

**OPTIONS PROGRAM IN CAMBODIA
CHILD LABOR EDUCATION INITIATIVE
Technical Report
March 2006**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|--------|------------|---------|------------|--|--|-------------------|--|
| Grantee: World Education, Inc. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Title: OPTIONS: Combating Child Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Through Education | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Number: E-9-K-3-0061 | | Reporting Dates | | Report Preparation Date: | | | | | | | | | |
| | | From: | To: | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | 01.09.05 | 28.02.06 | 31.03.06 | | | | | | | | | |
| Project Budget: <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Source</td> <td style="width: 70%;">Amount</td> </tr> <tr> <td>USDOL</td> <td>\$ 3,000,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>UNICEF</td> <td>\$ 295,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Private</td> <td>\$ 599,852</td> </tr> </table> | | Source | Amount | USDOL | \$ 3,000,000 | UNICEF | \$ 295,000 | Private | \$ 599,852 | Planned start date: 20.08.03 Planned end date: 16.08.07 | | Evaluation Dates: | |
| | | Source | Amount | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | USDOL | \$ 3,000,000 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | UNICEF | \$ 295,000 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Private | \$ 599,852 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Planned as per project document M&E Plan | | Proposed new dates | Actual dates carried out | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mid-term | August 2005 | December 2005 | February 2006 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Final | June 2007 | -- | -- | | | | | | | | | | |
| Grantee's Contact official: David W. Kahler, Vice President World Education, Inc. 44 Farnsworth Street Boston, MA 02110 Tel: 617-482-9485, Ext 498 Fax: 617-482-0617 E-mail: dkahler@worlded.org | | Person responsible for completing the report: Ingrid Martonova, Program Director World Education, Inc. P.O.Box 74 Phnom Penh, Cambodia Tel: 855-23-216-854 Mob: 855-12-802-720 Fax: 855-23-218-369 E-mail: worlded.options@online.com.kh | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Objectives: The Development Objective of the OPTIONS Program is the reduction of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of Cambodian children. The Immediate Objective of the OPTIONS Program is the education of vulnerable and exploited children in programs that are relevant to their special needs. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

List of Acronyms Used in this Report

| | |
|-----------|--|
| CARE: | Care International in Cambodia |
| CBCPN: | Community Based Child Protection Network for Prevention and Early Intervention |
| CIC: | Community Information Center |
| CLC: | Community Learning Center |
| CSE: | Commercial Sexual Exploitation |
| CSH: | Community Social Helper |
| CSI: | Commercial Sex Industry |
| CSW: | Commercial Sex Work |
| CUC: | Catch Up Course |
| CNCC: | Cambodian National Council for Children |
| CWCC: | Cambodian Women's Crisis Center |
| DGEAG: | District Girls' Education Animator Group |
| DOE: | District Office of Education |
| DOL: | Department of Labor |
| DSAVY: | Provincial Department of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation |
| ECCD: | Early Childhood Care and Development |
| EFA: | Education for All |
| ESCUP: | Education Services for Children from Underserved Populations--USAID-funded program |
| ESSP: | Education Sector Support Program |
| FTTP: | Fast-track Teacher Training Program |
| GEWG: | Girls' Education Working Group |
| GET: | Girls' Education Team |
| GLO: | Girls' Liaison Officer |
| GSG: | Girls' Support Group |
| ILO-IPEC: | International Labor Organization – International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor |
| IO: | International Organization |
| IPM: | Integrated Pest Management |
| KAPE: | Kampuchean Action for Primary Education |
| LCSC: | Local Cluster School Committee |
| LSCEP: | Life Skills Curriculum Enhancement Program |
| LSMC: | Local Scholarship Management Committee |
| LSS: | Lower Secondary School |
| LSSS: | Lower Secondary School Scholarship |
| M & E: | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MOEYS: | Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport |
| MOI: | Ministry of Interior |
| MOSAVY: | Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation |
| MOWA: | Ministry of Women's Affairs |
| NFE: | Nonformal Education |
| NGO: | Nongovernmental Organization |
| OSAVY: | District Office of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation |
| PAP: | Priority Action Plan |
| PMT: | Program Management Team |
| POE: | Provincial Office of Education |
| POWA: | Provincial Office of Women's Affairs |
| PTA: | Parent Teacher Association |
| SSC: | School Support Committee |
| TAF: | The Asia Foundation |
| TGL: | Technical Grade Leader |
| TTC: | Teacher Training College |
| TTD: | Teacher Training Department |
| VCAO: | Vulnerable Children Assistance Organization |
| WFP: | World Food Programme |

I. IMPLEMENTING ENVIRONMENT

The human rights situation in Cambodia took a serious downturn towards the end of 2005, particularly in terms of the freedom of press and the freedom of expression. Five prominent human rights activists were arrested and detained between October and December, among them the directors of human rights and legal service NGOs, the president of a national teachers' organization, and the director of a local radio station. The activists were arrested for their criticism of the government's border agreements with Vietnam, and released on bail on February 17, 2006 following strong pressure from the international community. Prime Minister Hun Sen also let it be known that the release was a gesture of goodwill for the occasion of the inauguration of the new US embassy in Phnom Penh. The release of the human rights activists coincided with the timing of a pardon deal struck between Prime Minister Hun Sen and the opposition leader Sam Rainsy, who had been tried in absentia on defamation charges in late December, when he was sentenced to eighteen months in prison. The pardon was granted by King Norodom Sihamoni at Hun Sen's request, and Sam Rainsy returned to Cambodia on February 10, 2006.

Shortly after the release of the activists, and the return of Sam Rainsy to Cambodia, Prime Minister Hun Sen withdrew his defamation lawsuits against the human rights activists, and declared his support for the abolition of the criminal defamation law. Many feel, however, that these declarations were made only to please the international donor community ahead of the Consultative Group Meeting on Cambodia, which took place in early March 2006.

Cambodia's ranking as a Tier 3 country in the US government's 2005 Global Trafficking in Persons (GTIP) Report became official in September, after the expiration of a sixty-day grace period, during which the government had not made significant progress in its counter trafficking efforts to warrant a review of the tier ranking. In the same month the US government announced that sanctions would be imposed on Cambodia effective October 2005. The sanctions mean withholding direct funding to the Cambodian government, except for programs on counter trafficking, good governance and assistance to vulnerable populations, including women and children. By virtue of an earlier agreement with the United States of America, Cambodia is still eligible to receive military assistance.

Over the past six months, the Cambodian government and the NGO community have been working to meet the basic compliance requirements that could place Cambodia at least on the Tier 2 Watch List in the 2006 GTIP Report. The Chai Hour Hotel, which was raided in December 2004, precipitating a series of events that contributed to the lowering of Cambodia's tier ranking in 2005, was raided again this past September. Four persons arrested in the raid were eventually convicted for human trafficking and illegal possession of firearms. Raids were also conducted in at least three other establishments, but there have been no convictions to date. The National Assembly formally ratified the UN Protocol on Trafficking in Persons on November 25, 2005, facilitating advocacy efforts that are aiming to make the language of Cambodia's draft anti-trafficking legislation consistent with the UN Protocol. The Ministry of Justice, which had previously been reluctant to consider suggestions from NGOs to amend the draft law, has now agreed to review the draft legislation. At present, a small group of NGO representatives, including a lawyer from The Asia Foundation, is working with the Ministry of Justice to amend the draft of the anti-trafficking legislation, to make it consistent with the UN Protocol. There are hopes that the revised law will be submitted to the Council of Ministers by May 2006.

On September 16, 2005 Cambodia's National Assembly approved the law on domestic violence, which aims to protect victims of domestic violence, and to prevent the incidence of domestic violence. The law aims specifically to prevent domestic violence of all forms and to protect the victims, and covers physical, mental, sexual, and economic violence. The law will enable local police, authorities, and other relevant government institutions to protect victims in rural areas in case of domestic violence, even if a court has not issued a protection order. The bill also allows judges to take legal action to temporarily prevent violent suspects from living with or contacting victims. This is a change from the existing law on crime and family, which only intends to punish offenders in an effort to stop violence, but does not do anything to prevent the act of violence. Research suggests that some 23% of married Cambodian women between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine suffer from domestic violence.

The *Cambodia Poverty Assessment 2006* report was launched in February with a positive review of the progress made by Cambodia in reducing poverty over the last decade. The new poverty assessment, which is based on the 2004 National Socio-Economic Survey, and a number of specially commissioned studies, has found that the proportion of population living below the national poverty line fell from an estimated 47% ten years ago to 35% today. Over the past decade, the report asserts, Cambodia has achieved economic growth of over 7% annually. Increase in the ownership of durable consumer goods and improvements in housing quality and school enrolment corroborate the assessment that the standard of living has been rising for most Cambodians².

In spite of the progress of the last decade in reducing poverty, the improvement in living standards has been much more pronounced for some groups and areas, and inequalities have risen sharply. Although poverty fell by 20% in rural areas over the decade, it fell by 60% in Phnom Penh, and 44% in other urban areas. In 2004, 91% of poor Cambodians were living in rural areas, with poverty rates highest in remote rural areas with limited access to roads, markets, and rural services. Although the poverty assessment report presents a favorable view of the past decade, it also suggests that complex institutional and policy changes and strengthened partnerships will be needed if Cambodia is to reach its Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty by 2015³.

In response to this favorable review of Cambodia's progress, the donor community stepped up its commitment to support Cambodia's development goals at the 8th Consultative Group Meeting on Cambodia, which met on March 2-3, and was attended by members of the donor community and the Government of Cambodia. At the end of the meeting, donors pledged \$601 million in support of Cambodia's development efforts, as part of the country's budget and financial plan for 2006. This is nearly \$100 million more than in 2004, and comes with an additional \$82 million of support through debt relief provided by the International Monetary Fund.

In contrast to the progress highlighted at the macro level, the most vulnerable people of Cambodian society -- squatters, ethnic minority groups and the very poor -- continue to suffer the injustice of evictions, land disputes, illegal land sales and disputed compensation packages. The growth in human rights abuses during the reporting period (as outlined in the opening paragraph to this section) has led many victims of land development projects to sell their land quickly at below market value for fear that they may otherwise end up with nothing.

II. OVERALL PROGRESS OF PROJECT

A. Summary:

In the fifth six-month period OPTIONS continued to meet its objectives of providing education support services to vulnerable and exploited children, and to do so with a strong focus on improving the quality of educational opportunities for Cambodia's most vulnerable population. In doing so, OPTIONS collaborated with counterparts at all levels of government to help ensure that the interventions implemented under OPTIONS become incorporated into the government's own activity and budget plans into the future. Advocacy activities featured prominently in our agenda over the past six months, with district consultations organized in Kg. Cham, and provincial forums in all three provinces. The results of this consultative process formed the agenda of a national-level workshop, which provided an opportunity for commune, district and province-level government counterparts to dialogue on major policy issues with senior staff from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation. Through the emerging Cambodian Network Against Child Labor, in which OPTIONS has played a very active role over the past four months, opportunities have arisen for building stronger linkages with the Time Bound Programme (implemented by the Royal Cambodian Government with support from ILO-IPEC), and the newly established Ministry of Labor.

² *Despite Progress, Cambodia Faces Tough Road to Halve Poverty by 2015*, World Bank Press Release, February 16, 2006.

³ *Ibid.*

Three major themes marked this reporting period: 1. Transition, 2. Consolidation and Documentation, and 3. Reflection and Evaluation. The staffing transitions that marked the fourth period of OPTIONS continued into this fifth period, with two national staff who had held responsibility for OPTIONS activities in Banteay Meanchay departing CARE in the second half of 2005. The first of these was Ms. Ouk Sothira, the Gender Technical Advisor who departed in October, and the second was Mr. Long Serey, the Project Manager for OPTIONS in Banteay Meanchay province, who left at the end of December. Both staff left to take up positions with other NGOs who were offering significantly increased salaries. The Project Manager was a valued and strong leader and his resignation has had a significant impact on the workload of staff in the field, as well as for management staff in Phnom Penh. Recruitment for the two positions proved quite challenging, with CARE having to conduct several recruitment rounds to find candidates with appropriate skills and experience, and who were willing to relocate to Poipet, located on the Thai-Cambodian border. A new Project Manager was recruited in early February, Mr. Yinsieng Someth, who comes to CARE from the Department of Planning with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, and brings a wealth of technical and management experience. A Senior Technical Advisor, Ms. Phon Tara, was hired just a few weeks before the preparation of this report to replace the former Gender Technical Advisor. Ms. Phon will train staff and stakeholders in gender, equity and girls' education related issues, and provide technical assistance to improve the teaching skills of literacy and life skills teachers working across all of CARE's activities. Ms. Phon joins CARE from the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport.

The provincial teams in Prey Veng and Kampong Cham continued to assume greater management responsibility for day-to-day operations following the departures of the former Education Specialist and Senior Technical Advisor in the first half of 2005. The new Education Specialist, Ms. Sue Gollifer, and Technical Advisor, Ms. Liesbeth Roolvink, who came on board in August and September respectively, skillfully used their prior experience in Cambodia to take on the challenges and responsibilities of the two positions that were left vacant a few months prior. The new Program Management Team was vibrant with experience and energy, but many of the new members were unfamiliar with the first two years of the OPTIONS Program. Therefore, the first two months of the reporting period were marked by a great amount of learning and discovery for all involved—old and new staff alike.

The entry into the third year of the program brought to focus the need to begin consolidating and documenting our experiences, in order to build a "body of information/evidence" about the work of OPTIONS, which would help facilitate the replication of many of our interventions on a wider scale, both among existing OPTIONS partners, and beyond. To assist with documentation tasks at this stage of the program, OPTIONS recruited an intern from Brandeis University, Ms. Bella Kovner, who committed nine months of her graduate study program towards this task. Bella assisted OPTIONS in coordinating a very vibrant annual review meeting for all partners, which took place in early November, and she used this experience to build her relationship with the varied OPTIONS partners. This relationship proved very helpful in facilitating her documentation task, which is nearly complete at this time.

The reporting period was also a period of reflection, as the OPTIONS team prepared for the mid-term evaluation, which was carried out in February. The preparation for the mid-term evaluation began with internal discussions about issues that OPTIONS hoped would be examined during the mid-term evaluation exercise. These issues were presented to DOL in early January, and also shared with the evaluation team in advance of the team's arrival. It was unfortunate that the evaluation exercise devoted less than two weeks to data collection in Cambodia, as the complex structure of the program, coupled with a wide geographic spread, required substantially more time. As it happened the evaluation team spent only four days in the field, which seemed insufficient to address all the issues that we hoped the evaluation would examine, and unfortunately did not allow for the team to visit OPTIONS activities in Banteay Meanchay Province. The preparation for the evaluation was also not ideal, with minimal contact from the evaluation team in advance of their arrival, making it difficult to know what the expectations were from the OPTIONS team.

Nevertheless, the evaluation brought into focus the need to examine critically our experience to date, build on activities that work well, and amend activities or approaches that are not working so well. Internal discussions within the team have identified the need to review our current work plan for Output 4 (policy and advocacy), as the learning from the first and second year of district and province-level consultations

suggests that we need to amend our strategy for advocacy work, bringing our attention closer to the commune level. The OPTIONS team has already begun to revise the strategy under Output 4, and we hope to have the revision completed by the end of April. The outcomes of the mid-term evaluation, once available, will also be helpful in guiding further discussions among the PMT members about areas of needed shifts and improvements.

The reporting period also marked the beginning of the last year for the activities planned for the OPTIONS partner CARE in Banteay Meanchay Province. When the OPTIONS Program was designed, it was decided that the activities managed by CARE in Banteay Meanchay would be planned for a three-year period only, with the hope that CARE would be able to raise additional resources to extend the activities for another year. CARE has secured a small amount of funding from private donors in the US. Coupled with savings from the first year of the program, these funds should enable CARE to extend OPTIONS activities at least until the end of 2006. CARE is continuing to seek funding from other sources so as to continue project activities into 2007 and beyond, and is hopeful of continuing to work within the OPTIONS partnership through to the end of the program. Plans regarding the continuation of activities beyond September 2006 will be finalized by June, at which point OPTIONS will inform DOL about the status of the activities in Banteay Meanchay Province in the fourth year of the program.

B. Plans of action and policy documents established during the period under review:

Plans of Action and Policy Documents Resulting from OPTIONS:

The Group on Policy Actions, which was established a year ago with the support of the OPTIONS Advisory Committee to help further policy dialogue with government departments, met in early January 2006 to finalize the recommendations for policy actions based on the results of the first round of district and provincial stakeholder meetings. The recommendations of the Working Group were presented to the Advisory Committee in separate meetings with each of the partner ministries (MOEYS, MOWA, MOSAVY). The results and recommendations of the second round of district and provincial workshops were also presented during these meetings. With these the Advisory Committee members were primed for the OPTIONS National Forum, which was conducted on January 25-27, 2006. The National Forum provided the venue for district and provincial stakeholders and the members of the Advisory Committee to dialogue on policy issues and recommendations that were raised in the district and provincial consultation workshops (more information on the National Forum can be found in the section on Output 4).

As one of the founding members of the Cambodian Network Against Child Labor, which is scheduled to be launched in June 2006, OPTIONS has been involved over the past four months in the development of a plan of activities/actions for mobilizing civil society actors to join to fight against exploitative child labor practices in Cambodia. The founding members for the civil-society Network Against Child Labor include ILO-IPEC, World Vision, and three local NGOs supported through the CIRCLE Project.

External Plans of Actions and Policy Documents:

The government's plan of action on combating child trafficking has been under review for more than a year now, as the old five-year Plan Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children had expired at the end of 2004. A draft of the second Five Year National Plan of Action on Trafficking has been completed and is currently being reviewed by the Committee on Social and Economic Affairs of the Cambodian National Council on Children (CNCC). The new draft plan expands its focus in counter-trafficking efforts to include all individuals, not just children, which is a significant change from the previous plan of action, which focused solely on children. The CNCC review is expected to be finished and the draft plan forwarded to the Council of Ministers for approval by May 2006.

