



IMPACT ASSESSMENT of PROGRAMS **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The evaluation was undertaken by an independent consultant, with participation and cooperation from PEPY's Executive Management Committee (EMC), and involved program field staff over a total of 27 days during three months, April-June 2012, including 8 days fieldwork. The Evaluation Report was reviewed by the EMC and PEPY Board in July 2012 and comments are reflected in this final Report.

The goal of the evaluation was to reflect on the work of PEPY to allow the organization to adapt and improve its activities in order to fulfill its new mission. The new mission aims to expand the opportunities available to Cambodian youth - investing time and resources in young people, connecting them with the skills, systems, and inspiration necessary to achieve their goals, raise standards of living, and improve the quality of education in their communities. This mission is consistent with the goals of National Policy for Youth Development released by the government in June 2011.

The evaluation was required to address the following specific objectives:

1. Review what PEPY has accomplished in all its programming areas, with a special emphasis on the programs focusing directly on children and youth (Child to Child, Young Leadership, Creative Learning Class, English Language Training, etc.)
2. Identify strengths and weaknesses in all programs
3. Assess PEPY's effectiveness in meeting the needs of its *current* main participants and beneficiaries— students and educators
4. Examine PEPY's partnerships with other youth development and education organizations and with the Cambodian government;
5. Assess PEPY's human resource capacity in programming and recommend how best to prepare for the expansion of existing programs or potential new programs that may be developed to meet the needs of the new mission and vision
6. Identify key lessons learned from the implementation of PEPY's programs and develop recommendations for improvements to PEPY's programs that may be developed or improved to align with PEPY's new mission and vision

The evaluation process involved a detailed review of all aspects of the PEPY program from design, to implementation, to impacts. The evaluation also

recognized that there are many programs in Cambodia directed at improving living standards and, as a result, the goals of these programs overlap with the goals of the PEPY program. This creates additional opportunities for PEPY to increase its overall impact in terms of advancing its goals and objectives by a combination of influencing these programs and leveraging the resources involved as well as through direct project implementation.

The evaluation findings, particularly the lessons learned, identify issues that will contribute to the success of the PEPY program as it enters phase II. In this context, the most significant lesson learned is the need for PEPY to work closely with all stakeholders in the design of the new phase and to involve stakeholders as true partners in the program as it evolves. This requires recognition of the complementarities between the PEPY program, and its goal to empower young people, and the strategies of other organizations, most notably the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, who share a common goal to ensure that all young people have access to basic education and that this education provides them with the life skills required to live a productive life. The evaluation findings suggest that the PEPY program is likely to deliver the greatest benefits, with the greatest likelihood of sustainability, if it can leverage the resources of the Ministries, contributing to building teachers' and trainers' skills, expanding their horizons as educators and facilitating their capacity to reach out to young people who have left school through continuing educational activities and vocational training. It is in this context that the youth clubs established by PEPY, ad open to all youth, could be of even greater value in phase II.

Findings in relation to the specific objectives of the evaluation are summarized below and detailed in the body of the Report.

1. Accomplishments

Overall, the program has been successful in achieving PEPY's goals – to promote and improve education and to empower youth. -

- ▶ **Quality of education at primary and secondary schools has improved:** As examples, the library and classroom library activities are reported by teachers and students to have increased the learning capacity of students at primary school, particularly grades 4, 5, & 6., The English teaching project for grades 5 to 9, increased students' capacity in basic English before they progressed to study at High School. Creative Learning Classes and Dream Management contributed to building students' presentation skills, analytical thinking, initiative, and leadership capacity.
- ▶ **Empowerment of young people:** This was observed in many different ways and serves to demonstrate the capacity of youth to create sustainable projects based on the skills acquired through the PEPY program. As just one example, Volunteers for Community Development (VCD) was formed after its founders observed the Youth Leadership Club supported by PEPY. These young people formed VCD by themselves, with initial activities similar to those organized by the youth leadership clubs, such as English teaching for village

children, awareness raising campaigns within the community on sanitation and hygiene, and environmental management; and enhancing life skills through home gardening to produce food crops. The VCD has a strong communication network and management has been able to form a Board comprising the commune chief, school principal, chief of health center, and commune police chief. To date, VCD has contributed to building English language skills of around 600 village children.

