevant Objectives:

There were two sets of key performance indicators related to Project Development Objectives (mentioned in the ICR as goals), namely, a) Schools participating in the program should increasingly demonstrate characteristics of effective schools as revealed in: (i) student enrollment, (ii) attendance, (iii) student flows, and (iv) achievement; b) the Government will draw lessons from practice to policies to: (i) improve teacher motivation, (ii) lower the cost of education, (iii) reduce repetition and drop-out, and (iv) increase the time available for learning.

a.i) Student enrollments in EQIP provinces did increase, but basically at the same rate as the nation as a whole .

(This indicator would have been better addressed through gross or net enrollment ratios, since changes in absolute enrollment numbers may be a reflection of population increases .)

a.ii) Student attendance was not reported on .

a.iii) Student flows were evaluated in terms of drop-out and promotion rates. Multiple regression analysis of schools which had been in EQIP during varying lengths of time (and including various control variables) show substantial reductions in drop out rates in EQIP schools (about 30-40 fewer students per cluster dropping out per year) and

positive changes in promotion rates (increases of between 1 and 2.5 percent per year).

a.iv) Concerning student achievement, EQIP participation was associated with a 0.62 point increase in the numeracy test given in EQIP schools and a 0.88 point increase in the literacy test. (Given that the standard deviation of each test was around 3.5 points, these effectiveness were considered quite large in standardized terms).

On the impact of project practice on Government policies, a qualitative evaluation of the project by Geeves et al. (2002) demonstrates that the Project had considerable influence on funding flows to schools (using a grant mechanism with decentralized planning features) and government positions on the use of clusters, the school timetable, and use of data in school monitoring and evaluation. Also, policy studies on monitoring clusters grants, quality improvement monitoring and evaluation systems, grade four student achievement, and decentralization were completed and considered influential (Geeves et al.). The Project did not specifically address the policy issues specified in the PAD of teacher motivation, cost of education, and time available for learning.

4. Significant Outcomes/Impacts:

- EQIP did succeed in creating a demonstration model of the participatory approach to school quality improvement, shown to energize school and supervisory personnel in planning for and executing school improvement plans at the cluster level;
- Positive outcomes on student flows and learning outcomes were found to be linked to EQIP and its use of grants at the school level; teacher training planned and executed at the cluster level seems to have been particularly effective;
- Achievement testing on a national sample to evaluate education quality has been instituted, based on the Project's student testing efforts;
- The channeling of funds to school clusters through district offices was a breakthrough in the decentralization in educational financial management;
- District officers who acted during the EQIP as animators are generally much more grounded in the realities of schools and are now in regular contact with schools;
- District, provincial and national officials have broadened their understanding of effective schooling and how to promote it;
- Educational managers at all levels have increased their interest in and capacity to use performance indicators in evaluating school performance;.

5. Significant Shortcomings (including non-compliance with safeguard policies):

- The Project did not appear to measure (or at least the ICR did not report) student attendance, one of the four main improvement indicators, which might have shown whether educational climate was more interesting and engaging to children;
- The Project did not appear to track the effect of the demonstration program on key policy issues (specified in the PAD) such as how to improve teacher motivation, lower the cost of education, and increase time available for learning.
- It is not clear whether the EQIP model will be extended to provinces other than those in the Project (e.g., it does not seem that the new Priority Action Program (PAP) is participatory in the same way; also the future of the cluster system seems to be uncertain);
- The heavy use of expat volunteers (24 person years) to animate the animators was never counted in Project costs and thus the real cost-effectiveness of the system is unknown; also, there are doubts whether the local offices can sustain an innovative program like EQIP without expat consultants and /or without extra financial incentives for supervisors and teachers;
- Once the main channel for policy improvement, the National Committee on Effective Schooling, was dissolved (half-way through the project) it does not appear that any specific body for translating Project successes into policy improvement was established to take its place.

| 6. Ratings : | ICR | OED Review | Reason for Disagreement /Comments |
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| Outcome : | Satisfactory | Satisfactory | Some of the performance indicators in the Project design were not addressed by the Project, but the main outcomes indicators, student flows and learning outcomes were, an important accomplishment for a country where this kind of tracking had never been done before. |
| Institutional Dev .: | Substantial | Substantial | The Project succeeded in lifting awareness about elements of and contributors to school effectiveness at all levels (school to national) and supported innovations in decentralized management, but the decision to manage |

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| | | | the Project through special Implementation Units at the National and Provincial levels creates a risk that those most instrumental in managing change under the project will not continue in positions of power. |
| Sustainability : | Likely | Non-evaluable | It is not clear to what extent the lack of continued financial support for cluster level teacher training and facilitation by animators will affect the sustainability of the school improvement model. It is also not clear what aspects of quality improvement have been taken up in the new PAP budgeting system. Finally, there is uncertainty as to whether the EQIP system of cluster-level school improvement planning will be continued. |
| Bank Performance : | Satisfactory | Satisfactory | |
| Borrower Perf. : | Satisfactory | Satisfactory | |
| Quality of ICR : | | Satisfactory | |

NOTE: ICR rating values flagged with '*' don't comply with OP/BP 13.55, but are listed for completeness.

7. Lessons of Broad Applicability:

Key lessons learned from this LIL are:

- One viable model for improving school quality is to gradually build the concept of effective schools from the ground up including school or cluster-level choices about learning materials, teacher training, and innovative practices, yielding grounded experiences and results which can be translated into policies at higher levels;
- Even at the grassroots level, but also at higher administrative levels, technical assistance is important to catalyze local creativity, introduce fresh ideas, and build capacity;
- Allowing schools or clusters of schools to articulate their own teacher training needs can be a more effective way of organizing inservice teacher training than creating teacher training programs at the center (central Ministry or teacher training college);
- For Projects aiming to improve school effectiveness through substantial changes in educator attitudes and practices, it would be good to include some observable, intermediate outcomes (such time on task, student activity level, or child-centered teaching) in addition to the kind of performance indicators set for the Project (student enrollment, attendance, promotion/drop-out, and achievement, and policy improvement), since the latter often change quite gradually or are affected by system-wide improvements. Classroom observations by qualitative researchers (reported in an ICR supporting document) revealed positive changes in classrooms which were not reflected in the formal project performance indicators.
- It is a good idea to draw Project catalysts at the school /cluster level (in EQIP called "animators") from among the district officers so that once the Project is completed these officers will be in a position to support the continuation of innovation; however, since the Project provided financial incentives to animators, the country will need to find ways to motivate local managers to keep up the extra school support efforts;
- Good information and effective communication covering innovative practices and their impacts are important, requiring both adequately-resourced monitoring and evaluation systems, and timely, readable reports in the national language in order to reach target audiences and influence the overall policy dialogue.

8. Assessment Recommended? Yes No

9. Comments on Quality of ICR:

The ICR is generally satisfactory. It is clearly written and informative but has some shortcomings, however: its failure to discuss the results in Annex 1 and its omission of data on student achievement made it difficult to assess Project outcomes; also, scant description of the new PAP system of school financing made it difficult to understand whether the new system is participatory or performance based; moreover, it was not clear whether there was just one policy study (the one on 4th grade achievement) or others (e.g., the ICR supporting documents).