It is worthwhile to note that the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) is also currently in the process of drafting a "Strategy on Trafficking in Persons", but what is not clear is whether this strategy will be only for MOWA, or whether it will become a national plan of action to be implemented by different government agencies. There are concerns that MOWA's Strategy on Trafficking in Persons will overlap with the

CNCC's Plan Against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children, but it appears that MOWA and the CNCC have not been able to come to any resolution on this potential duplication of effort.

Lastly, on October 12, 2005 the governments of Cambodia and Vietnam signed the Agreement on Bilateral Cooperation for Eliminating Trafficking in Women and Children and Assisting Victims of Trafficking. The basic provisions of the Cambodian and Vietnamese agreement are similar to the provisions embedded in the Cambodia – Thailand Memorandum of Agreement.

C. Progress Towards Strategic Goals and Operational Objectives and Indicators:

| |
|---|
| <p><i>1. Raise awareness of the importance of education for all children and mobilize a wide array of actors to improve and expand education infrastructures.</i></p> |
|---|

| |
|---|
| <p>Focus group discussions carried out with program stakeholders during the recent mid-term evaluation revealed that stakeholders have a very strong understanding of the importance of education, yielding anecdotal evidence about parental and community support to help young people achieve their educational goals. These anecdotal statements are supported by a significant improvement in rates of retention over the past six months.</p> |
|---|

| |
|--|
| <p>OPTIONS continues to expend a large amount of effort and resources on building and strengthening partnerships with government departments, donors, and NGOs to ensure that our own resources, which are small in comparison to the need of the overall education sector, can be enhanced through multiplication factors and economies of scale. In doing so, we use our experience and knowledge base to advocate for allocation of resources to areas where we feel they will bear high return (such as education programs for older adolescent girls), and share our experience with other organizations with plans to establish activities to combat child trafficking and exploitation. Our collaboration with the Education Services for Children from Underserved Populations (ESCUP) Program, implemented by World Education, KAPE and CARE, is an example of this type of partnership, as it has allowed OPTIONS to move forward with an initiative to offer scholarships and support for study in Teacher Training Colleges for young people from highly disadvantaged areas, where there are great teacher shortages, and even greater shortages of female teachers to serve as role models for young girls in the community.</p> |
|--|

| |
|--|
| <p>Over the past six months, ESCUP and OPTIONS were able to receive support from the Teacher Training Department to move forward with a scholarship program to encourage students from disadvantaged areas to obtain teaching credentials, in exchange for the promise to teach in their home communities upon graduation. Most teachers who are assigned to teach in remote and disadvantaged areas are not there by choice, but by virtue of their performance on the TTC examination. As these young teachers do not choose to live in remote areas, they look for the quickest opportunity to be reassigned, which leads to a very high out-flow of teachers from remote parts of Cambodia. The new Teacher Training Scholarship Program, described on page 22 of this report, will help ensure that remote schools are staffed with new teachers who come from these communities, and are therefore inclined to remain for a long period of time. It will also help to increase the number of female primary school teachers in remote and disadvantaged parts of Cambodia, which will lead to positive multiplication effects that come from the presence of strong female role models in rural communities.</p> |
|--|

| |
|--|
| <p><i>2. Strengthen formal and transitional education systems that encourage working children and those at risk of working to attend school.</i></p> |
|--|

| |
|--|
| <p>Over the past six months, OPTIONS has provided support to the government's re-entry program aiming to get more primary school-aged children who are out of school into the formal education system. District Offices of Education are currently able to access central-level resources to conduct re-entry courses during the summer months, with the aim of getting out-of-school children back into school at</p> |
|--|

a level appropriate to their age and ability. However, the government's re-entry activities have not yielded very high numbers of enrollees to date, as individual District Offices of Education have a difficult time in identifying out of school youth who are interested in returning/enrolling into school. Aware of the OPTIONS support structures for conducting NFE activities in rural communities, the DOE's in Prey Veng have asked OPTIONS for assistance in identifying suitable candidates for re-entry activities. During the reporting period, OPTIONS was able to refer thirty-six basic literacy graduates (10% of the literacy cohort in Prey Veng) to the government's re-entry program. All of the graduates enrolled in school in October, and are currently receiving scholarship assistance. OPTIONS will continue to work closely with the MOEYS to see how to better support the Ministry's re-entry program through referral of literacy graduates, as well as technical support for the actual re-entry activities. Although the basic literacy stage was not envisaged as a step towards eventual school entry, OPTIONS welcomes the choice made by many literacy graduates to enroll in the formal school system, rather than continuing on the NFE track.

With a third cohort of NFE learners currently enrolled, the My Better Future (MBF) NFE package has begun to demonstrate positive results in terms of its impact on improving options for viable livelihoods for older, at-risk girls. With the MBF package fully developed, OPTIONS is able to offer an improved program structure with minimum gaps between the three stages of MBF activities, helping to retain students from one step of the program to the next. The incorporation of savings activities has also had a very positive impact on the motivation of girls to continue onto the final stage of skills training. The improved program structure, combined with the incentives of the savings program, have contributed to higher retention rates. The fact that the MBF approach differs from other conventional vocational training programs, in that it takes a holistic approach to developing learners' abilities to critically evaluate their livelihood options, and choose a skills area that best suits their interests and the local market reality, has generated a lot of positive attention from the MOEYS as well as other education programs in Cambodia. OPTIONS is hopeful that the MBF approach may be adapted by a larger number of partners on a wider scale, and that some of its elements may be incorporated into the future plans that MOEYS has for post-literacy/advanced studies for out-of-school adolescents.

During the reporting period OPTIONS had begun to work with a special target population of children living and working in seven brick factories in Prey Veng province. These efforts came at the request of the Provincial Department of Social Affairs, which referred the children as Children in Need of Special Protection, falling under the OPTIONS vulnerability criteria. In consultation with ILO-IPEC and the Time Bound Programme, OPTIONS decided to respond to the referral request by establishing a pilot intervention focused on the needs of the children and their families (see more on this pilot initiative on page 23). The initiative presents an opportunity for OPTIONS to learn about another sector that engages Cambodian children in a worst form of child labor, which is particularly important as there is little prior experience in working within the brick factory sector (both for the government, ILO-IPEC and the NGO community), and whatever experience there may be is not well documented. OPTIONS is enthusiastic about the opportunity to study the issues surrounding the brick making sector, and to use this experience to design education interventions to assist children who are involved, or at risk of becoming involved, in brick making.

Another example of the impact that OPTIONS has had on strengthening formal education systems that encourage children to stay in school is best demonstrated through a case study of Him Roty and Sles Slamy, two former OPTIONS scholarship recipients who have become community teachers with support from the ESCUP Program. In areas with extremely high shortages of teachers, the ESCUP Program identifies community members with at least nine years of schooling who can work as community teachers at lower primary level. Within the MOEYS system these teachers have a similar status as contract teachers, which means that their status is temporary, without a formal civil service contract. Unlike contract teachers, who receive no preparatory training from the Ministry, community teachers receive ten days of intensive training provided by ESCUP, and a Child Friendly Schools tool kit. The partnership between OPTIONS and ESCUP has led to exciting opportunities for students who have completed lower secondary education, opportunities that provide incentives for current scholarship beneficiaries to complete their studies, with a promise of further training and a teaching

career. This partnership will not only improve the future study choices of a number of OPTIONS Program beneficiaries, but also contribute towards improving the education infrastructure in rural areas by providing qualified female teachers to disadvantaged communities.

Case study: A bright future for two former OPTIONS scholarship recipients in Kampong Cham



Him Roty teaching her Grade 3 class

Him Roty (19) and Sles Slamy (20) both come from a Muslim community in Tbong Khmom district in Kampong Cham Province. They both completed Grade 9 with scholarship support from OPTIONS. Most of their friends dropped out of school before reaching Grade 9, so they are both very grateful for their opportunity to finish lower secondary school. But when they finished school, there were few job opportunities in the community, and Roty and Slamy struggled to help their families with income at home. When the Commune Chief announced that they were looking for community teachers for primary schools in their district, they were very excited and decided to apply. Roty is now teaching Grade 3 and Slamy is a teacher in Grade 1. They both found the training offered by the ESCUP Program to be very interesting and useful. Roty says that she is very proud that she now has a respected job, and Slamy feels that she and Roty are good role models for other girls in their community. However, reflecting on their first three months as primary school teachers, Roty and Slamy shared that while teaching is exciting, it is also very challenging. They are both hoping to further develop their teaching skills through additional training, reading books, learning from other teachers and practicing in their micro teaching sessions.

3. Strengthen national institutions and policies on education and child labor.

Over the past four months the OPTIONS Program has become actively involved in an effort to establish and launch a civil society Cambodian Network Against Child Labor. This network, due to be launched in June 2006, will provide opportunities for influencing dialogue and action against child labor at the national, provincial, district and commune levels. OPTIONS is one of the six founding organizations/programs, collaborating with ILO-IPEC, World Vision, and three local NGOs.

OPTIONS has also begun to develop a working relationship with the new Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, a relationship that will allow us to provide input into policy development around child labor issues as child labor becomes more prominent in public discourse. The recently appointed head of the Department of Child Labor is very excited about opportunities to work with the OPTIONS Program, as the Ministry of Labor is very new (just over one year old), and therefore in need of capacity development support. In Kampong Cham Province, the Ministry of Labor has a very dynamic leader in the head of the Provincial Department of Labor, who has reinvigorated the Provincial Child Protection Network in Kg. Cham. The Network provides opportunities for further strengthening government initiatives to improve social services for children in the province. There is already a very good working relationship among OPTIONS partners working in Kg. Cham province (through the provincial working group established by OPTIONS), but the new network could help to formalize existing links among the NGO partners working in Kg. Cham, and transfer ownership for coordination to the responsible government bodies.

On the education side, the work of OPTIONS in life skills education has informed the development of the new MOEYS Local Life Skills Policy, which is based on examples of good practices in life skills

education from various programs, including OPTIONS. The Local Life Skills Policy provides opportunities for individual schools to set aside a few hours in the weekly timetable for locally relevant life skills activities. Following on this new development, OPTIONS will work with District Offices of Education in target areas to try to incorporate the life skills and curriculum enhancement activities currently implemented under the OPTIONS Program into the formal time table, following the guidance of the MOEYS Local Life Skills Policy.

4. Ensure the long-term sustainability of these efforts.

The strategies and approaches employed by the OPTIONS Program were designed to complement existing policies of the Royal Cambodian Government, particularly from the perspective of the education sector. The preliminary results of the mid-term evaluation indicate that OPTIONS working groups are committed to continue their work even if the program were to come to an end in 2007. This is a result of our focus on capacity building of local partners to carry out their government roles, and the close coordination and joint planning that have characterized the program since the beginning. Recognizing the need to focus on the quality of the teaching and learning in the interventions offered through OPTIONS, the program has acquired additional levels of technical expertise, including key curriculum developers and trainers from within the Ministry of Education. The final testing of the refined life skills program, which is planned for the next year, is timely in that the MOEYS has recently approved the incorporation of life skills into the school curriculum, which means that the life skills program, which up till now was taught as an extra-curricular activity, can be taught during school hours in the coming years.

The program has ensured where possible that activities that fall under the MOEYS Priority Action Programme (PAP) are financially supported by the Ministry of Education, rather than OPTIONS. The Ministry of Education has financed the salaries of basic literacy teachers, as there is a provision for such funding under the PAP mechanism. There have been some delays in getting MOEYS to approve the payment of basic literacy teacher salaries in the current cohort (more on that on page 42), but OPTIONS is working closely with provincial education authorities to address this issue. LSS scholarships are only provided by OPTIONS in cases where government scholarship programs (such as PAP12, JFPR, BETT and CESSP) are not able to support OPTIONS graduates who complete grade 6.

At the national level, OPTIONS partners continue to be actively engaged in policy efforts through the NGO Education Partnership as well as various government-initiated processes for reviewing policies and plans, such as the current process for assessing progress on EFA goals mid-way through the decade.

III. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION AND ASSESSMENT

A. Measurement against project objectives

| | |
|--|--|
| Development Objective: | Trafficking and sexual exploitation of Cambodian children reduced. |
| <p>Narrative assessment of contribution to the development objective:</p> <p>In staying on target for meeting the Immediate Objectives and Outputs, the OPTIONS Program is making a positive contribution towards the reduction of trafficking and exploitation of Cambodian children. As outlined in the Performance Monitoring Plan and further discussed in previous reports, there is currently no accurate mechanism for measuring the overall situation of trafficking and exploitation of Cambodian children, as there are no reliable, national-level statistics or studies on this hidden, illegal phenomenon. It is thus not possible to verify empirically the ability of OPTIONS to impact on the overall development objective. However, the program is proceeding well in meeting its Immediate Objectives and Outputs, which should serve as a positive indicator for long-term progress towards the ultimate goal of reducing child trafficking and exploitation in Cambodia.</p> | |

| Immediate Objective: Vulnerable and exploited children are educated in programs that are relevant to their special needs. | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------|--------|
| Indicators | Sub-component | Base-line | Target Actual | Sep 03 Feb 04 | Mar 04 Aug 04 | Sep 04 Feb 05 | Mar 05 Aug 05 | Sep 05 Feb 06 | Mar 06 Sep 06 | Total |
| 13,500 vulnerable and ex-ploited children enrolled in education programs | N/A | 0 | Target | 5,670 | | 3,105 | | 2,700 | | 11,475 |
| | | | Actual | 6,365 | 389 | 3,981 | 394 | 3,536 | | 14,665 |
| % of children who persist into the next step of the NFE cycle | N/A | 70% | Target | 70% | | 72% | | 75% | | 74% |
| | | | Actual | 81% | 80% | 84% | | 82% | | --- |
| % of children who persist beyond the 1st (2nd, 3rd, 4th) enrollment cycle in multi-year formal education programs | Primary | 85% | Target | N/A | | 88% | | 89% | | 89% |
| | | | Actual | N/A | | 90% | | Report next period | | --- |
| | Lower Secondary | 80% | Target | N/A | | 81% | | 83% | | 83% |
| | | | Actual | N/A | | 76% | | Report next period | | |
| % of children enrolled in nonformal education programs who complete the full program cycle | NFE Package | 58% | Target | 58% | | 60% | | 62% | | 61% |
| | | | Actual | 65% | | 81% | | 48% | | |
| | KAPE Voc. Ed. | 75% | Target | 76% | | 77% | | 77% | | 77% |
| | | | Actual | 100% | | 100% | | Report next period | | |

| Indicator | Sub-component | Baseline | Target/ Actual | Sep-03 Feb-04 | Mar-04 Aug-04 | Sep-04 Feb-05 | Mar-05 Aug-05 | Sep-05 Feb-06 | Mar-06 Aug-06 | Total to Date |
|---|-----------------|----------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|------------------|
| % of children enrolled in formal education programs who complete the full cycle | Primary | 45% | Target | 88% | | 85% | | 83% | | 84% |
| | | | Actual | 98% | | 45% | | Report next period | | |
| | Lower Secondary | 35% | Target | 65% | | 68% | | 68% | | 68% |
| | | | Actual | 87% | | 35% | | Report next period | | |
| % of children attending a transitional NFE program who move to a formal education program | N/A | 83% | Target | -- | | 83% | | 84% | | 84% |
| | | | Actual | -- | | -- | | -- | | -- |
| % of targeted beneficiaries who move from primary school to lower secondary, and from lower secondary school to upper secondary | Primary to LSS | 50% | Target | 50% | | 55% | | -- | | 53% |
| | | | Actual | N/A | | see notes | | Report next period | | |
| | LSS to USS | 22% | Target | 22% | | 25% | | 25% | | 25% |
| | | | Actual | N/A | | see notes | | Report next period | | |
| % of targeted beneficiaries who move from formal education programs to vocational education program (KAPE) | | 20% | Target | 20% | | 22% | | 22% | | 23% |
| | | | Actual | -- | | 26% | | 26% | | |

The Performance Information and Assessment table on the previous pages shows that OPTIONS is on track in meeting many of the targets for the common indicators. As of the current period, OPTIONS has provided direct education assistance to nearly 14,700 vulnerable and exploited children, well above the target of 11,475.

Two different rates of persistence for NFE programs are being reported in this period, as two different cohorts moved from one step of the NFE cycle to the next during the reporting period. The first rate of 82% refers to the persistence of the second cohort of My Better Future (MBF) students between the first and second stages of the three-stage NFE package, while the second rate of 57% refers to persistence between the basic literacy and post-literacy stages of NFE learners in Bt. Meanchay, where the full MBF package is not available. The lower persistence rate in Bt. Meanchay can be attributed to the long lag period between the end of the basic literacy stage (Sept 05) and the start of the post-literacy stage (Jan 06). With future cohorts in Bt. Meanchay OPTIONS will try to make the time period between the two stages much shorter, to warrant a higher rate of persistence.

Persistence in the formal school system will be reported in the next technical report, after the end of the 2005/06 school year.

Two different rates of completion for NFE programs are being reported in this period. The first is the completion rate for the first cohort of MBF learners, who began their basic literacy studies in February 2004, and completed their vocational training nearly a year later, in December 2005. This was the first pilot cohort for the MBF action research project, starting out with only sixty-seven girls. Thirty-two girls completed the program, resulting in a completion rate of 48%. This is significantly lower than the targeted rate, but it is reasonable considering that this was a pilot cohort that experienced delays in the staging of the different MBF components, as the project team was trying to keep up with the curriculum development and capacity building needs relating to the implementation of the pilot program. Rather than the planned eighteen months, this cohort of girls went through an MBF course that was twenty-two months in length.

The second reported completion rate for an NFE program is the rate for the first cohort of NFE learners in Bt. Meanchay, who completed the post-literacy stage in October 2005. Because the NFE package offered in Bt. Meanchay has only two steps, the completion rate is expected to be higher than for a three-stage program.

The completion rates for the formal school system will be reported in the next technical report, after the end of the 2005/06 school year.

As discussed in previous reports, OPTIONS is not running transitional programs (based on the Catch-Up-Course model originally proposed in our Project Document) due to insufficient concentrations of out-of-school children in the target age group. Therefore, there are no figures reported for children transitioning into a formal school system through a transitioning program. However, it is worth to note that about ten percent of the third cohort basic literacy learners in Prey Veng decided to go to a government re-entry program (which is run for two months during the summer months), rather than to the second stage of MBF. All those who chose the re-entry program (thirty-one girls in total) succeeded in enrolling in school, and are currently receiving scholarships. Since literacy is not considered a transitional program, however, we are not reporting this number of girls in a transitional percentage, as it would be difficult to know what number to use in the denominator of the equation.