2. Strengths and weaknesses

Key strengths include:

- ▶ **Strong cooperation and satisfaction from involved stakeholders:** All stakeholders met during the evaluation expressed satisfaction with PEPY's projects. Stakeholders included Deputy Chief of District Office of Education in Kralanh, school principals, teachers, and school supporting committees. All had cooperated constructively with the project team in running activities efficiently.
- ▶ **Building capacity of students and club members :** students and club members report enhanced skills in many areas – increased knowledge as a result of extra classes, greater ability and confidence to participate in discussions at school and in their communities; taking leadership roles in matters affecting young people and contributing to decision making; capacity to develop and run projects tailored to needs and interests of youth (refer page 24)

The evaluation also found some weakness:

- ▶ Minimal involvement of stakeholders in initial project design and implementation;
- ▶ No project descriptive document and log frame were available;
- ▶ Five of the eight projects have no phasing out and sustainability strategy. The exceptions are the, SAS, Library, and Classroom Library projects. However, even for these projects the documents set out what is to be done at the end of the project rather than focusing on strategies for strengthening project stakeholders, so that they are able to take ownership and continue to implement the project after PEPY involvement has been phased out;
- ▶ There is a lack of performance monitoring plans and baseline data was collected in 2008, one year after the project started. This weakness is recognized by PEPY and this evaluation, in part, was designed to overcome this weakness by providing a detailed assessment of project achievements and impacts as PEPY moves into a new phase, with a new Executive Director;
- ▶ The overall number and scope of projects, with different projects implemented in different schools, added to the complexity of program management;

- ▶ A comprehensive intervention or strategy to prevent or reduce school dropout – a major problem – is lacking.

3. Effectiveness in meeting needs of students and educators

- ▶ **Building social engagement among students and prompting behavior change:** More than 300 students in 14 villages, covering 2 communes in Kralanh district, have formed Child to Child Clubs. Through support from the project, club members gained additional knowledge and practice in working with the community on campaigns such as sanitation and hygiene, and traffic rules. In addition, we observed students were more confident to ask questions of their teachers, and were more polite and respectful when speaking to older people. The key learning noted as important for club members was how to research a subject and make a presentation to the group or class. This contributed to broadening their understanding on various subjects as well as their presentation skills.
- ▶ **Good organizational policy on staff capacity building:** All the PEPY staff interviewed expressed their satisfaction with the organization's policy on capacity building. PEPY staff received training on at least one subject per year, helping them to increase their knowledge and capacity to contribute more effectively to project implementation. Subjects on which staff received training included education law, project management, and facilitation. In addition to the training in class, PEPY also provided exposure visits for the staff to observe and learn from the experiences of other projects both inside and outside country. These visits also contributed to building staff motivation.
- ▶ **Less effective – meeting training needs of school teachers:** educators expressed disappointment – and some dissatisfaction given the implications for project sustainability – with PEPY's approach of hiring additional teachers to run projects rather than training and supporting school teachers to design and run projects. While it is recognized that PEPY was not designed as a program to support schools but rather as a program to support young people, the emphasis to date on working with school students inevitably drew the program into close association with schools.

4. Partnerships

- ▶ **At the community level, partnerships contributed to school development:** Through the Sahakhum Aphiwat Sala (SAS) project, target primary schools can develop through the active participation of and contribution from school supporting committees and the school management. The school supporting committees have committed to undertake their tasks effectively, collecting contributions from citizens in the community and managing activity implementation. Achievements in schools resulting from the SAS project included pond digging, preparation of a giant water jar, and development of garden, drilling wells, and filling in the land to prevent flooding in the school compound.

- ▶ **Limited partnerships formed with other organizations and Cambodian government:**
- ▶ **National Policy for Youth Development:** stresses value in partnerships and co-operation between government and non-government organizations.

