Return to Learning – Cambodia Case Study

USAID All Children Reading – Asia
CIES April 22, 2022
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Ok Amry
Further explore EGRA results from Cambodia in USAID’s Early Grade Reading Barometer

EarlyGradeReadingBarometer.org
Purpose of Study

Investigate COVID-19 responses from:

- USAID ACR—Cambodia program, and
- Cambodia Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS).
Program Impact

ACR-Asia conducted an impact evaluation comparing changes in average learning outcomes during disruptions due to COVID 19.

Grade 1 – Average Correct Letters per Minute

2018 2019 2021

10.2 10.6 12
9.4 12.6 16.3

Kampong Thom
USAID ACR Asia - Cambodia

Battambang

COVID19 response
Research Framework

The study incorporated USAID’s resilience framework to focus on instances of the following capacities:

**Absorptive resilience** – ability to deploy existing resources,

**Adaptive resilience** – ability to make deliberate changes in response to the negative impact of disruptive events

**Transformative resilience** – the ability to add procedures, policies, knowledge, or communication channels to attempt to address vulnerabilities to future disruptions.
Study Design

Forty-four semi-structured qualitative interviews of stakeholders in the Provinces of Kampong Thom and Battambang.

- 10 Central MoEYS
- 4 District/Provincial Education Officers
- 7 School Directors
- 12 Teachers
- 7 Caregivers
- 4 NGO personnel

Interviews were conducted virtually in May and June of 2021
# COVID-19 School Closures

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<th>Year</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
<th>January</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019-20</td>
<td>Sem 1</td>
<td><strong>Closed</strong></td>
<td>Sem 1</td>
<td><strong>COVID-19 school closure</strong></td>
<td><strong>Restart Semester 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reclose</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2020-21</td>
<td><strong>Closed</strong></td>
<td>Sem 1</td>
<td><strong>Semester 2</strong></td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td><strong>New Year</strong></td>
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March – August 2020

Initial school closures – Remote Learning

USAID ACR – Cambodia prepares **take-home books** and distance learning workbooks.

USAID ACR – Cambodia prepares additional **digital storybooks** for students in the program.

**Teachers travel to communities** to instruct their students and communicate guidance to parents.

MoEYS introduces **online learning platform**.

**MoEYS develops and funds worksheets.** Schools distribute worksheets to students electronically and in-person.
March – August 2020

**Initial school closures – Remote Learning**

**Schools** implemented locally driven solutions to meet MoEYS expectations.

**Teachers** were proactive in reaching their students during initial school closures.

**School directors** supported teachers and held them to expectations.

**Access** to learning was most equitable when teachers used **online and in-person** approaches to reach students.

**Schools and communities collaborated** with a shared goal of continued learning for early grade students.
“I admired the efforts of the teachers. Sometimes when they could not contact us, they came directly to our household. They tried their best to help teach the children.”

Parent

Some parents reported feeling overwhelmed with trying to help their child.

Some parents observed other parents in the community not focusing on their child’s learning.
September – November 2020, January – March 2021

**Schools re-open**

Students permitted in school three days per week in classes of no more than twenty students.

Schools instructed to focus on early grade learning and mathematics.

Teachers claim to have assessed their students and adapted learning for individuals.

Teachers claim to be continuing to use paper-based resources developed by MoEYS and ACR-Cambodia after schools re-open
March 2021

**Schools re-close – return to Remote Learning**

- **Travel restrictions** on teachers prohibit them from visiting their students.

- Teachers deliver learning resources **virtually**

- Parents directed to **online learning** platform.
March 2021

**Schools re-close – return to Remote Learning**

**Teachers** are disappointed with not being able to reach as many students relative to initial school closures.

**Teachers** instructed to deliver learning resources virtually. Not all had the capacity to do so.

Only caregivers with smartphone could receive worksheets online.

Transformative Resilience opportunity lost due to a change in conditions
Conclusions

• During initial school closures, Central MoEYS set clear expectations for continued learning and supported these expectations by providing resources (online, worksheets)
  ▪ School directors performed two functions: supporting teachers and holding them accountable to meet MoEYS expectations.
  ▪ Adaptive Resilience was not carried over into Transformative Resilience when travel restrictions were imposed in March 2021.
  ▪ Equity issues, especially when schools re-closed
“Every day, I write on the blackboards of my teachers, ‘How can we support the parents?’”
School Director

A disruption can often change the social order and provide new opportunities.

Sometimes these changes become the norm, sometimes everything reverts back to how it was.
Study Limitations

- We attempted to select schools based on a variation of average learning gains, however we were somewhat restricted.
- The sample is a little biased towards “bright spot” schools.
- Findings generalizable to the school sample only.