The transition rates for movement from primary to lower secondary and lower secondary to upper secondary will be reported in the next period, after the end of the 2005/06 school year.

Lastly, although we are meeting our target for the last indicator, which looks at the percentage of targeted students who choose to enter vocational education after completing grade 9, the 26% rate is lower than we had expected, considering the popularity of the course last year. We think that the lower enrollment is due to the delayed arrival of matching funding, which caused uncertainty in the early part of the school year about our ability to run the course, and may have therefore deterred potential students.

Output 1:

| Performance Assessment Table | | | | | | | | |
|--|----------|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Output 1a: Increased access to formal and nonformal education programs for vulnerable and exploited children. | | | | | | | | |
| Output 1b: Improved quality of learning for vulnerable and exploited children in formal and nonformal education. | | | | | | | | |
| Indicators | Baseline | | Period 1 Sep-03 Feb-04 | Period 2 Mar-04 Aug-04 | Period 3 Sep-04 Feb-05 | Period 4 Mar-05 Aug-05 | Period 5 Sep-05 Feb-06 | Life of Project |
| # of children who will not have their access to education impeded by direct education costs | 0 | Target | 4,698 | | 5,240 | | 4,634 | --- |
| | | Actual | 3,780 | 43 | 5,302 | 90 | 5,563 | --- |
| % of parents of primary school scholarship beneficiaries for whom the annual direct costs of their child's education do not exceed \$2 | TBD | Target | 90% | | 91% | | 92% | --- |
| | | Actual | 65% | | Pending completion of survey in Oct 05 | | 69% | --- |
| % of parents of secondary school scholarship beneficiaries for whom the annual direct costs of their child's education do not exceed \$5 | TBD | Target | 85% | | 87% | | 89% | --- |
| | | Actual | 67% | | Pending completion of survey in Oct 05 | | 64% | --- |
| # of new village-based NFE groups formed | 0 | Target | 21 | | 27 | | 10 | --- |
| | | Actual | 27 | 10 | 23 | 26 | 22 | --- |
| % of participating children who pass the basic literacy/numeracy course | 78% | Target | 80% | | 82% | | 84% | --- |
| | | Actual | -- | 82% | 76% | 97% | 95% | --- |
| % of participating children who pass post-literacy life skills training | 78% | Target | 80% | | 82% | | 84% | --- |
| | | Actual | 96% | -- | No post-lit activities were completed during this period—to be reported in the next period | | 83% | --- |
| % of schools in project clusters that increase the relevance of education by providing life-skills education programs for upper-grade primary students | 0 | Target | 27% | | 29% | | 31% | --- |
| | | Actual | 28% | 37% | 40% | 40% | 34% | --- |

Narrative Assessment of Achievements Towards Output 1

The following section will provide detail on our progress towards the achievement of Output 1 in relation to specific interventions:

Scholarship Programs:

During the reporting period, scholarship assistance was provided to 3,761 children in 99 primary schools, of whom 1,007 are new intakes for the current school year, and 1,802 children in 27 lower secondary schools, of whom 625 are new intakes. Scholarships at both the primary and lower secondary level are given in kind, providing the tools and materials required for attending school (such as uniforms, flip-flops, book bags, note books, and pens). At lower secondary level the assistance may also include lunch support, bicycle for transport, or boarding support, depending on the distance between the child's home and the nearest lower secondary school. Additionally, special tutoring assistance is provided to the scholarship beneficiaries at lower secondary level to address the problem of "compulsory tutoring", through which lower secondary school teachers supplement their low salaries.

Of the children currently receiving scholarship assistance, 307 (57% girls) were referred to OPTIONS by the Department of Social Affairs or social service NGOs. These are children who were exploited through trafficking or exploitative labor, or who have been identified as being highly vulnerable for trafficking and exploitation, such as AIDS orphans or HIV/AIDS affected children, or children with disabilities. The referral systems between OPTIONS and provincial Departments of Social Affairs and social service NGOs are strengthening, resulting in more referrals of exploited and trafficked children for education service support from OPTIONS.

Of the primary school scholarship beneficiaries, just over 80% are girls. The drop-out rate at primary level is very low in the current year at less than 1%. The low rate of drop-out can be attributed to the scholarship assistance, as well as home visits/awareness building activities conducted by community-level working group members. Additionally, the rice rations provided to all scholarship beneficiaries in grades 4-6 through the partnership between OPTIONS and the World Food Programme (WFP) contribute towards high levels of retention. For the first half of 2006 the rice rations are also being supplemented by vegetable oil rations from the WFP.

In Prey Veng, OPTIONS has noted that approximately 6% of the current primary scholarship beneficiaries are repeating their grade. This is worrying in that most of these repeaters appear to be coming from one of the three districts where OPTIONS is operational. In Kg. Cham, where the results for first semester tests were available at the time of the writing of this report, the testing outcomes suggest that approximately 5% of primary scholarship recipients may be at risk of repeating their grade next year, as they failed their mid-semester exam. High repetition is of great concern, as it is closely linked to drop-out. The Cambodian school system is plagued by the problem of over-age enrollment, which is a great contributing factor for drop-out among older girls. OPTIONS will work on addressing these issues before the next school year by more closely monitoring the achievement of scholarship-supported children, with the aim to provide remedial classes or tutoring in collaboration with MOEYS.

Among the scholarship beneficiaries at lower-secondary, 88% are girls. Drop-out for lower secondary scholarship beneficiaries has been low over the past six months (in comparison to last year), registering at 3.7% mid-way through the school year. As highlighted in previous reports, there are two forms of lower secondary scholarship assistance offered under OPTIONS:

1. In Kg. Cham Province, where the OPTIONS partner KAPE pioneered scholarship assistance for lower secondary schools (the first such program in Cambodia), the government has been slow in implementing its own scholarship program, and therefore it was not expected that in the life of OPTIONS it would be possible to transfer Kg. Cham primary school graduates to a government scholarship program. Consequently, provisions were made in the OPTIONS budget to provide lower secondary scholarship assistance to qualifying girls at the same level that KAPE has always offered in Kg. Cham, the cost of which averages to about \$63 per year. The scholarship is

provided in kind (goods and materials), not in cash.

2. In Prey Veng, where World Education did not implement lower secondary school (LSS) scholarship programs before the start of OPTIONS, and where the government had begun to implement its own LSS scholarship program earlier than in Kg. Cham, efforts are made to refer OPTIONS grade 6 graduates to the government supported scholarship program for grade 7. Unfortunately, because the number of government scholarships is limited per school, OPTIONS in Prey Veng (where there have now been three cohorts that have reached grade 7) has found that not all of its grade 6 graduates are able to receive government scholarship support. In cases where OPTIONS graduates do not qualify for the government scholarship, OPTIONS provides scholarship assistance at the same level as the government assistance. This amounts to \$45 per year, given out in three cash installments.

As the government's scholarship program grows in the program's target areas, OPTIONS in Kg. Cham has been placed in the position of passing over the responsibility for new intakes in certain schools to the Cambodian Education Sector Support Program (CESSP), a new form of the government's secondary scholarship program that is funded by the World Bank. There is concern about this "hand-over", as the CESSP scholarship, like other government scholarships, is limited to \$45 per year, paid in cash installments, and does not provide for boarding support for students who live more than 15 km from their target school. Anecdotal evidence from Prey Veng suggests that the government scholarship program has a very low retention rate, estimated (by some) to be about 50% from one year to the next. This is not surprising, in that the government scholarship assistance comes quite late in the school year, well past the time when students need to purchase their uniforms and school materials. It is also not monitored very well, with insufficient resources provided to Local Management Committees for follow-up, which creates space for corruption. In Prey Veng, where OPTIONS tries to complement the government's scholarship program (as outlined in point two above), the program provides transportation assistance to LMC members to help them monitor scholarship beneficiaries.

Although there have been OPTIONS students who have graduated grade 6 in Banteay Meanchay, OPTIONS has not been able to refer these students to the government scholarship program, and so there is no further assistance available for students who complete grade 6 under OPTIONS in Banteay Meanchay. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some students manage to enroll in lower secondary school on their own, but OPTIONS has not been able to collect data on their retention in the system, as this is beyond the monitoring capacity of the current project team in Banteay Meanchay.

At the start of the reporting period OPTIONS carried out a survey with a sample of parents of primary and lower secondary scholarship recipients from the 2004/05 school year to determine how much money families of scholarship beneficiaries had spent on direct costs of education, beyond the assistance they received from the program through their scholarship package. OPTIONS surveyed approximately 7% of the parents of primary school scholarship recipients, and 5% of the secondary school scholarship recipients. The survey found that 69% of the families of primary scholarship beneficiaries spent less than \$2 during the academic year on direct costs of education, while 64% of secondary scholarship beneficiaries spent less than \$5 per academic year. This is significantly lower than our target threshold of 92% of families of primary scholarship recipients, and 89% of secondary scholarship recipients. Concerned about the difference in actual versus targeted percentages, the OPTIONS team looked closely at the items for which families were expending the greatest amount of resources. For primary scholarship students, flip-flops ended up being one of the most frequently purchased items, as were books and pens in other instances. Since these items are given out as part of the scholarship package, OPTIONS investigated further to find out why families were purchasing them in addition to the items they were receiving. What we learned was that the flip-flops provided by the program were of low quality, and weren't lasting the whole of the school year. Additionally, the timing of the book/pen distribution did not always correspond to the needs of the students, so sometimes families were purchasing these items in advance of the distribution of scholarship assistance. To remedy these two problems, OPTIONS decided to purchase higher quality flip-flops for the current school year, and to increase the number of books/pens given out in the first scholarship installment. We hope that these two small changes will help improve the results of the direct cost of education survey for primary school beneficiaries at the end of the 2005/06 school year.

The majority of lower secondary students were spending extra money on "compulsory tutoring"—fees that they have to provide to teachers to help them prepare for exams. The cost of this tutoring increases with each grade level at lower secondary school. Again, provisions for tutoring costs are included in the lower secondary scholarship package, but it appears that the extra tutoring costs have been on the rise, and that OPTIONS will need to investigate further whether the current scholarship package for lower secondary students is sufficient. We hope to be able to conduct more detailed research into this question at the start of the summer holiday.

Life Skills and Curriculum Enhancement:

Life skills and curriculum enhancement activities targeted to scholarship beneficiaries and girls who are at risk of drop-out took place in 59 primary schools in Prey Veng and Kg. Cham, engaging 1,582 girls in grades 5 and 6. These activities were designed especially for girls, whose school leaving rates increase sharply at grades 5 and 6 in rural areas, at about the same time that they enter puberty. Although there is some difference in the type of activities that are carried out under the heading of "life skills and curriculum enhancement" between Prey Veng and Kg. Cham, cross visits between the two sites have resulted in the sharing of experiences and resources, thus bringing the content of the two programs closer in line. For example, new modules on health and hygiene were incorporated into the life skills program in Kg. Cham this year, building on the experience in Prey Veng. Furthermore, gender mainstreaming is now featuring heavily in the training of facilitators and monitors for the life skills classes in Kg. Cham, again building on some of the experiences in Prey Veng. Nevertheless, the Kg. Cham life skills curriculum is still quite heavily focused on sewing and handicrafts as the main life skills area, while in Prey Veng the focus is primarily on content such as reproductive health, child welfare, safe migration, trafficking prevention, and on the development of skills in critical thinking, problem solving, community activism, and team work. OPTIONS will continue to promote the sharing and adaptation of approaches and materials on life skills education across both program sites.

Only one girl dropped out from curriculum enhancement activities during the reporting period. One of the great contributors to the success with retention in these activities is the active role that community working groups take in monitoring the progress of girls participating in life skills education. A number of visits were made by working group members to the homes of girls who were showing poor attendance, an indicator of potential drop-out. In many instances these home visits were key in convincing families to support their daughters to stay in school.

During the reporting period OPTIONS in Prey Veng trialed the use of the life skills curriculum enhancement program developed for girls in grades 5 and 6 with a small cohort of girls in grades 7 and 8 in three target lower secondary schools. The idea was to trial the use of the same curriculum with girls who have not yet had a chance to experience it when they were in primary school, to see how well it might work as a curriculum enhancement activity at a higher grade level. The reports thus far are very favorable, and there has been no recorded drop-out.

In addition to offering targeted curriculum enhancement activities to girls in grades 5 and 6, OPTIONS in Kg. Cham also offers community-based life skills/vocational skills training in nine primary schools for both boys and girls in grades 5 and 6 (this intervention is offered in nine primary schools, three of which also offer the curriculum enhancement activities targeted only for girls in grades 5 and 6). Students in the nine target schools are able to choose from a list of life skills and vocational skills, which are taught by community resource persons after school hours over a ten-week course, which starts in mid-January. The choices for curriculum enhancement activities include first aid, traditional music, barbering, bicycle repair, and sewing. The program works very well as a result of good cooperation between cluster-based working group and the teachers who are hired for these activities from within the community. Currently, 925 students are participating in life skills activities that began in mid-January, and there has been no recorded drop-out thus far. OPTIONS is considering offering two ten-week community-based life courses during one academic year in the future (Jan to March and then again April to June) to take advantage of new MOEYS policy guidelines for teaching community-based life skills.

With matching donor support for Kg. Cham Province, the OPTIONS partner KAPE was also able to offer

vocational and computer skills training to grade 8 students in a total of seven lower secondary schools, expanding into one new lower secondary school during the reporting period. In the past these activities were offered to students in grade 9, as this grade usually marks the end of schooling for most lower secondary school students in rural Cambodia, and so vocational and computer skills classes are important to equip students at least minimally with skills applicable to the world outside the classroom. However, OPTIONS found that students in grade 9 were too busy with their preparations for grade 9 examinations, and thus not able to utilize fully the vocational and computer training activities. Therefore, the activities were moved to grade 8.

During the reporting period, 1,247 students enrolled into the ten-week vocational training course in mid-January, which included skills options in hair cutting, sewing, vegetable growing, cooking, and bicycle repair. Over 2,100 students benefited from computer instruction, which amounts to eight hours of computer training per month over a period of nine months⁴. None of these students are tracked through the Student Tracking System, however, as these training programs are offered school-wide in six LSS, and not all participating students fit vulnerability criteria. Those students who are vulnerable are receiving scholarship support, and are thus tracked through the STS.

As a result of the work in curriculum enhancement and life skills education, more than a third (34%) of primary schools in target project clusters have increased the relevance of education by offering enhanced curricular activities to children in upper primary grades. This compares favorably to the planned target of 31% for Year 3 (last indicator for Output 1b).

Nonformal Education Activities for Out-of-School Youth:

Several cohorts of nonformal education learners were engaged in the OPTIONS Program during the reporting period. This section describes first the activities in Banteay Meanchay Province, and then the activities in Prey Veng:

Banteay Meanchay

OPTIONS in Banteay Meanchay offers a two-step NFE program for out-of-school children aged 13 to 17. The first step is the government's six-month basic literacy program; the second step is a twenty-week post-literacy program that focuses on the development of essential life skills. Three different cohorts of NFE learners completed varied stages of the two-step NFE program during the reporting period, as outlined in greater detail below:

The first cohort of NFE learners completed post-literacy activities in October. Of the 177 learners who enrolled for post-literacy at the end of the last reporting period, 90% completed the five-month course. Of those who completed the course, nearly 83% passed the post-literacy test.

The second cohort of NFE learners completed the basic literacy course in September. The cohort started out with 470 learners, of whom 77% were girls, and completed with 412, which translates to a drop-out rate of just under 13%. This is quite low in comparison to our prior experience with drop-out during the basic literacy stage. Of the 412 learners who completed the course, more than 95% passed the basic literacy course, which is a great improvement over the passing rates of the first cohort of literacy learners. The involvement of Youth Committees has contributed to the high rate of retention, while the improvement in the capacity of literacy facilitators, coupled with improved capacity of program monitors, have contributed to the improved achievements of the basic literacy learners.

Post-literacy activities for the second cohort of NFE learners began in January. 68% of the cohort 2 graduates who passed the basic literacy course decided to enroll in the post-literacy activities. It is unfortunate that not more of the literacy graduates were able to continue with post-literacy studies, but the "rate of loss" is consistent with our experience elsewhere, where a post-literacy activity does not begin

⁴ 778 students participate in vocational training and also in computer training. This means that in total 2,569 secondary students benefited from one or both of these interventions.

immediately (or within a month) after the end of the basic literacy course. The OPTIONS team in Banteay Meanchay had hoped to begin post-literacy activities earlier, but they had to be delayed due to capacity building needs of the post-literacy facilitators, who needed to improve their own skills before moving forward with a new cohort of learners.

A third cohort of NFE learners was enrolled in basic literacy classes in the middle of February 2006 (rather than January), comprising of fifteen classes with 375 learners, of whom 62% are girls. The activities for this third cohort were delayed by one month due to complexities that arose in the selection process. The literacy classes have become popular locally, and some students from the formal school system tried to enroll in them as an add-on to their formal schooling. Since our target districts in Banteay Meanchay are quite remote, it took a while for the program staff and counterparts to double-check on the background of the selected learners, to ensure that they all met the selection criteria for basic literacy.

Prey Veng

In Prey Veng, OPTIONS offers a three-step NFE program called *My Better Future (MBF)*. My Better Future grew out of an eighteen-month action research project, in which OPTIONS worked to develop and trial out a holistic package of NFE interventions targeting vulnerable girls. MBF takes an illiterate adolescent girl through an eighteen-month learning process through which she not only becomes literate and numerate, but also develops essential life skills, as well as the ability to earn a viable income through a selected livelihood activity.

The three stages of MBF are as follows:

1. the government's six-month **basic literacy program**;
2. a six-month **post-literacy and livelihood preparation stage**, which consists of an IPM Student Field School; life skills classes; Work Experience Immersion; and participation in Savings Groups; and
3. a six-month **livelihood skills development stage**, during which girls receive training in an activity they selected individually on the basis of their local market assessment; continue with Savings Groups activities; and participate in a small business development course.