5. Human resource capacity

- ▶ **Committed and capable project staff:** Most of the PEPY project staff is local people, living in or near project areas. This helped to encourage the acceptance and participation of local people and to build confidence in the project. In addition, most staff members are young, fitting with the mission and vision of PEPY, working to promote education and empower youth. However, where project staff lived outside the target community, lower levels of commitment to the project and to the community were observed (refer page 34).
- ▶ **Greater focus on capacity building among Ministry teachers and vocational trainers could increase program benefits and enhance sustainability:** For phase II, this includes increasing the ability of teachers/trainers to reach out to young people who have left school, to allow them to build life skills through different forms of continuing education and vocational training. This may require a different approach to staff recruitment (teachers of teachers/trainers or trainers) as well as in the training provided to project staff.

6. Lessons learned and recommendations

Key lessons learned include:

- ▶ Need to involve all stakeholders in initial project design and implementation. Consultation can help eliminate subsequent problems when the proposed design and implementation do not reflect resource constraints in the schools. Consultation can also increase commitment to the project and its success.
- ▶ Need to respond constructively to feedback from stakeholders. For example, the Deputy Chief of District Office of Education has suggested that the Library and Classroom Library programs be expanded to other schools yet these programs are noted as 'in transition' by PEPY.
- ▶ A lasting and constructive partnership with government, particularly with the most relevant Ministries, Education, and Labor and Vocational Training, is more likely to be forged if the PEPY program is seen to be contributing to achieving to the government's priorities. Like PEPY, the government is committed to empowering young people to lead productive lives, capable of generating sufficient income to support a family and to improve living standards. The government is seeking to do this through improved access to education and vocational training, and improved teaching of life skills.

- ▶ The sustainability of activities is compromised when additional resources are hired by PEPY rather than PEPY supporting existing resources (most notably teachers) to undertake the extra curricula activities. When PEPY funding ceases, neither the Ministry of Education nor the school community are likely to be able to continue to fund the additional resources and, at best, the activities will continue in a truncated way, or, at worst, cease.
- ▶ Coordination between PEPY projects and school activities is also compromised when outside resources are hired by PEPY – communication between the two groups can be limited, with neither fully aware of the roles and responsibilities of the other (refer page 21).
- ▶ Feedback from stakeholders – predominantly school principals and teachers – with regards to the Community Development Program - suggested that greater benefits to members – particularly students - may result from closer links between clubs and schools.
- ▶ Sustainability of outcomes for the Traveling Teacher Support model would be enhanced if greater emphasis was placed on PEPY teaching teachers – not students.
- ▶ External factors, such as a lack of teachers in some schools, can affect the functioning of the PEPY program and PEPY staff needs to be aware of these limiting factors and take them into account when implementing programs. It may be that, in some instances, projects need to be substantially altered in order to accommodate the external limitations (refer page 23).
- ▶ While many parts of the PEPY program are intended to be open to all young people, in and out of school, the experience of the program indicates the difficulty of reaching out-of-school youth and the need for highly targeted communication with this group (refer page 27).

Strengthening PEPY's capacity to empower young people to reach their dreams should be consistent with advancing both the strategies of the Ministries of Education, and Labor and Vocational Training, and the National Policy for Youth Development. To contribute to achieving all these objectives, we recommend that in the next phase of its program PEPY take the following steps:

- ▶ Design the new project in close association with all stakeholders, including the Departments of Education and Labor and Vocational Training and school community members (students' parents, Committee of Education for All, School Supporting Committee, school principals, teachers, and students). This would greatly assist PEPY in developing constructive partnerships with government and non-government stakeholders.
- ▶ Set realistic goals/objectives, with a clear implementation strategy, and clearly articulated and achievable milestones, a strategy for phasing

out PEPY involvement and ensuring the sustainability of project outcomes. This should be done in conjunction with stakeholders.