Three different MBF cohorts (cohorts 1-3) were enrolled in NFE activities in Prey Veng province during the reporting period, as outlined in greater detail below:

The first cohort of MBF learners completed the livelihood skills development stage during the reporting period (the third stage activities for the first cohort commenced in May 2005 and finished six months later). Forty-three of the original sixty-seven girls who enrolled in the first cohort to trial MBF in August 2004 were retained for the start of the third phase. As outlined in the previous technical report, this was a fairly high "rate of loss", but as in the case of Banteay Meanchay above, this was mainly due to our inability to offer seamless transfer from one stage of the program to the next, as we were in the midst of the development of the pilot program, and a number of constraints delayed various activities.

Of the forty-three girls who enrolled in the third stage of MBF last May, thirty-two completed the course, resulting in a rate of drop-out of 26%. This is still high, but lower than the rates of drop-out experienced in previous vocational skills training activities. Fifteen of the learners studied sewing, fifteen studied agriculture and animal raising, and two studied beautician skills. As of today, these thirty-two girls are engaged in the livelihood activities outlined in the table that follows:

| Current livelihood activities of the first cohort to graduate from My Better Future: A total of 32 graduates | |
|---|---|
| Skill area | |
| Sewing | 7 girls working in garment factories in Phnom Penh |
| | 2 girls employed by their apprenticeship trainers |
| | 2 girls have begun their own sewing business |
| | 4 girls are currently planning to start their own sewing business |
| Vegetable growing and animal raising | All fifteen graduates are conducting small scale livelihood activities at home with vegetable gardens and pig and chicken raising |
| Beautician | 1 girl is working as an assistant to her trainer |
| | 1 girls has not yet found employment |

The second MBF cohort was engaged in the second stage of MBF activities during the reporting period. This cohort started out with 457 girls in January 2005, of which 397 completed the basic literacy course in July 2005, resulting in a rate of drop-out (following the first stage) of 13%. From the 397 who completed basic literacy, 357 enrolled in the second stage of MBF in August 2005. Of the forty that did not enroll in the second stage, thirty-one had chosen to re-enter the formal school system in October 2005 with scholarship assistance from OPTIONS⁵. As noted in the previous technical report, an unexpected outcome of the NFE program has been the expressed interest of a significant number of basic literacy graduates (about 10% in the second cohort) to re-enter the formal school system. These tend to be the younger girls within their cohort.

The 357 girls from the second cohort who enrolled in the second stage of MBF participated during the reporting period in an IPM Student Field School, which was followed by life skills modules and the Work Experience Immersion (WEI) activity. With the second cohort much larger than the first cohort (357 vs. 43 girls) at the second stage of the MBF package, program staff and working group counterparts found it difficult in many locations to find sufficient placements for the Work Experience Immersion activity. The Prey Veng team had anticipated this issue, so it had already begun to think about additional ideas for WEI placements for the third cohort, specifically placements focused on social service vocations, such as pre-school/community teachers, health care assistants/village health volunteers, as well as community leaders (i.e. female leaders on the commune council). Also during the reporting period, the girls in the second cohort organized into twenty-five Savings Groups, which have begun to meet regularly to collect savings from among the group members. As of the writing of this report, 33 girls, or 9%, have dropped out. This is a low drop-out rate considering prior experience with a comparable population of older adolescent girls. The post-literacy stage will be completed in May, at which time the girls will engage in a participatory market assessment, which will help them identify the skill area in which they would like to be trained in the third stage of MBF.

Lastly, a new cohort of NFE learners began to study basic literacy in seventeen new basic literacy classes, which began in January, involving 396 children, of whom 378 are girls. This will be the third cohort of learners to experience the My Better Future NFE package, and the first to experience it with the curriculum fully develop and tested, and with a refined sequencing of activities. Thirty-three children in this third cohort are children living in brick factories, a special new target area for OPTIONS in Prey Veng, as discussed in greater detail on page 24. To date there has been recorded drop-out from these classes.

⁵ In order to enroll in school in October, the literacy graduates had to complete a MOEYS re-entry class, which took place during August and September as part of the Ministry's ongoing effort to use the summer holiday months to encourage school re-entry for drop-outs. OPTIONS collaborated closely with the District Offices of Education to ensure that the literacy girls received the attention and support they needed to assure their success in re-entering school in October.

Case study: A clear goal creates opportunities for an OPTIONS graduate

Samphors completed the OPTIONS NFE program in April 2004. She attended basic literacy, followed by post-literacy, and then completed a vocational training course in beauty preparation.

After the course, most of her friends who learned to sew went on to work in garment factories. But Samphors wanted to test out her new skills in her own community, and told OPTIONS staff that her dream was to start her own business. She began working for a woman who ran a beauty and wedding preparation business. She also met her teacher from the vocational training course three or four times to update her skills. People in the community liked her because she communicated well, and she was skilled at developing modern patterns and applying modern techniques when she prepared young girls and women for wedding celebrations. She mentioned that her confidence had grown as a result of the courses that she attended with OPTIONS, and this helped her when dealing with different people. She also started cutting and dressing people's hair at her own home.

With a clear goal for the future, Samphors made a plan to set up her own business. She began saving, and in November 2005 she became self-employed. She bought all the material and equipment for her beauty business with approximately US\$ 400. She went on to learn how to take good photos from a cameraman in Prey Veng town, and then bought a camera to use in her business.

As her reputation grew, Samphors asked two of her peers who had attended the training course with her to come and work for her. Today, the business is flourishing and during the dry season, which is the wedding season, the team is busy almost every day. The income per wedding and/or event is 100,000-120,000 riels (US\$ 25-30). Samphors makes between 500,000- 600,000 riels (US\$ 125-150) after covering her business costs, about three times as much as her friends who work in garment factories in Phnom Penh. Samphors' next plan is to expand her business so that she can provide wedding equipment such as tables, chairs and decorations. She is a great model for other girls in the community. In her spare time she also works as a mentor for girls who are participating in the second cohort of My Better Future.

Vocational Skills Training For Grade 9 Graduates:

In Kg. Cham, thirty-eight lower secondary school graduates were enrolled in vocational training during the reporting period. This was the third year in which the OPTIONS partner KAPE enrolled grade 9 graduates in a vocational training activity, which is aimed at students who are not able to continue on to grade 10. This year OPTIONS introduced a cooking program under the vocational training umbrella. Of the new cohort of thirty-eight students, twenty-four have enrolled in sewing and tailoring, and fourteen in cooking. As part of the eight-month vocational training course, students will receive training in small business development, and receive an orientation on safe migration. This will be aimed at those graduates who will hope to use their skills to obtain a garment-factory job in Phnom Penh. The safe migration module will provide students information on services available from the OPTIONS partner Mith Samlanh in Phnom Penh, in the hope that the students will avail themselves of these services upon their arrival in the capital city. At this time, there has been no drop-out recorded from the course.

Shelter-based Education Support to Trafficked and Exploited Children:

OPTIONS continued to provide education and psychosocial support to children formerly trafficked to Thailand, or children who had been abused in Poipet, a porous border town between Cambodia and Thailand that serves as a transit point for many migrants and trafficked persons. This assistance was implemented through funding support to Damnok Toek, a local NGO that runs a reception/reintegration center in Poipet, on the Cambodian side of the border. During the reporting period, Damnok Toek provided educational and psychosocial support to forty-two children ranging in age from six to fifteen. There was a near equal split between boys and girls in this group. The children at the center learned typical subjects from the formal school curriculum, as well popular Khmer stories, drawing, traditional dancing, and gardening. They received medical assistance and care, as well as three nutritious meals per day. Fifteen children left the reception center during the reporting period; four to return to their families, and eleven were referred for long-term care to Damnok Toek's long-term care center, or to other NGOs.

In late December 2005, OPTIONS renewed its partnership with Damnok Toek for a third year of support funding for calendar year 2006 at a funding level very similar to last year. In addition, Damnok Toek hosted Ms. Jennifer Spande from the US Embassy for a visit to the Reception Center in February 2006.

Teacher Training Scholarship Program (formerly referred to as Fast Track Teacher Training):

Over the past six months OPTIONS moved forward with efforts to support teacher training for students who would not qualify for TTC entry under regular circumstances. These efforts moved forward somewhat differently than envisaged at the design stage of the program. As outlined in the OPTIONS Project Document, OPTIONS planned to pilot test an activity called Fast Track Teacher Training (FTTT) for grade 9 graduates from rural areas who would be "fast-tracked" into a Teacher Training College, by-passing the TTC entry requirement of having completed 12 years of schooling. Although there had been initial enthusiasm within MOEYS for the FTTT model to be expanded into OPTIONS-targeted areas, by mid-2005 it became clear that opinion differences within the Ministry on the FTTT model would make it difficult for us to move forward with our original design. However, a compromise solution to the FTTT question arose in the late summer of 2005 through collaboration between OPTIONS and the Education Services for Children from Under-served Populations (ESCUP) Program, a USAID-funded initiative implemented by World Education in collaboration with KAPE and CARE in the remote northeast of Cambodia. As a compromise to the FTTT initiative, ESCUP and MOEYS designed the Teacher Training College Scholarship Program for remote areas, which provides opportunities for grade 12 graduates from remote and under-served areas to apply for a spot in a TTC with relaxed entry criteria, while receiving additional tutoring support to help them manage their studies at a Teacher Training College. This compromise responds to the problem of great teacher shortages in remote area, and encourages young women to pursue a teaching profession, while addressing MOEYS concerns about ensuring that all new TTC students in all but the most remote areas have twelve years of preparatory education before entering a TTC.

Through its established networks in Kg. Cham Province, where both the OPTIONS and ESCUP Programs are being implemented, and where teacher shortages are particularly acute, the OPTIONS partner KAPE was able to identify and select ninety-two grade 12 graduates who were offered the opportunity to enroll in the Kg. Cham TTC with scholarship support from OPTIONS and ESCUP. Thirty-one of these students (of whom sixteen are girls) are being supported by OPTIONS. Although these TTC scholarship recipients had completed 12 years of schooling, they would not have been able to pursue a teaching career without this support. Firstly, many did not have high enough scores on their grade 12 examinations to allow them to sit for the TTC exam, and many would not have passed the exam without the additional tutoring they received from KAPE. Secondly, they would not have been able to afford the boarding costs that many require to live in the provincial town, where the TTC is located. In exchange for the scholarship, the students committed themselves to teach in their home districts upon graduation. Many of these are districts with a high percentage of Cham people, a Muslim ethnic minority group. It is worthwhile to note that the Teacher Training Department had agreed to grant 110 spaces to ESCUP/OPTIONS TTC scholarship recipients from among the 280 new TTC slots available this year. Considering that the scholarship recipients come in with lower scores than typically required, the TTD's willingness to allocate 40% of the entry seats in the regional TTC to our beneficiaries is a great testament to their trust in our collaboration and support.

Children Referred to OPTIONS Through the Government and Social Service Agencies:

To date, OPTIONS has accepted referrals for more than 390 children who have been exploited or who have been classified by the government's protection system as Children in Need of Special Protection (CNSP). The CNSP category includes children who have lived on the street, have been sexually abused, have experienced domestic violence, are orphaned, or are affected by HIV/AIDS. All of these children were referred to OPTIONS in Kg. Cham and Prey Veng provinces. The majority of the referrals were made by the Provincial Offices of Social Affairs, but some referrals came from IOM, VCAO and Mith Samlanh.

Among the children referred by the Prey Veng Department of Social Affairs are 113 children who are living and (some) working in seven brick factories in Kanchrieu District of Prey Veng Province. These chil-

dren were referred to us as children who are extremely vulnerable to exploitation as they are either working in the factories, or are at high risk of working in the future.

As the brick-making sector is targeted by the Time Bound Programme, OPTIONS consulted with ILO-IPEC on whether we should respond to the request issued by the Prey Veng DSAVY office to assist these children and their families. ILO-IPEC indicated that Prey Veng would not be a target area for their brick-sector work, and encouraged us to respond to the referral request made by the DSAVY. Upon significant reflection, OPTIONS decided to respond to the referral request by setting up a pilot brick-factory component under the OPTIONS Program. As the factories are not located in one of our three target districts, OPTIONS had to expand the working group structure in Prey Veng Province by forming an additional working group based in Kanchriach District. This working group includes a factory owner representative, who is quite supportive of the program's effort.

In this pilot effort targeting brick factory children, OPTIONS is offering the same interventions that are available to vulnerable children: scholarship support for those who are in school, and NFE activities for those who are not, coupled with rice rations from WFP. This is our immediate response. Over the coming year we plan to study carefully the situation in the brick factories to better understand their economy, and the motivating factors that compel parents to engage their children in brick making. We will work closely with the factory owners in order to influence the working hours and the working conditions for the children, and study what additional services might be required by the families to support their efforts of keeping their children in school, and out of factory work. We have discussed these plans with our GOTR, who was supportive of the initiative, though cautioned that we will not be able to use the number of these children in our performance reports, as our original mandate was not to be working with brick factory children. This is not a problem for OPTIONS, as we are on track for exceeding our targets regardless of these numbers.

Output 2:

Performance Assessment Table

| Output 2 a: Increased community awareness of child trafficking and exploitation, and the role that education can play in their prevention. | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|--------|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Output 2 b: Improved attitudes toward educating children, especially girls, in the face of difficult economic circumstances. | | | | | | | | |
| Indicators | Baseline | | Period 1 Sep-03 Feb-04 | Period 2 Mar-04 Aug-04 | Period 3 Sep-04 Feb-05 | Period 4 Mar-05 Aug-05 | Period 5 Sep-05 Feb-06 | Period 6 Mar-06 Aug-06 |
| % of surveyed community members who pass the first three levels of a Trafficking Awareness Survey (TBD) | TBD | Target | TBD | | | | | |
| | | Actual | Survey carried out in July-August 2005 | | | Analysis not fully finalized. | | |
| % of surveyed community members who do not find acceptable the first three levels of an Education Attitudes Scale (TBD) | TBD | Target | TBD | | | | | |
| | | Actual | Survey carried out in July-August 2005 | | | Analysis not fully finalized. | | |

Narrative Assessment of Achievements Towards Output 2:

A variety of awareness raising activities contributed to knowledge improvement and attitudinal shifts on child trafficking and exploitation and the importance of education in the target communities. The varied activities are described below:

School-based Awareness Raising on Trafficking and Exploitation:

Based on the successful piloting of IOM-developed materials called *Shattered Dreams*, which follow the experiences of a young Thai girl who had been tricked into commercial sex work, OPTIONS facilitated the use of the *Shattered Dreams* materials in a larger number of target primary and lower secondary schools in the first half of the 2005/06 school year. OPTIONS trained cluster-based Technical Grade Leaders (part of the MOEYS TA structure at the cluster level) to deliver the program in primary school, and lower secondary teachers to do so in secondary schools. In Banteay Meanchay, as a form of capacity building, the awareness raising activities were facilitated by program staff and working group members. In total, over the reporting period, 940 students aged 10-14 participated in the *Shattered Dreams* awareness raising activities in twenty primary schools and sixteen lower secondary schools.

In Kg. Cham, in response to a recommendation made during the pilot trial in the summer of 2005, KAPE invited community members to join the awareness raising activities in the school. The sessions stimulated discussions among the participants on migration, trafficking, exploitation, and HIV/AIDS. The *Shattered Dreams* video does not specifically target any particular audience (younger or older students, parents, teachers, or community members), so it is important to have good facilitators for the discussions that follow the viewing of the video. In Banteay Meanchay, the facilitators found that the younger children found it difficult to follow the video, and to understand its main ideas. Based on this most recent experience, OPTIONS will not conduct the *Shattered Dreams* awareness raising program with children younger than grade 5, and organize separate small group discussions following screenings to wide-ranging audiences, to help translate the relevance of the topics to the individual age groups. Also, OPTIONS decided to adapt the materials for use with NFE learners by incorporating the *Shattered Dreams* materials into the Safe Migration life skills module in the second stage of the My Better Future package.

Use of the *Shattered Dreams* Materials for Awareness Raising with Local Authorities:

In Banteay Meanchay, OPTIONS decided to use the *Shattered Dreams* materials in awareness raising with local authorities and teachers. CARE staff and working group members conducted sessions on domestic violence, human trafficking, exploitation, and the value of children's education. These sessions reached 152 participants (about 45% female), including teachers, school directors, village leaders, commune council members, commune police, soldiers and monks.

The sessions encouraged viewers to associate what happens in the video with issues in their community, and led to lively discussions. Participants also received relevant reading materials developed by CARE and UNICEF, to share with their community members. The distribution of these materials was timed to correspond with the screening of the *Shattered Dreams* video in schools. The participants related that they found this approach more interesting than other workshops, as they were able to discuss ideas in relation to what they had observed in the video, and this made it easier to relate to real issues in their own community.

Awareness Raising through Orientation Sessions and Open Days:

Orientation sessions for the second step of the My Better Future package in Prey Veng offered opportunities for motivating parents to support their girls' NFE studies, engaging 285 parents and 337 girls. The impact of the activity can be seen in the significant decrease of drop-out in the second stage of MBF—an improvement of 30 percentage points in comparison to the previous cohort. Similarly, Open Day activities in early September provided an opportunity for the learners themselves to influence their parents' attitudes towards their education by displaying in confidence their group work, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. The Open Day activities were organized by the girls themselves in every cluster of Prey Veng. More than 570 girls and 800 villages participated in Open Days activities.

Awareness Raising Conducted by Youth Committees and Girls' Clubs:

Youth Committees and Girls' Clubs have been set up in different OPTIONS sites to encourage young

people's participation in the implementation of OPTIONS activities, and to foster their interest and engagement in civic leadership. In Banteay Meanchay, seven Youth Committees were formed with fifteen girls in total (two/three girls per committee) by selecting literacy graduates with strong leadership potential. In Kg. Cham, Girls' Clubs were organized in seven secondary schools with 301 girls. During the reporting period, Youth Committees carried out awareness sessions on domestic violence, child trafficking and exploitation, and the value of education for more than 200 villagers, who were very pleased with the young people's efforts, and commented on the relevance of the issues to their own community, where there are many problems with domestic violence. Members of Girls' Clubs were trained on topics such as health and hygiene, domestic violence, and child labor, developing their skills in analysis, discussion, and group work. In January, the clubs proceeded to organize meetings with their peers and parents to discuss the issues on which they had been trained. OPTIONS hopes that the Youth Committees and Girls' Clubs will foster civics education, build cooperative ties among program beneficiaries, and engage older girls as agents of social change in their community.

Village Orientation Program:

The Village Orientation Program (VOP's) was carried out in December in fifteen villages in Prey Veng in order to discuss the importance of girls' education, and to encourage women to apply for positions as NFE facilitators for the My Better Future NFE course. OPTIONS collaborated with the District Offices of Education to run the VOP's, which drew more than 1,000 participants. Following the VOP events the DOE's received 67 applications from people interested in the positions of NFE facilitators. Following a list of criteria that were developed during the VOP, as well as an interview process, the DOE's selected fifteen women as new NFE facilitators. It is worth noting that the VOP process of facilitator selection was observed/learned by OPTIONS staff during their study tour to Nepal, and is a concrete example of adaptation of one excellent selection strategy to another country context.

Young Migrant Outreach Program:

Through continued partnership with the local NGO Mith Samlanh (MS), OPTIONS continued to support outreach activities for your migrants arriving in the capital city, as well as outreach to potential migrants in Kg. Cham Province, the pilot province for Mith Samlanh's efforts to reach potential migrants before they decide to leave their home community.

Mith Samlanh's safe migration team works in twenty-two areas in Phnom Penh where newly arrived migrants are known to congregate. The team works in collaboration with local authorities, street vendors, and moto drivers, who make contact with the MS outreach team when they encounter children or young people in need of assistance. During the reporting period, Mith Samlanh's outreach team made contacts with more than 1,700 young people, of whom 63% were street children, and 37% were migrants. Of the total, just under half (49%) were women. Group and one-on-one counseling sessions were offered to young female migrants and street girls at the Young Women's Information Center, to which girls and young women are referred for further guidance and support.

Of the many young people reached through the outreach teams during the reporting period, twenty-two decided to return home following their interaction with MS staff, thirteen were referred to the MS vocational training program, six were referred to the MS Education Center, three were referred for support to other NGOs, and five were referred to the MS Transitional Home, as their home situations were unresolved.

Through prevention efforts in Kg. Cham Province (one of the highest source areas for young migrants in Phnom Penh), Mith Samlanh was able to identify 135 multiplication agents during the reporting period. These agents assist in the identification of vulnerable children and young adults in five target districts, and attempt to provide assistance with existing community resources and referrals, while also providing safe migration information to potential migrants. Through the efforts of the district-level staff of the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the multiplication agents, more than 2,260 young people were identified and provided information and assistance during the reporting period.

At the end of December the OPTIONS Program renewed its funding partnership with Mith Samlanh for an additional year of funding support to the Young Migrant Outreach Program.

Directing Safe Migration Messages at Secondary School Students:

In Kg. Cham, where there is close collaboration between the Mith Samlanh Safe Migration team and the KAPE team, the materials developed by Mith Samlanh to promote safe migration have been adapted for use in lower secondary schools. Secondary school students are at high risk of labor migration due to their advanced age and the pressure from their families for economic support. Mith Samlanh has trained nine KAPE staff, who have in turn trained working group members to conduct safe migration activities in all secondary schools, particularly in grade 9. A safe migration module has also become a standard component of the vocational training course offered to graduates of grade 9.

Reflection as Awareness Raising:

During the focus group discussions carried out by the mid-term evaluation team, a number of beneficiaries, parents, and working group members had an opportunity to review and reflect on what they had learned about reducing vulnerability and exploitation through education. OPTIONS considered this to be an awareness raising opportunity, as it allowed for individual and group reflection on knowledge, attitudes and practice relating to our issues of concern. Altogether, sixty-two children, thirty-seven parents, and twenty-eight working group members participated in the focus group discussions conducted between February 21-24 as a part of the mid-term review.

Measuring Progress Under Output 2:

The team of researchers from the University of Phnom Penh (that had been commissioned by OPTIONS to carry out the baseline survey on awareness and attitudes) had completed the data collection process in August 2005. At the beginning of the reporting period, the research team had begun the analysis process. Unfortunately, the data analysis required much more time than the team's TOR stipulated, resulting in several long delays in the submission of the survey report. A draft report was finally received from the research team in early March, but given the mid-term review and the crunch of the reporting period, the OPTIONS team has not yet been able to analyze the report results in great detail. It has become clear, however, that one of the reasons for the great delay in the report submission was the research team's concern over findings that showed a small margin of difference in the awareness levels of OPTIONS respondents in comparison to the control population. The researchers were concerned that OPTIONS would be displeased at seeing marginal differences in awareness levels, and therefore conducted several checks and rechecks on the data. The OPTIONS team conveyed to the researchers that we were happy to receive whatever results the data offers, assuming it has been collected and analyzed correctly. In fact, marginal differences in awareness, if shown through our baseline, would actually support claims made by many individuals who suggest that it is not awareness that is lacking, but people's ability to act on that awareness when confronted with a calamity such as a natural disaster, serious illness, or death in the family, when awareness about what is right or wrong no longer factors into decisions about economic activities in which family members become engaged.

By the end of April OPTIONS will complete the analysis of the baseline research, and this information will help us determine whether the indicators proposed for this output will be practicable to help us measure our progress through the remainder of the program. It is possible that we will find that the indicators were not realistic from the start. When working on our Logical Framework during the Project Document review, the indicators for Output 2 were very difficult to define, as it is not easy to quantify awareness and attitudinal shifts with % terms. Awareness and attitudes shift slowly over time, and the best way to gauge their change is through conversations with individual community members over an extended period of time. OPTIONS believes strongly that there has been a great improvement in the knowledge, attitude and practice on the issues under consideration, which is best demonstrated through community support and engagement in our program, and through the improved rates of retention in all of our educational interventions, particularly in NFE, where retention was always much lower than in formal school programs.

Output 3:

Performance Assessment Table

| Output 3: Increased effectiveness of OPTIONS implementing partners, including local program implementation committees. | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Indicators | Baseline | | Period 1 Sep-03 Feb-04 | Period 2 Mar-04 Aug-04 | Period 3 Sep-04 Feb-05 | Period 4 Mar-05 Aug-05 | Period 5 Sept-05 Feb-06 | Period 6 Feb-06 Aug-06 |
| % of committees able to manage program implementation at a satisfactory level | 80% | Target | 80% | | 83% | | 87% | |
| | | Actual | Not measured until summer 04 | | 85% | 95% | 80% | |
| Institutional capacity of OPTIONS implementing partners improves (Non-reporting indicator.) | N/A | Target | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | | Actual | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

Narrative Assessment of Achievements Towards Output 3

A number of training and capacity building activities took place across the three program sites during the reporting period. The following section provides an overview of our efforts in capacity building. A discussion on the measurement of our indicator follows at the end of this section.

Training for Implementation Working Groups and Scholarship Management Committees:

Across all program sites, OPTIONS partners carried out regular capacity building activities for committees and working groups responsible for the implementation of all education interventions. These included:

In Banteay Meanchay:

- Two-day refresher training for thirty members of scholarship management committees took place in October in order to strengthen the capacity and performance of scholarship committee members in advance of the new school year.
- After identifying data collection errors for the survey on direct costs of education, the OPTIONS team conducted a one-day training for four scholarship management committee members to clarify the purpose of the survey, and review data collection procedures. Following this training, the scholarship management committees re-interviewed forty-one respondents whose responses in the first run of the survey were incorrect. The new information was then sent to the central OPTIONS team in Phnom Penh for analysis.
- A one-day training to strengthen facilitation for awareness raising activities was carried out for twelve members of the Girls' Education Team in Banteay Meanchay.

In Kampong Cham:

- At the start of the school year, fifty-one members of scholarship management committees participated in a refresher training on scholarship program management, focusing on student selection, the use of correct forms for the processing of applicants, the use of operational funds for committee activities, data collection, and data reporting.

In Prey Veng:

- Over the course of the reporting period, sixty-three working group members at the commune level and seventeen working group members at the district level received a total of twenty-seven days of coordination training support from program staff members.
- The same number of working group members participated in a quarterly review workshop in September, which helped to review challenges encountered in the last quarter, and plan activities for the next quarter. Following this quarterly review, it was decided that the review meetings will be held in six-month increments into the future, as the quarterly schedule had become too difficult to manage among the group members.
- A new nine-member working group, established in Kanchrieach district to assist with the implementation of our pilot effort in seven brick factories, received a five-day orientation training for new working groups. The working group contains employer representatives.

Curriculum Enhancement and Life Skills:

A variety of training activities for teachers and working group members who support life skills and vocational activities took place at the start of the school year. These include:

In Kampong Cham:

- One-day teacher preparation for teaching the curriculum enhancement course was provided to eighty-five teachers at the start of the school year.
- One-day training was conducted with eighteen grade 5 and 6 teachers on how to prepare students to conduct research on life skills opportunities in their community.
- Forty-five community teachers and Technical Grade Leaders were trained on the preparation and implementation of life skills activities.

In Prey Veng:

- Eleven Technical Grade Leaders and six district working group members, as well as two teachers from a Teacher Training College (who act as technical resource people) received a six-day training on planning LSCEP modules. This training helps to prepare them for their monitoring and support roles in the LSCEP program.
- Eighteen female primary school teachers and three secondary school teachers received training on the LSCEP modules on Primary Health Care, Nutrition and Hygiene, and HIV/AIDS. All teachers are able to teach their classes effectively, and have shown an overall increase in capacity through class observations. Cross visits have also been part of on-going training and support.

Training for Basic and Post Literacy Facilitators and Monitors:

In Banteay Meanchay:

- Fifteen literacy teachers and three core teachers (literacy teacher supervisors) received a ten-day training to strengthen their facilitation skills.
- OPTIONS staff from Prey Veng traveled to Banteay Meanchay in late December to provide a ten-day training on life skills to the CARE team (seven staff members) and thirteen post-literacy facilitators and two DOE counterparts. The training helped boost facilitators' confidence in teaching the post-literacy curriculum, which focuses on life skills development. The training helped CARE staff strengthen its understanding of the concepts of life skills, and the processes used in facilitating life skills development in learners. The ten-day training was followed by a two-day follow-up workshop, where the focus was on problem identification and analysis in life skills classes.

In Prey Veng:

- Twenty-two new literacy teachers went through a basic literacy TOT course in advance of the start-up of the new literacy session in January 2006.
- A three-day training on principles of nonformal education was carried out for twenty-three working group members to help them in their monitoring of NFE life skills activities.
- A day-long workshop on Work Experience Immersion was carried out for twenty-eight members of Livelihood Development Work Teams (L-Teams) and district level monitors.
- Twenty post-literacy facilitators and eighteen L-Team members participated in a five-day Training of Trainers on the life skills modules of MBF, stage II. Seven of the post-literacy facilitators are new, and so they received an additional two-day training on facilitation.
- A two-day training on establishing savings groups was carried out for seven post-literacy facilitators and two L-Team members, who went on to help set up savings groups with the first cohort of MBF girls, who finished their vocational training during the last six months. For the first cohort of MBF girls the training on savings group work comes much later than for the new cohorts, who are introduced to savings at the start of the post-literacy stage of MBF (stage II).

Livelihood and Business Development Training:

In Kampong Cham:

- An Assistant Program Officer from KAPE received training from ILO on small business development, focusing specifically on women and entrepreneurship. The OPTIONS Program in Kg. Cham will use the experience to enhance the current offerings in the curriculum enhancement program for girls in grades 5 and 6, where there is interest among the learners in small business development.

In Prey Veng:

- Thirty members of the Livelihood Development Work Teams (L-Teams) and five district working group members received training on case management and reporting, which will help them better support the girls entering the third stage of the MBF program by offering a case management support system with individual L-Team members assigned to individual girls for close follow-up and support.
- Members of L-Teams, accompanied by a district-level official, were trained on home gardening and chicken raising by the local NGO CEDAC. They also received a day-long training on agriculture monitoring. This training will enable the L-Teams to better monitor and support the learners in the third stage of the My Better Future Program.

Building Capacity for Youth Committees and Girls' Clubs:

In Banteay Meanchay:

- Four CARE staff, two DOE counterparts and six Youth Committee members took a two-day cross visit to learn from the NGO Ponleu Kumar (PK) about PK's youth activities. This resulted in meaningful sharing of experiences in conducting youth activities, especially in using role plays for awareness raising. This experience inspired CARE OPTIONS staff to adopt the approach of using role plays and dramas for awareness raising.
- To engage Youth Committee members in data collection activities, CARE staff provided training to twenty-eight Youth Committee members on collecting demographic information as well as family history data on program beneficiaries. This information feeds in to the STS database. As a result of the training, the majority of YC members were able to collect reliable data from literacy and post-literacy learners for the STS data survey.

In Kampong Cham:

- Twenty members of scholarship management committees at the secondary school level received training on how to work with and support Girls' Clubs.

Refresher Training on the Student Tracking System:

Refresher training on the use of the STS was provided to all project staff in all three sites by the Data Management Officer following the results of the M&E review workshop, which took place on December 13-14 (described in greater detail in the output 5 section). The training aimed to resolve a number of issues that had been identified at the M&E review workshop, including timing of data collection, systematic updates, accurateness of data, registration of new students, and replacement of drop-outs.

Safe Migration Training:

OPTIONS staff in Kg. Cham and Prey Veng received training from partners at Mith Samlanh on safe migration issues and the use of safe migration messages and materials developed by Mith Samlanh with funding support from OPTIONS. In Kg. Cham, these new materials have been incorporated into awareness raising efforts targeting secondary school students and grade 9 graduates who enter vocational skills training. In Prey Veng, the messages and materials have been incorporated into life skills activities taught both in the formal school system and as part of the My Better Future Program.

Training for School-Wide Awareness Raising Using "Shattered Dreams" Materials:

In Kg. Cham, OPTIONS staff trained twenty-two Technical Grade Leaders in primary schools to conduct the *Shattered Dreams* awareness-raising program for all upper primary grades in their schools. The strategy of using TGL's to disseminate the *Shattered Dreams* awareness program appeared to work well, and offers great scope of expansion of this awareness raising activity into an even larger number of schools in the future.

Training on UNICEF's Child Protection Model:

Following on the recent revision of UNICEF's child protection model, currently referred to as the Child Protection Network (CPN), OPTIONS has sought out opportunities for its partners to become familiarized with UNICEF's new child protection model, which is being piloted in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng Provinces. One such opportunity was built into the Banteay Meanchay provincial forum, where UNICEF staff shared with the forum participants their own experience with the former model of the CPN, and the lessons that emerged out of that. They then facilitated a session in which forum participants began to develop action plans for setting up their own district-based child protection networks.

Regional and National Exchanges on Education and Social Service Provision:

Through district and province-level consultations and meetings, as well as individual cases of child exploitation that have been brought to the attention of OPTIONS staff, it has become increasingly clear that government and NGO workers in rural areas have very limited understanding of the educational and social support services that may be available within their own district or province, or at the national level. This in spite of substantial training that has been directed to the staff of the Ministry of Social Affairs and social service NGOs through assistance from UNICEF, ILO-IPEC, and other international organizations. In response to this situation, OPTIONS has sought to generate opportunities for government and NGO staff in rural areas to learn about varied services and modes of service referral through study tours and exchanges, and these study tours were built into the Banteay Meanchay provincial forum as well as the national workshop (both of these activities are described in great detail in the section focusing on Output 4 below). The provincial forums in Kg. Cham and Prey Veng did not include a study tour component, since in those provinces there is an existing network among education and social service providers targeting vulnerable children, and it was thought that the existing network structure was a better venue for furthering everyone's understanding about available resources and services.

The study tour in Banteay Meanchay took place on October 18, 2005, and brought together twenty participants from district government offices and OPTIONS working groups. The study tour offered district-level partners the opportunity to share experiences in delivering educational services to vulnerable children (including livelihood and vocational education), and to learn about the different types of social services to which they may refer children from rural areas as needed. As most of these services are located in the provincial center or in the border town of Poipet, it was very helpful for district-based staff to physically visit these facilities, observe their resources, and learn how to make referrals when in need.

The learning exchange and study tour that was built into the national forum took place on January 25-26, 2006, and brought together more than fifty district, province, and national level representatives from the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, Women's Affairs, and the new Ministry of Labor, as well as local NGO partners. The learning exchange focused on the themes of child protection networks, access and quality of education, educational needs of out-of-school youth, safe migration, and community-based awareness raising. Participants had the opportunities to visit several local shelters, and learn from their management staff about service referral and service availability.

Regional Meeting for Educational Initiative Grantees from Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa:

Seven OPTIONS team members were able to take advantage of a three-day opportunity to share experiences with implementers of other EI programs across the wide region spanning southeastern Europe, North Africa, and all of Asia. The three-day meeting organized by DOL in Bangkok provided opportunities for understanding the broad spectrum of programs funded through the Education Initiative, and for making helpful connections with colleagues who work on similar issues.

Measuring Progress Under Output 3:

In the last technical report we discussed the need to revise our scoring scale for the assessment tool on working group capacity, as the "satisfactory" target in our indicator had resulted in a performance score of nearly 100% in the last report, which did not leave much room or incentive for improvement. During the reporting period, the OPTIONS team revised the scoring scale by inserting a new "good" category, which helps to distribute what had been a too wide a range of performance under the old scale. The following table compares the old and new scoring scales:

| Old Scale for Capacity Assessment Tool | New Scale for Capacity Assessment Tool |
|---|---|
| Very Good = 65% score or more | Very Good = 80% score or more |
| Satisfactory = 50% - 64% | Good = 65% - 79% |
| Needs improvement = 49% or less | Satisfactory = 50% - 64% |
| | Needs improvement = 49% or less |

Following the revision of the scale, OPTIONS wishes to change the indicator to **% of committees able to manage program implementation well (scoring "good" on the assessment scale)**. As there are other suggested revisions for indicators under Output 4, OPTIONS will follow the required formal procedures for changing the wording of this indicator together with the indicators for Output 4 (see more below).