- ▶ Develop and implement systems for ongoing monitoring and regular evaluation, with processes in place to ensure the delivery of accurate, on-time reports and review of response to findings as well as to feedback from stakeholders. The monitoring and evaluation system should include a baseline survey, reporting system, tools for activity monitoring, external mid-term and final evaluations. It is strongly recommended that in all circumstances a project description, including goals, objectives, activities, outputs, and outcomes be developed through a participatory approach, involving all stakeholders, including project staff and this document should be used to orient to all project staff and to ensure that they have a clear picture of a whole project cycle. In need, this system could be developed through a local consultant with experience and expertise in monitoring and evaluation. To implement the system effectively, PEPY may require additional staff specifically responsible for monitoring and evaluation.
- ▶ It is recommended that comprehensive minutes of each meeting should be written up and share with all staff, with action items identified and circulated as appropriate. Copies of all meeting agendas and Minutes and action items should also be held in a central file (ideally electronically).
- ▶ It is highly recommended that the PEPY continue to promote the existing human resources through strengthening their capacity both in training sessions and coaching, and, in particular, focus on the topics which are necessary for working in education and with the youth. It is suggested that PEPY encourage and provide opportunities for the project staff to join in exposure visits, workshops, and meetings organized by relevant institutions and NGOs so that they can share and learn the knowledge and practice related to their job more effectively.
- ▶ Address high levels of school dropout. Unless effectively addressed, this problem will seriously impact the capacity of the program to help progress the strategy of the Ministry of Education and implement the National Policy for Youth Development. It is recommended that this intervention involve the development of a strong network of government, NGO and community organizations that meet regularly to discuss and act on strategies to increase high school retention.
- ▶ Pilot an income generation project to increase benefits to the young people (particularly members of the Child to Child Club and Youth Leadership Program) through the cow bank project.
- ▶ Youth Club: It is suggested that PEPY continue the youth clubs which play an important a part in strengthening life skills and engaging youth in social and community works. The subjects and activities to be implemented should take into consideration both the existing

curriculum from the current project and the participation planning involving all the target youth. This activity is proposed to response to the strategy of the National Policy for Youth Development which aims to increase participation among the youth in community work, build capacity among youth to collect information, participate in open discussion, and analyses and share information as well as to produce information tailored to the needs of other youth.

- ▶ Youth Capacity Development Center. It is suggested that the Center play an important role in providing capacity building sessions to the youth in target communities on the topics related to improving living standards. This project should be designed to be supported for between three to five years and current projects having the greatest impacts should be implemented: Dream Management, Creative Learning Class, and English training. In addition, the new initiatives should also consider vocational training skills (computer programming, electronic repair, and the other skills based on the needs of the youth and where there is a demand for the skills).
- ▶ Expand the scholarship program to enable – and encourage – more students to continue their education, including at university and vocational training. Scholarships could be linked to a mentoring program and awarded on a competitive basis. Means testing could be applied to ensure that assistance was provided to those students who most need support to complete their education.
- ▶ It is highly recommended that identifying the detailed goals and activities under each component discussed above should be involve youth at the participatory planning stage so that the project is designed in response to the needs of the youth and it will reach success during implementation.
- ▶ In addition, as a bridge to support the current generation of youth achieve their potential, it is recommended that the project continue to focus on helping to improve the quality of education. In this context, it is suggested that PEPY reconsider its intention to transition the Library and Classroom Library projects. The evaluator fully agrees with the recommendation of the Deputy District Chief of Education who asked PEPY to consider continuing and expanding these projects it is recommended that these projects should be implemented using existing school resources (school librarians or teachers) and building their capacity gradually rather than working only through PEPY resource persons.

The design and implementation of the new PEPY project should be closely aligned with and respond to the priorities of the Ministries of Education, and Labor and Vocational Training. In target communities, PEPY projects should align with the priorities of the District Office of Education. For example, in the current target project site (Kralanh district), the top three priorities of the District Office of Education are:

1. Promote the need for all children to enroll for school at the age of enrolment - age 6
2. Every children to remain at school until at least grade 9 is successfully completed
3. Promote life skills subjects among students, starting from grade 4. These subjects include homestead-vegetable cultivation, animal raising, fish farming, and some simple vocational training, such as hair cutting, bicycle and motorbike repairing, etc.