Twenty-six working groups at the cluster, commune and district level were assessed at the end of the reporting period using the standard assessment tool originally developed by KAPE, and later adopted by the other OPTIONS partners. Of the twenty-six assessed groups, twenty-one, or 80%, scored well using the new scoring scale. As the targets for the PMP were set with the original indicator in mind (looking at satisfactory performance only), it is likely that we will perform slightly lower than our targets for years three and four, as the performance threshold has been set higher.

Output 4:

Performance Assessment Table

| Output 4: Government policies and practices informed/influenced by the work of program partners. | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Indicators | Base-line | | Period 1 Sep-03 Feb-04 | Period 2 Mar-04 Aug-04 | Period 3 Sep-04 Feb-05 | Period 4 Mar-05 Aug-05 | Period 5 Sep-05 Feb-06 | Period 6 Feb-06 Aug-06 |
| 5 key provincial decision-makers (DM) in each of 3 provinces receive "Issues/Recommendations" documents.... | 0 | Target | 15 | | 15 | | 15 | |
| | | Actual | To be reported in period 3 | | 8 prov- ince-level; 17 district- level DM | 3 prov- ince-level; 15 district- level DM | 17 prov- ince-level DM | |
| % of issues raised in annual workshops that are discussed by the Gender Steering Committee and the CNCC | 0 | Target | 50% | | 50% | | | |
| | | Actual | To be reported in period 3 | | Please see the narrative below | | ---- | |
| % of issues/recommendations presented annually to the OPTIONS AC that are formally communicated back to the government | 0 | Target | 50% | | 50% | | | |
| | | Actual | To be reported in period 3 | | Please see the narrative below | | ---- | |

Narrative Assessment of Achievements Towards Output 4:

District Consultations and Provincial Forums:

The last in the series of the district consultation workshops that began in the second year of the program took place in Kampong Cham Province between September 20-27. These were conducted over two-day periods, combining two districts in two of the workshops and three districts in one workshop. A total of 110 participants from the seven districts targeted in Kg. Cham Province attended these events. The participants comprised district level authorities (district governors and vice-governors, district police, senior officials of the District Offices of Education, Social Affairs, and Women's Affairs), commune-level leaders, heads of village councils, school directors and heads of school clusters, teachers and students. The Director of the Provincial Department of Labor and an ILO-IPEC staff provided input into the workshops, and co-facilitated some of the sessions, particularly on child labor, child protection networks and on the National Plan of Action to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

The second round of OPTIONS provincial forums (completing the local-level consultation process begun in the second year) took place on October 18-20 in Banteay Meanchey, on December 16 in Kg. Cham, and on December 23 in Prey Veng. The provincial forum in Bt. Meanchay took three days as it incorporated a study tour and learning exchange. The three provincial forums were opened and presided over by the Provincial Vice-Governors and attended by a total of eighty-eight participants, comprising representatives of OPTIONS counterparts in fourteen districts, the directors or deputy directors of the Provincial Departments of Education, Health, Labor, Social Affairs and Women's Affairs, as well as allied NGOs. The forum in Prey Veng Province was conducted in collaboration with the Provincial Department of Social Affairs, while the Kg. Cham forum took place in coordination with the Provincial Department of Labor and ILO-IPEC.

The OPTIONS provincial forums served as a venue for sharing and dialogue among key provincial stakeholders on policy and practice issues related to child exploitation, trafficking and child labor.

Discussions on child labor figured prominently in the provincial workshop in Kg. Cham, where the director of the new Department of Labor is highly committed and engaged. In all, seventeen provincial decision

makers received recommendations arising out of the district workshops. The formal delivery of these recommendations was built into the agenda of the provincial forums, and targeted eight decision makers in Kg Cham, five in Prey Veng and four in Banteay Meanchey.

Participants from the provincial government departments accepted the recommendations generated in the district consultations, and agreed to advocate for support from the Provincial Governor and Provincial Cabinet. These recommendations included the following:

- the establishment of district and commune child protection committees;
- improved coordination and information sharing regarding procedures of referral and service delivery among government service agencies;
- capacity building among local authorities and government service providers from the village to the district levels;
- increased community awareness and community participation in child protection and prevention of child abuse;
- improved coordination between government and NGOs; and
- authorization to commune councils to monitor the use of government scholarship funds and coordinate with the provincial education department to resolve problems.

Participants also agreed to facilitate access to training and capacity building; assist in resource generation; advocate for budget allocation from the government budget and/or the commune development plan; and endorse the district and provincial recommendations in a dialogue with ministry staff at the national level.

National Forum:

A national-level dialogue about the recommendations generated in district consultations and provincial forums took place during the OPTIONS National Forum (the first national forum for OPTIONS), which took place from January 25-27, 2006. The forum provided an opportunity for more than eighty participants and guests from district, province and national-level government agencies and allied NGOs to discuss their issues and challenges with senior officials of the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, and Women's Affairs, as well as an official from the Cambodian National Council on Children—all of whom are members of the OPTIONS Advisory Committee. Prior to the National Forum, the reports of the district and provincial workshops were discussed with the Working Group on Policy Action (an inter-ministerial WG comprised of mid-level staff appointed by the Advisory Committee) and then with the Advisory Committee, to adequately prepare the Advisory Committee members for the policy dialogue. In structuring a dialogue between local level government staff and senior government officials, OPTIONS was "breaking with Cambodian tradition", which does not provide for a dialogue between high-level officials and lower ranking government staff. In aiming to facilitate an exchange between the varied levels of government, we needed to ensure that there was sufficient preparation—both in helping local level staff prepare for their presentations/discussions, and in helping senior government staff understand our expectations for an exchange, rather than a lecture. Although the resulting exchange was far from a true dialogue, with local level staff seated in rows in front of their senior representatives (as there was no way to avoid this form of seating), the exchange was constructive in terms of providing a voice for local level officials, who would normally be unheard. The senior officials accepted/listened to the recommendations presented by the participants, explained government policy in instances where necessary, and clarified the challenges they face in addressing some of the issues raised by the participants. There were no miracle solutions arising out of the gathering, but there was a common sense of understanding and purpose among those present at the National Forum. After the Forum, OPTIONS staff received very positive feedback from participants at all levels (including the senior officials from the Advisory Committee) about the process employed at the Forum. They felt that it contributed greatly towards generating an understanding for national staff of the constraints faced at the local level, and an understanding for local staff of the challenges faced by national level decision makers.

The OPTIONS team was pleased with the outcomes of the National Forum, and also pleased with the opportunity that the Forum afforded for a meaningful engagement of the Advisory Committee in the activi-

ties of the OPTIONS Program. As stated in earlier reports, OPTIONS has been struggling with how to engage the AC members more constructively in providing feedback and input into the planning and implementation of OPTIONS. An inter-ministerial body representing Ministries that are not known for cooperation, the Advisory Committee has served a very symbolic role to date, meeting twice yearly for AC meetings, and at times visiting OPTIONS activities in the less remote areas. Although not all of the AC members became actively engaged in the National Forum, at least half of them did. And the preparatory meetings for the Forum provided an opportunity to meet individually with each Ministry, leading to a more meaningful exchange than in the meetings of the full Advisory Committee. When asked for their feedback on the individual meetings, as compared to full committee meetings, all AC members advised that in the future they would prefer to meet in individual Ministry groups, not as the full forum. This will be much easier for OPTIONS to organize, and will facilitate better engagement by the Advisory Committee members.

Digital Media Initiative:

Building on first year's experience with radio programming, OPTIONS embarked on a new radio initiative during the reporting period, this time through satellite technology. In partnership with Equal Access, which specializes in digital media programming for remote access areas, OPTIONS will help to implement the Digital Broadcast Initiative, a flagship digital radio program which will focus on raising awareness about trafficking and exploitation through engaging radio plays, mini-dramas, songs, and information spots. Equal Access will provide up to 150 battery/solar powered receivers for OPTIONS sites in remote or far-away areas that are typically not reached through FM radio. The receivers will be distributed to "listener groups" with the goal of integrating the listening function into groups that already meet on a regular basis for other purposes. These could be groups of literacy learners, savings groups, Girls' Clubs, or Youth Committees. The twenty-six pilot episodes of the Equal Access Digital Broadcast Initiative will be developed under the guidance of a Content Advisory Group, in which OPTIONS is represented through our National Program Coordinator, who will provide input into the life skills content of the radio program. The pilot episodes will begin airing in April and complete by October. Equal Access outreach staff will travel regularly to provinces to monitor the activities of listener groups, and to collect their feedback about the existing programming, as well as input into new programming.

Measuring Progress Under Output 4:

In the last technical report we discussed our difficulties around collecting information for the second and third indicators for this output, and proposed the possibility of revising the Output 4 indicators so as to better represent our efforts in this area of activities. At the M&E Review Workshop on December 14, described in the section on Output 5, the Policy Advisor and Program Director worked together to revise the existing indicators as detailed in the following table:

| Old Indicators for Output 4 | Action | New Indicators for Output 4 |
|--|---------------|---|
| 5 key provincial decision-makers (DM) in each of 3 provinces receive "Issues/Recommendations" documents.... | Keep the same | 5 key provincial decision-makers (DM) in each of 3 provinces receive "Issues/Recommendations" documents.... |
| % of issues raised in annual workshops that are discussed by the Gender Steering Committee and the CNCC | Delete | ----- |
| % of issues/recommendations presented annually to the OPTIONS AC that are formally communicated back to the government | Revise | # of meetings of the central level Working Group on Policy Action, organized to ensure that information on issues arising out of district and province level meetings/actions are being communicated to and acted upon by individual ministries |
| ----- | Add | % of Commune Councils in OPTIONS target areas that create/animate commune-level EFA committees (CEFACs), Committees on Women and Children, and/or child protection committees |

| | | |
|-------|-----|--|
| ----- | Add | % of existing CEFACs & Committees on Women and Children and/or child protection committees in target area that will have incorporated recommendations coming out of district consultation workshops into their annual commune planning processes |
|-------|-----|--|

To set the targets for the two new proposed indicators, we will need to carry out an inventory among commune councils in our target areas on the number of active commune-level EFA committees, Committees on Women and Children, and/or other child protection committees or mechanisms. We will also need to better understand the existing involvement of these committees in the annual commune planning process. We will carry out the inventory through the month of May, one month in advance of the start of the annual commune planning process.

OPTIONS will be submitting the proposed revision for the Performance Monitoring Plan for Output 4 to DOL following the submission of this report, and the team would like to receive guidance from DOL on what procedures need to be taken to formally approve these new indicators as measures of progress in our efforts under the advocacy and policy agenda.

Output 5:

Performance Assessment Table

| Output 5: Information generated by program M&E system effectively utilized by OPTIONS team. | | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|--------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Indicators | Baseline | | Period 1 Sep-03 Feb-04 | Period 2 Mar-04 Aug-04 | Period 3 Sep-04 Feb-05 | Period 4 Mar-05 Aug-05 | Period 5 Sep-05 Feb-06 | Period 6 Mar-06 Aug-06 |
| # of monthly meetings held by program partners to review progress of indicators along the logical framework | 0 | Target | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| | | Actual | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | |

Narrative Assessment of Achievements Towards Output 5

Monthly Meetings of the Program Management Team:

The OPTIONS Program Management team continued to meet monthly during the reporting period, except for February, when the monthly PMT meeting was cancelled due to the high number of other team meetings required for the preparation of the mid-term evaluation. The monthly PMT meetings continued to serve as the forum for reviewing progress on enrollment and retention of program beneficiaries, and discussing various issues related to the different output areas.

Annual Review Meeting:

The second annual review meeting for all implementing partners of the OPTIONS Program took place from November 2-4, 2005. This was a little later than originally hoped, as the end of the second year was at the end of August, but because September and October are very busy months with preparations for the new school year, OPTIONS was not able to mobilize all partner staff any earlier. We hope to hold the third annual meeting closer to the end of the third year, preferably in August 2006.

The second annual review meeting took place in Kg. Cham province, where three of the OPTIONS partners are working (KAPE, VCAO and Mith Samlanh), which provided opportunities for learning about each other's work through study visits. Thirty-eight staff representing the agencies of the OPTIONS partner-

ship--World Education, KAPE, CARE, The Asia Foundation, VCAO, Damnok Toek, Mith Samlanh, Cambodian Women's Crisis Center and Ponleu Kumar—participated in the three-day review meeting. The agenda was dynamic, allowing time for sharing of experiences, developing capacity in a chosen thematic area, and visiting one of the partners who work in Kg. Cham. The meeting served the purpose of renewing our connections across the wide geographic spread of the OPTIONS partnership, strengthening our understanding of each other's work and capacity, and developing further our interpersonal and working relationships. A report on the meeting was disseminated to all partners, and a copy was shared with colleagues at DOL.

M&E Review Meeting:

In response to site-specific issues with the management and utilization of data from the Student Tracking System, and the need to review our data collection and analysis procedures for all program indicators, OPTIONS carried out a two-day M&E review meeting on December 13-14, 2005. All field level managers and data management staff participated in the review, as did the senior management team (the PMT), which was also responsible for facilitating the workshop. The workshop began with a review of the OPTIONS Logical Framework and Performance Monitoring Plan, which was helpful for both the new members of the Program Management Team, as well as the provincial site managers, who had not been involved in the original design of the Log Frame and the PMP. More than two years into implementation, it was good to reflect on the challenges that OPTIONS has faced with some of the indicators. Some indicators may be conceptually good (such as the indicator that looks at the % of families that spend below a certain threshold on schooling materials), but in practice they have turned out to be quite difficult for data collection. The M&E workshop offered an opportunity to generate ideas on how these indicators might be refined or revised in a next phase of the program.

In preparation for the M&E workshop, each provincial team had prepared a list of issues relating to the collection, input and analysis of data on student enrollment and drop-out through the STS. At the workshop, the site teams had an opportunity to share their challenges and strategies for addressing the issues, and then each site team worked on the refinement of its data collection, management and analysis system, which was then shared with the larger group. The workshop was very good at addressing many of the concerns that had led to the design of the workshop, but as is often the case with complex issues, it was not long enough to work out all of our data collection issues in fine detail. The task of refining these issues was passed on to each provincial site in preparation for the current report. The PMT will review the data management process relating to this report once the report has been completed, and conduct a follow-on M&E review meeting as necessary.

Semi-Annual Meeting with the OPTIONS Advisory Committee:

Rather than holding a joint Advisory Committee in late 2005, as set out in our work plan, OPTIONS chose to hold individual meetings with the three different Ministries that comprise the Advisory Committee, using these meetings as an opportunity to update the Committee members on our progress, and seek their input in program areas that are relevant to their interests. These meetings were also used to engage the interest of the three collaborating ministries to become involved in the planning and execution of the National Forum held on January 25-27. The individual meetings with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport; Ministry of Women's Affairs; and Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation took place in the two weeks preceding the National Forum. Semi-annual reports in Khmer were distributed to the Advisory Committee at the time.

The meetings were more engaging than the meetings of the whole Advisory Committee, because each Ministry could focus the meeting to its own agenda. A recommendation was made afterwards that we hold the Advisory Committee meetings with individual ministries in the future, rather than in the larger forum. The danger there is that we may miss the opportunity to bring all the Advisory Committee members together with representatives from UNICEF, ILO-IPEC and IOM. But since OPTIONS coordinates with these three agencies on a regular basis, then other venues and events may fulfill this function sufficiently.

Mid-Term Evaluation:

The mid-term evaluation for the OPTIONS Program took place in February, with the field-work portion of the evaluation taking place from February 20 to March 3. The evaluation was carried out by Macro International, who commissioned Ms. Esther Velasco to serve as the lead evaluator. On the ground support was provided by Ms. Chhorn Khema, who organized all logistics, served as the translator during field visits and focus group discussions, and co-facilitated the Stakeholder Workshop on February 27. The evaluation exercise had two observers: Ms. Rachel Phyllips, who came from DOL to observe the evaluation process and to visit few of the OPTIONS activities, and Ms. Suteera Nagavajara of Macro International, who came to observe the Stakeholder Workshop on February 27.

The evaluation included meetings with government agencies involved in the implementation and support of the OPTIONS Program, major partners involved in counter-trafficking and child welfare activities, and all the members of the OPTIONS Program Management Team. It also involved field visits to Prey Veng and Kg. Cham, where the evaluation team met with a small number of beneficiaries, parents, teachers, and working group members, and learned about their experiences with the OPTIONS Program through a series of focus group discussion. The evaluation also included a day-long Stakeholder Workshop on February 27, which brought together approximately forty government and local NGO counterparts from the three target provinces. Unfortunately, planning for the evaluation activities was not well executed. The evaluator arrived in Phnom Penh just one day ahead of the official start of the evaluation, and with limited guidance from the lead evaluator on what was expected from OPTIONS in terms of preparation, it was difficult to prepare for the exercise in a way that would yield the highest level of benefit. Perhaps the weakest part of the evaluation exercise was the actual Stakeholder Workshop, where it was not very clear what the expectations were of the participants, and the questions asked were so difficult to understand, that many were confused by the purpose of the whole workshop. The OPTIONS team had generated a long list of questions that we had hoped would be addressed through the mid-term evaluation exercise. We hope that some of these will be addressed in the evaluation report.

Section III. B. Aggregate Performance Report on DOL ICLP EI Common Indicators – Direct Tracking

The Aggregate Performance Report is included as an Appendix to this report, as it is difficult to incorporate the table inside this report due to complex formatting.

Section III. C. Improving Quality of Education and Country Capacity to Address Child Labor

The first table in this section has been updated to show the number of teachers and school administrators trained during the reporting period, as well as the curricula and materials that were updated and revised. The second table provides inputs from OPTIONS on the small steps/contributions made towards the global targets of improving country-level capacity to address child labor. The third table contains updated information on national resources leveraged in support of the OPTIONS Program.

| IMPROVING QUALITY OF EDUCATION | | |
|--|---|---|
| Indicator | Reporting Period | Project Duration |
| Number of teachers/school administrators trained in improved teaching methods/school management | Teachers: 283 School administrators (cluster to province level): 319 | Teachers: 462 School administrators (cluster to province level): 347 |
| Improved curriculum modules developed or adapted by the Program... (Curriculum and materials development has been an-going process since the start of OPTIONS; an "x" mark in the right column means that development or revision was carried out in the most recent reporting period.) | An "X" mark in the column on right means on-going curriculum and materials development during reporting period: | |
| | 1. Life Skills Curriculum Enhancement Modules | |
| | • Migration, trafficking, and sexual exploitation | |
| | • Primary health care, part I and II | x |
| | • Village Life School | |
| | • IPM in Rice Agriculture | |
| | • Personal safety and prevention of sexual abuse | |
| | • Reproductive health | |
| | • HIV/AIDS prevention | x |
| | • Vocational awareness | |
| | • Entrepreneurship and book-keeping | |
| | • Gender and girls' education | |
| | 2. Post Literacy Modules (My Better Future) | |
| | • Introductory Module | x |
| | • Savings | x |
| | • Work Experience Immersion | x |
| | • Nutrition and Food Hygiene | x |
| | • Personal Hygiene | x |
| | • Primary Health Care | x |
| | • IPM in Rice Agriculture | x |
| | • Reproductive Health | x |
| | • HIV/AIDS Prevention | x |
| | • Personal Safety | x |
| | • Child Labor and Exploitation | x |
| | • Migration and Trafficking | x |
| | • Social Services in the Community | |
| | • World of Work | |
| | • Gender and Girls' Education | |
| | 3. Livelihoods Sensitization Course | |
| | 4. Training for Girls' Counselors | |
| | 5. Developing Peer Support Networks | |
| | 6. Facilitating Transition | |
| | 7. Scholarship Management Manual for Local Magmt. Committees | |
| | 8. TOT Manual for Literacy Teaching Methodology and Follow-Up | |

1. The adaptation of the legal framework to the international standards, including the definition of a list of hazardous occupations for children.

During the reporting period the OPTIONS Program strengthened its relationship with the new Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training, which will spearhead the review of the current labor law to ensure that it addresses concerns of child laborers. There was no major advancement on the revision of the labor law during the reporting period.

2. Formulation of specific policies and programs at the national, regional, or sectoral level within a country dealing with the worst forms of child labor or basic education.

As outlined in other sections of this report, OPTIONS has collaborated with ILO-IPEC and four other NGOs on the establishment/development of a civil society network against child labor, which we hope will be launched in June 2006. During the reporting period, OPTIONS worked together with the other founding organizations on the development of by-laws for the network.

3. The inclusion of child labor or basic education concerns in relevant development, social and anti-poverty policies and programs.

Nothing to be reported in this area for the reporting period.

4. Establishment of a child labor monitoring mechanism (CLMS).

OPTIONS is not involved in activities that would contribute to the establishment of a child labor monitoring mechanism at this time.

| NATIONAL RESOURCES LEVERAGED FOR OPTIONS | | |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| Indicator | Reporting Period | Project Duration |
| Monetary value of leveraged national resources: | | |
| Kampong Cham | | |
| Discounted value of KAPE rental space provided by the provincial Teacher Training College (\$300/month) | \$1,800 | \$9,000 |
| Establishment and renovation of computer lab rooms (in high schools for life skills) | \$2,450 | \$3,930 |
| Guards at Kg. Cham schools to guard rice for school breakfast programs (\$20/month x 5 months x 151 guards) | \$15,100 | \$72,480 |
| Prey Veng | | |
| PAP 12 Scholarship Support for OPTIONS/Prey Veng Graduates Who Go to Lower Secondary School & Qualify for Gov't Scholarship (20 girls in 2003-4 and 36 in 2004-5 @ \$45/girl) | \$4,060 | \$6,580 |
| Community effort for distribution of take-home rations in Prey Veng not covered by funds from OPTIONS (\$3/day/person—detail on break-down of total amount available) | \$7,180 | \$24,946 |
| Literacy teachers paid by MOEYS in Prey Veng (\$25/month/teacher) | \$3,450 | \$8,550 |
| Literacy materials for learners in Prey Veng received from government (\$4-9/learner for 690 learners over life of program) | \$2,340 | \$6,283 |
| Post-literacy materials for Prey Veng received from government (\$100/group for nine groups) | \$900 | \$1,800 |
| Catch Up Course Teachers paid by MOEYS in Prey Veng (17 teachers/3 months/\$33 per month) | \$0 | \$1,683 |
| Community provision of teaching space for basic literacy and post-literacy classes | \$1,710 | \$4,230 |
| Banteay Meanchay | | |
| Salaries to literacy teachers in Bt. Meanchay (\$25 per month per teacher) | \$2,250 | \$6,600 |
| Cost of literacy materials for learners in Bt. Meanchay (\$9 per literacy package of materials per student) | \$3,375 | \$5,715 |
| Construction of literacy study place: estimated cost of thatch, wood, and labor | \$0 | \$70 |
| TOTAL | \$44,615 | \$151,867 |

In addition to the leveraged national resources outlined above, OPTIONS was also able to secure 950 metric tons of rice from the World Food Programme. The rice was distributed to all target primary schools in Kg. Cham for school breakfast programs, and to scholarship beneficiaries in grades 4-6 as well as all NFE beneficiaries in the three provinces as take-home rations of 15 kg/month/beneficiaries. The total value of the distributed rice during the reporting period was US \$457,000, as shown in the table below. In addition to the distributed rice, OPTIONS scholarship beneficiaries in grades 4-6 received a temporary monthly ration of vegetable oil (1.5 kg/beneficiary per month) for the last two months of the reporting period. This temporary oil ration will cease in June, prior to the expiration date of this commodity.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| | Sept 05 to Feb 06 | Project to Date |
| Total amount of rice distributed | 950 metric tons | 5,494 metric tons |
| Value of distributed rice | \$457,000 | \$2,729,000 |

IV. PROBLEMS/ISSUES MATERIALLY IMPAIRING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PROJECT OBJECTIVES, PROPOSED SOLUTIONS AND ACTIONS TAKEN OR TO BE TAKEN

4.1. Implementation (include technical as well as management issues; including administrative, financial and budgetary issues)

| Problems/Issues | Proposed solutions and actions taken or to be taken |
|---|--|
| The OPTIONS team in Banteay Meanchay had experienced difficulties in trying to adapt life skills materials developed by OPTIONS in Prey Veng, as the concepts were new for the facilitators, and thus difficult to adapt to the existing program. The team also found it difficult to conduct training on gender, and to maintain gender sensitivity in teaching delivery, as the technical advisor who had supported gender training activities had left the program in October 2005. | CARE recruited a Senior Technical Advisor, who will begin to work with the Banteay Meanchay program team beginning in March 2006 on strengthening their life skills programs, and improving their understanding of gender concepts, as well as their ability to conduct gender-focused training with program beneficiaries. |
| The implementation of the program in Kg. Cham has been challenged this year due to late and insufficient funding from The Asia Foundation, which had pledged matching support for KAPE's activities under OPTIONS for all four years of the program. This has particular impact on the lower and upper secondary scholarship programs, and on vocational training. | KAPE is monitoring the funding situation carefully, utilizing existing resources from other private donors to ensure continuation of activities for this academic year, as the beneficiaries are already enrolled, and the program feels strong responsibility to honor its commitment. Meanwhile, KAPE continues to be in regular contact with TAF to follow up on the pledged funds, which will hopefully become available before the end of the third year of the program. KAPE is also actively searching for new donors for the future of the activities implemented under OPTIONS. |
| The MIS team for the OPTIONS partner KAPE in Kg. Cham has been overwhelmed during this reporting period by an ever-increasing work load from KAPE's growing portfolio of programs, including OPTIONS and ESCUP. | Two full time staff members were appointed to support the MIS manager in updating of the computer data base. |
| During the reporting period, the OPTIONS team in Prey Veng underwent significant staffing changes. One staff member resigned, three staff members changed their positions within the PV team, and three new staff members were hired. It has taken time for the team to adjust to these changes, especially as the reporting period marked an extremely busy period for the program, due in part to the start of the new school year, the mid-term evaluation, and a very high number of visitors to the field. | The management team of OPTIONS has recognized that there is a need to slow down and invest more time in staff orientations, support, and reflection sessions. A five-day work reflection and planning session is planned for April to help address many of these issues. |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>The provincial site teams have been experiencing difficulties with the data collection and management process, resulting in number discrepancies between computer and paper records. Also, confusion at school level about name registration/tracking has contributed to further problems, as in the case of children who change their name when they enter lower secondary school (a common enough practice in Cambodia), resulting in double counting in the data base.</p> | <p>An M&E workshop was held in mid-December for all staff responsible for data collection and management, to clarify and address all the different problems identified in the three sites. These problems included technical issues within the STS, and confusion about terms such as transition and completion. The workshop has improved the data collection and management process considerably. To solve the problem of name changes, OPTIONS is considering developing an ID card system.</p> |
| <p>Although drop-out among primary scholarship beneficiaries and NFE learners has been on the decrease, OPTIONS in Prey Veng has noticed an increase in drop-out rates for lower secondary scholarship recipients (who receive the government-scholarship allotment of \$45 per year, whether from the government, or from OPTIONS). The school holiday time appears to be most critical for drop-out.</p> | <p>OPTIONS in Prey Veng has identified three strategies to prevent drop-out at lower secondary, two of which are modeled on the experience of KAPE in Kg. Cham. The three strategies will be implemented over the coming months, and include: 1. Awareness raising sessions during the summer holidays, 2. A girls' counselor system to offer girls support from a female teachers/mentor, 3. Peer support activities through Girls' Support Groups.</p> |

4.2. Stakeholders, partners and implementing agencies

| Problems/Issues | Proposed solutions and actions taken or to be taken |
|--|--|
| <p>The OPTIONS team in Banteay Meanchay has been struggling with its inability to respond to requests by literacy and post-literacy learners for OPTIONS to provide vocational skills training in addition to post-literacy studies. This is particularly the case in the Malai and O'chrov districts, where the NGO Ponleu Kumar is offering vocational training opportunities to learners in other villages, and information about these opportunities has been passed on to OPTIONS beneficiaries. The OPTIONS team in Bt. Meanchay feels that its inability to offer vocational skills training at this time may be contributing to lack of motivation among some of the learners, who feel discouraged by the lack of opportunity for further study/skills training.</p> | <p>The OPTIONS CARE team is not able to consider vocational training activities while the literacy and post-literacy components need to be improved. Additionally, understaffing and the lack of expertise in this area are critical considerations for any planning of vocational training inputs. However, the OPTIONS CARE team will consider carrying out livelihood development activities/vocational training in the next year if additional funding is secured through CARE/USA.</p> |
| <p>OPTIONS has been having difficulties with getting the Provincial Offices of Education in Bt. Meanchay and Prey Veng to cover the salaries of basic literacy teachers for the most current literacy cohort, which began in January. This is surprising, as salaries of teachers for basic literacy were covered by the POE's in both provinces over the past two years. It is not certain what precipitated the change, though some feel it has to do with corruption problems at the level of the POE. The situation has been unresolved in Prey Veng for two months now, so the OPTIONS team in Prey Veng has made temporary provisions for covering the salaries of literacy teachers in the hope that this will soon be resolved. In Banteay Meanchay the problem arose only within the last two weeks, so the response is not yet fully worked out.</p> | <p>OPTIONS will continue discussions with the POE in Prey Veng to see whether the situation can be fixed for the current cohort of literacy classes, or at least avoided for the next cohort. OPTIONS has written a formal letter to the POE requesting a meeting to discuss issues relating to salary payments for literacy teachers, and the sustainability of OPTIONS activities. Complementary to this action, OPTIONS has also organized a district and province-level planning meeting to discuss how OPTIONS can be better incorporated into MOEYS plans at the district level in the future. A follow-up meeting will soon be hosted at the POE.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Banteay Meanchay team is working closely with the POE in Bt. Meanchay</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | province to identify a solution to these same issues. |
| Local Management Committees are government appointed structures responsible for managing the government-administered program of lower secondary scholarships. As explained in other sections of this report, OPTIONS provides resources to the POE to cover OPTIONS girls who have gone on to lower secondary school but have not qualified for a government supported scholarship. The resources are the same as the government scholarship assistance. In exchange for this support, the POE is supposed to coordinate the LMC's linked to specific lower secondary schools to ensure that they monitor all scholarship beneficiaries, including those covered by OPTIONS. However, the LMC's complain that they do not receive any per diem or travel cost reimbursements for this additional follow-up, and so their follow-up is minimal. Consequently, there is no intervention when a girl is at risk of dropping out, contributing to increases in drop-out. As many more OPTIONS girls graduate grade 6, and choose to go on to grade 7, the issue of their monitoring through the government LMC structure will become more problematic. | OPTIONS is currently developing a plan to identify a role for Girls' Support Groups in each LSS to act as peer support mechanisms, monitor attendance among scholarship beneficiaries, and conduct follow-up visits as necessary. |
| The workload for commune and district-level implementation groups in Prey Veng continues to be very heavy, as many of the members of these groups are also responsible for implementation of UNICEF-supported activities. Ba Phnom district in Prey Veng is a 'convergence' district for UNICEF, meaning that all of UNICEF's programs concentrate their activities there, so there is a particularly high level of demand on the Ba Phnom district working group. | OPTIONS has attempted to coordinate with UNICEF in the past to address the overload on district working groups, but this has yielded very little result. A new strategy was tried during the reporting period through a district and province-level planning meeting (mentioned above in relation to the issue of literacy salary payment), where UNICEF was also included. The meeting aimed to identify how existing education programs work towards ESP/ESSP and EFA goals, so that OPTIONS, UNICEF, and other donor activities could be incorporated into school, district- and province-level planning, thereby avoiding duplication of effort. This new attempt at improved coordination will be followed up by a second meeting, which will be hosted by the POE. |

4.3. External factors (include particularly those external factors identified as being critical assumptions in the project document)

| Problems/Issues | Proposed solutions and actions taken or to be taken |
|--|---|
| There are a number of new rubber and wood processing factories in Kg. Cham Province, and improved roads have increased mobility and migration to the factories. It is likely that this will have an impact on drop-out later in the year, particularly among boys, for whom there are work opportunities in these factories. | OPTIONS staff in Kg. Cham will collaborate closely with the re-established Child Protection Network in Kg. Cham Province, and with ILO-IPEC, to identify appropriate responses to the situation of child laborers in rubber and wood factories. |

4.4. Other major issues/problems

| Problems/Issues | Proposed solutions and actions taken or to be taken |
|--|---|
| No other major issues or problems noted for the report period. | ----- |

V. OPPORTUNITIES

There are many promising opportunities for collaboration on new or existing initiatives with a wide range of program and actors. These include:

5.1. ESCUP Partnership:

As described in several section of this proposal, the good working relationship and close linkages between the OPTIONS and ESCUP Programs have already yielded very good benefits over the past six months, such as the movement forward with the Teacher Training Scholarship Program, and the opportunities for OPTIONS grade 9 graduates to enter provisional teaching positions as community teachers. Additional opportunities may arise through the network that ESCUP has been developing with Cham communities in Kampong Cham (the Cham are a Muslim minority group in Cambodia). ESCUP's existing partnership with the Cambodian Islamic Youth Association (CIYA) can help OPTIONS to reach to vulnerable girls in Cham communities, where out-migration is common, particularly into Malaysia. A recent article in the Cambodia Daily highlighted the plight of young Chams, particularly women, who are often tricked into exploitative working situations in Malaysia. The article points out that "a recent fact-finding mission to Malaysian detention centers found that Chams constituted around 60% of the Cambodians detained there, though they make up less than 5% of Cambodia's population"⁶. Because the Cham community is a closed community to outsiders, it is not easy for non-Cham organizations to reach inside it. The relationship that has already been developed between ESCUP and the CIYA can help broker opportunities for awareness raising and other efforts in Kg. Cham province, to address the growing problem of the outflow of young Chams.

5.2. Child Protection Network:

Since the beginning of its work in Prey Veng Province, OPTIONS has had a close working relationship with the former UNICEF-supported Community Based Child Protection Network (CBCPN), which was the network that was to identify vulnerable children in the community who were in need of educational support, and refer these children to OPTIONS. The CBCPN has recently gone through a major revision in structure and approach, and is now known as the Child Protection Network (CPN). The new Child Protection Network model is currently being piloted by MOSAVY and UNICEF in one of the districts targeted by OPTIONS in Prey Veng Province. Over the next eighteen-months, OPTIONS will work closely with the new CPN structure in the target district to ensure that the referral system developed between OPTIONS and the former CBCPN over the last few years is adapted and refined to complement the revisions in the CPN. The new CPN model has a strong role for youth leaders who are to take on a peer support function for vulnerable children in their community. OPTIONS girls have already been identified as youth leaders in some of the pilot districts where the CPN is beginning to be implemented, providing excellent opportunity for synergy between the two initiatives.

5.3. Growing Relationship with the Ministry of Labor:

Over the past two months the OPTIONS Program has had the opportunity to get to know the new De-

⁶ Cambodia Daily, February 4-5, 2006, pg. 10.

partment of Child Labor of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training. The Department's Director, Mr. Veng Heang, is very dynamic and enthusiastic about collaboration between his Department and the OPTIONS Program. OPTIONS has extended an invitation to Mr. Veng to join the Advisory Committee, which he eagerly accepted. OPTIONS has also been able to develop a strong relationship with the Director of the Kg. Cham Provincial Department of Labor, who took an active role in the Kg. Cham provincial forum, and also in the national forum. OPTIONS will hold meetings with the Provincial Departments of Labor in Bt. Meanchay and Prey Veng over the coming months to engage their support and leadership in a similar way. The growing relationship with the Ministry of Labor is coinciding with our efforts to support the establishment of the civil society Network Against Child Labor, which will also engage the collaboration of the Ministry of Labor.

5.4 MOEYS Local Life Skills Policy and Post-Literacy Program Developments:

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has recently issued a long-anticipated Local Life Skills Policy. The new MOEYS policy on life skills states that each school should select a life skills program that is based on the needs of its students, and the determination of this need is left to the discretion of each school. Schools need to identify the type of life skills program that they want to run to address local needs, and they need to incorporate this into their cluster-level plans. OPTIONS has been encouraged by the tone of the Director of the Ba Phnom District Office of Education in Prey Veng province, who refers to the Life Skills Curriculum Enhancement Program (supported by OPTIONS) as a life skills program implemented in his schools (rather than as an OPTIONS intervention), and who, during provincial and national level meetings, uses it as an example of the type of life skills programming that schools can conduct under the new MOEYS policy. To help further support the implementation of the new life skills policy, OPTIONS will continue to work closely with the District Offices of Education in our target areas to provide assistance in the planning processes for the next school year. This will hopefully ensure that the opportunity is not missed for OPTIONS-supported activities to be incorporated into Ministry planning processes, specifically with a focus on life skills. It will also help OPTIONS to serve in supporting function to the targeted schools for putting the new life skills policy into practice.

The Nonformal Education Department of the Ministry of Education has recently developed a set of post-literacy primers in collaboration with UNESCO. The Department is also working with UNESCO to look at the issue of equivalency for NFE programs. This presents an excellent opportunity for OPTIONS, as the experience of trialing the revised My Better Future NFE package can inform the development of MOEYS equivalency plans. The NFE Department is familiar with the My Better Future approach, as the OPTIONS team has conducted a formal presentation on the program, and staff of the NFE Department was involved in the development and trialing of the curriculum. OPTIONS will continue an active dialogue with the NFE Department to ensure that the implementation of the My Better Future package informs the development of NFE equivalency standards.

5.5 Collaboration with UNICEF:

OPTIONS has had a very strong working relationship with UNICEF/Cambodia for quite some time, as UNICEF has provided funding for several education initiatives implemented by World Education and KAPE (including co-funding OPTIONS activities in Prey Veng). But UNICEF is also a development partner in Prey Veng Province, which is a focus province for UNICEF's own programs in health, education, child welfare and rural development. The collaboration between OPTIONS and UNICEF in Prey Veng has led to a start of a series of joint planning sessions between district and provincial level government staff, as well as UNICEF and OPTIONS representatives. These meetings aim to identify ways in which successful models/strategies that have been developed by OPTIONS can be incorporated into MOEYS plans that aim to address the needs of girls and vulnerable children under the Education Sector Support Program and the Priority Action Programs. Such collaboration will provide opportunities for OPTIONS to replicate and scale up activities in all sites, as it can be used as a model for how to develop joint planning processes among varied OPTIONS partners at the local level.

5.6 Mid-term Evaluation and Good Practices/Implementation Manual:

This reporting period coincides with the mid-term evaluation, and with the development of an implementation guide (currently in production), which will serve as the basis for a good practice publication. These reflection and documentation activities provide an excellent opportunity for the OPTIONS Program to review its progress to date, and to identify focus areas for the remaining eighteen months of this funded phase, to ensure that the lessons of our work are documented and disseminated for wider application. The OPTIONS team looks forward to reviewing the results of the mid-term evaluation report, and continuing the reflection process through follow-on discussions among the OPTIONS Program Management Team members.

VI. LESSONS LEARNED AND EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES

6.1. Broad-based, multi-sectoral action against child labor and education for all children—"the program approach":

Many people who are introduced to the OPTIONS Program (including the recent mid-term evaluation team) find the program to be difficult to grasp due to the variety of interventions that are used to address the different needs and circumstances of our target population, from scholarship programs for vulnerable children in Kg. Cham, to shelter-based assistance in a reception center for trafficked children in Poipet, to livelihood development support for older adolescents in Prey Veng. OPTIONS aims to address the variety of factors that contribute to a child's vulnerability by engaging communities in awareness raising, supporting the development of social safety nets at the village level, and strengthening the district and provincial coordination systems among government agencies who look after the needs of vulnerable children. We try to set up referral systems with social service agencies so that we are able to respond to psychosocial needs of traumatized beneficiaries at a moment's notice. We have developed a strong relationship with the World Food Programme to address the food security concerns that often lead poor families to take desperate measures. We aim for multi-sectoral action, yet we find that our observers have a difficult time grasping the big picture. This is an interesting observation more than two years into the implementation of the program.

To add to the multi-sectoral web of activities that comprise OPTIONS, we have embarked over the past six months on a partnership with an organization called Equal Access, a partnership that will allow us to use state of the art technology to deal with some of the most basic issues of poverty and inequality. We are very excited about the potential offered through the Equal Access partnership, and look forward to reporting on its progress in the next technical report.

6.2. Action against the worst forms of child labor:

The Time Bound Programme implemented jointly by the Royal Cambodian Government and ILO-IPEC targets Kg. Cham Province as one of its priority areas. The OPTIONS team in Kg. Cham has tried to coordinate with ILO-IPEC and the Provincial Department of Labor to ensure a common approach among partners working on similar issues in the same province, but this has proven to be very time consuming process, requiring a lot of perseverance and patience. There is often a natural conflict between programs implemented by NGOs, which are fairly independent in their approach and ways of working, and programs implemented by the government (with support from international organizations), which are subject to multiple layers of bureaucracy, leading to long time horizons for planning and implementation. There is a significant clash of operational cultures, making it at times difficult for two programs with similar mandates (such as the TBP and OPTIONS) to work closely together. Cooperation is of course an essential component of any action against the worst forms of child labor. But cooperation takes time, patience, and lots of perseverance.

In contrast, when coordination is an integral part of a project design, as in the case of the development of referral systems between the Prey Veng Provincial Department of Social Affairs, the Child Protection Network, and OPTIONS, there seems to be greater commitment and effort by the individual partners to move forward with common goals and strategies. This is particularly the case when all partners are clear

of the goals and objectives of each other's programs, and when there is a clear understanding about the different roles that each partner plays in terms of action against the worst forms of child labor.

6.3. Partners:

In the last technical report, OPTIONS reported on difficulties that the program has encountered in its efforts to strengthen child protection networks at the local level. As a result of discussions with the UNICEF office of Children in Need of Special Protection, which coincided with the revisions of the previous CBCPN – now referred to as the CPN -- UNICEF has begun to work with the Ministry of Social Affairs on clarifying the roles and responsibilities of district social workers. UNICEF and other organizations are requesting district-level social workers to carry out various tasks on top of their normal duties, such as reintegration, case management, project planning and monitoring, awareness raising, training, among others. To better understand and manage this extra burden placed on government social workers, UNICEF would like to work with partners on developing generic Terms of Reference for District Offices of Social Affairs, to help them organize their work and prioritize tasks. OPTIONS has been asked by UNICEF to take part in the process, which aims towards one single TOR. This collaboration between UNICEF and OPTIONS is indicative of the relationship that has developed over the years, and the commitment that the two organizations/programs have to addressing issues that are raised at the local level.

6.4. Mainstreaming successful approaches and achieving sustainability of impact:

With each new school year the OPTIONS Program faces the challenge of transferring/mainstreaming some of its successful approaches into the government education system. Sometimes, this means relaxing the focus on quality in favor of wider replication, even if the success rate of the wider replication model is significantly lower than the original model. This is the case with the lower secondary scholarship program of OPTIONS, originally designed by KAPE to cover the direct costs of education for LSS students through a holistic set of support services. As the government's own scholarship program increases its coverage, KAPE has to make a strategic choice to withdraw from some of its target schools so that the government's program may begin to take over the funding function. Unfortunately, since the design of the government's scholarship program is lacking in resources and management systems, KAPE conducts the withdrawal with the understanding that the support received by government scholarship recipients will be of lower standard than if it were offered under the KAPE model. The equation is a simple one—you relax quality in favor of quantity, hoping for an eventual equilibrium within the system.

The mainstreaming process is a very time-consuming process. In 1998, World Education became involved in a pilot project that introduced the simple technology of Integrated Pest Management into the rural classroom as a science and livelihood activity focusing on practical life skills. The Ministry of Education was very excited about the approach of teaching IPM to rural students, most of whom will grow up to be rice farmers, and foresaw great promise for a wide replication of the IPM Student Field School model through an emerging policy window on local life skills. Back in 1998, World Education hoped that it would be a matter of one or two years before school clusters would be choosing IPM Field Schools as their local life skills options from a menu of other relevant life skills activities. Forward the clock to 2006. It is a very exciting development in the life skill area that the Local Life Skills Policy was officially introduced by the Ministry of Education during the reporting period. It is great to know that IPM and other agricultural programs are presented as models of local life skills activities in that policy. But it took a long time for the policy to pass and, a long time to mainstream the IPM life skills innovation. On a positive note, the new policy has opened up opportunities for replicating on a wider scale the life skills education models that have been developed under the OPTIONS Program, both in the formal school system and through the My Better Future NFE package.

6.5. Child labor monitoring:

The experience of the past six months with our pilot effort in the brick-making sector has taught us that the monitoring of children involved in child labor entails far more than the monitoring of their educational progress; it also involves the monitoring of a range of socio-economic factors that impact on the quality of their life. Although our monitoring work with the children in brick factories currently focuses only on edu-

cational progress, the program aims to develop a more comprehensive monitoring system over the coming year. The system will aim to respond to the information that will be generated through our interventions, with a focus on monitoring the children's general quality of life. OPTIONS anticipates that the children and young people themselves will be key actors in the development, collection and analysis of the data used for child labor monitoring purposes.

An important observation from a recent ILO-IPEC report, titled *Lessons Learnt on Child Labour Monitoring: Rubber, Salt and Fishing Sectors in Cambodia* (June 2005), is of the need for child labor monitoring to be based on legislation and policies at all levels of government. However, ministerial orders that specifically address brick making as well as other types of hazardous work are pending approval by the Labour Advisory Committee. A lesson learned for OPTIONS in the area of child labor monitoring in the Cambodian context is that regardless of existing or pending legislation, there is a need to develop a monitoring system at the local level that can act as an effective tool for collecting data that feeds into the development of strategies to prevent, improve and perhaps eliminate child labor practices. Monitoring committees and structures at all levels are new to the Cambodian context, and take a long time to be approved and established. With this recognition, OPTIONS will continue to keep informed of the government's own developments in child labor monitoring, while working on its own monitoring approach. This approach will be informed by the experience of other key stakeholders, such as ILO-IPEC, and it will aim to develop the capacity of local level actors in child labor monitoring.

6.6. Improving the knowledge base (baseline and other data collection efforts):

In embarking on our pilot effort of working in the brick-making sector, OPTIONS has been trying to understand better the nature of varied exploitative industries in Cambodia. A report on the current situation of child labor in Cambodia is pending from the Understanding Children's Work project, a joint effort involving UNICEF, ILO-IPEC, and the World Bank. The most up to date research preceding the UCW study is the *Cambodian Child Labour Survey*, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics and the ILO in 2001. The 2001 report states that 37% of children aged between 0 and 14, and 21% aged between 15 and 17 were engaged in labor activities. According to the same survey, approximately one in every two children in the 5-17 year old age group was found to be working⁷. 19.58% of these children were in the 5-9 age group, 46.97% aged 10-14 and 33.45% aged 15-17. In the 5-9 age group, there were more boys than girls classified as working. The number of girls working increased with age, and the statistics showed that there were more girls than boys working in the 10-14 age group. As was also found by OPTIONS in the case of the children working in brick factories in Prey Veng, the survey results on access to education among working children indicated that access was not the main barrier, with nine out of ten working children aged 5-17 attending school. However, the survey showed that the percentage of female working children attending school was lower than that for boys. It is likely that economic development in Cambodia will continue to impact more heavily on girls as they are called to support the needs of families who are placed at a disadvantage in a development process that has widened the gap between the rich and the poor.

6.7. Thematic lessons:

Using the Action Research Approach to Tackle New Challenges:

An action research approach undertaken in the Livelihood Development for Vulnerable Girls Project has resulted in an effective and viable NFE product/package, called My Better Future, one that grew out of an ongoing evaluation process by project stakeholders. While an action research approach can be challenging when you are faced with the immediate needs of highly vulnerable children, and the need to "test things out" seems a luxury one can't afford, the approach can bring excellent results if you are flexible and responsive to the feedback offered by pilot cohorts. OPTIONS would like to build on our previous success with action research in tackling the question of how best to meet the needs of our new target popula-

⁷ The survey classifies a child as working if they are engaged in any work or activity carried out by a person for pay in cash or in kind, profit or as an unpaid worker for family gain during a specific reference period. Since it is common for children to carry out housekeeping activities, the survey was also designed to inquire about children's activities of this nature.

tion—the children living and working in brick factories. OPTIONS will conduct research-based activities that will feed into the development of realistic and relevant strategies to meet a full range of needs of these children. The research will be informed by the work of other agencies.

The Need for Improved Capacity of Partners Responsible for Social Services:

The second round of district and provincial workshops conducted during the reporting period provided an opportunity for key district and province-level counterparts to share experiences and discuss challenges encountered in addressing the needs of vulnerable and exploited children. The outcomes of the workshops demonstrate clearly that a key concern of the participants working in social services at the field level is their inability to respond to the needs of exploited children, in particular in cases of rape, sexual assault and domestic violence, whether for lack of financial resources or the lack of necessary training to know how to deal with such sensitive issues. It is common for OPTIONS staff members to be confronted with a situation in which they are approached by working group members, community members, school officials or even OSAVY staff about a case concerning an exploited child who is already receiving OPTIONS assistance, but who is not doing well because of their traumatic experience/situation. OPTIONS team members often express concerns about not being in a position to offer direct assistance because of their own lack of training and resources. They also know that this is not their role, and that the issues should be addressed through the existing child protection network. Unfortunately, it seems that this network is not meeting the needs of the children it is meant to be serving. What is clear for OPTIONS is that there is a great need for social service strategies that would complement the educational assistance currently offered to OPTIONS beneficiaries.

Capacity Building of Partners Responsible for Education Services:

Over the past two and a half years OPTIONS has managed to develop and strengthen the skills of commune and district-level working group members to effectively implement and monitor OPTIONS interventions. However, it is often the case that working group members feel under tremendous pressure due to competing demands from different agencies and the government, be it MOEYS, OPTIONS, UNICEF or another program. OPTIONS recognizes that there is a need for stronger commitment to joint planning at the district level for all partners who aim to influence what happens in a village school, in order to foster greater ownership of the activities by the school, cluster, and DOE officials, and to make stronger links to EFA, ESP, and ESSP goals. It is hoped that joint planning sessions will help district level staff recognize that the activities that they are being asked to implement with different organizations should actually be incorporated into their existing roles and responsibilities as MOEYS staff.

Replicability of Successful Models:

OPTIONS has reached a stage in its development where it has produced effective models that address the educational needs of vulnerable girls and children. It is now time to focus on replicability and scaling up of these models, to ensure greater impact on children in need, and to increase sustainability of inputs and efforts. Standardization, replicability and sustainability will be the focus themes for the OPTIONS Program over the next eighteen months.

VII. Response to Donor Comments and Clarification Questions from Last Technical Report

Question # 1: USDOL looks forward to hearing the results of the baseline awareness and attitudes surveys that are currently underway.

Answer from OPTIONS: As outlined on page 26 of this report, the results of the survey are not yet fully analyzed, as there were great delays in receiving the raw data analysis results from the researchers who were contracted to do this work. We hope to have the results fully analyzed and disseminated before the end of May.

Question # 2: USDOL notes World Ed's difficulties in measuring indicator 2 and 3 under Output 4. We are open to discussing the issue further, and if mutually agreed upon, changing the two indicators to reflect local level effectiveness. USDOL looks forward to receiving a stand along request for discussion on this matter and possible revision of this indicator.

Answer from OPTIONS: This report discusses the progress we have made over the past six months in re-thinking how to measure our work in policy and advocacy. We will be submitting a separate request with the proposed new indicators within two weeks of the submission of this report. We welcome USDOL's openness to review the indicators in light of our experience.

Question/Comment # 3: USDOL agrees with World Ed's suggestion that the indicator under Output 5 should be changed to "monthly meetings" from the current "quarterly meetings".

Answer/Response from OPTIONS: Thank you for your approval to make this slight change to the indicator. This change has already been incorporated into the Performance Monitoring Plan.

Question/Comment # 4: Please keep USDOL posted about the semi-annual AC meetings and future efforts to more actively engage the members in discussions and feedback. Suggestions offered in the current progress report sound promising and will hopefully bear fruit.

Answer from OPTIONS: Pages 33-36 of this technical report speak about our efforts over the past six months to engage the Advisory Committee. The involvement of half of the members of the Advisory Committee in the planning and execution of the National Forum yielded very good outcomes in the level of their engagement in the program. Also, the individual meetings conducted in January with the Ministries represented on the AC proved to be more fruitful than our previous meetings with the full AC membership. Following suggestions made by AC members to hold more individualized meetings, OPTIONS will conduct individualized meetings in the future, and seek other opportunities for bringing the collaborating ministries together (such as field visits, launches of special activities, or other special events).

Comment # 5: It is unfortunate that the project has found the STS difficult to work with and inadequate for project needs. Please note that the STS is a tool offered by USDOL/Juarez Associates to assist grantees in tracking and monitoring their beneficiaries. It is not mandatory and if OPTIONS has established a more useful system that enables it to monitor its beneficiary indicators, as well as provide required reporting information to USDOL, please utilize that tool. Please also note however that USDOL is currently in discussions with Juarez to address several issues grantees have been having with the program, and Juarez is currently working on a manual for using STS.

Answer/Response from OPTIONS: OPTIONS does not have an alternate tool to use for tracking of beneficiaries, as we were guided to use the STS at the start of the program. Since we have expended significant time and effort in making the STS work for us, we are not in a position to be switching to another system at this point in time. We are hopeful that the issues that we have identified and sent on to Juarez will get ironed out over time, so that the STS can become an easier tool to use.

Comment #6: USDOL commends OPTIONS on its great work in leveraging counterpart funds and resources.

Response from OPTIONS: Thank you. We feel it is very important for our partners at the community level and government level to share in the cost of the program. We will continue to try to leverage in-country resources following the pattern set in the past.

Question #7: USDOL is concerned about the reported “competition” for human resources in joint UNICEF-OPTIONS project sites. It is unfortunate that UNICEF has been unwilling to collaborate up to this point, despite OPTIONS efforts. With the impending new UNICEF activities in additional OPTIONS areas, USDOL hopes that UNICEF will be more open to OPTIONS suggestions for collaboration. If collaboration is not successful, will there be serious negative implications for project implementation and success? USDOL looks forward to future reporting on this matter, and the progress of OPTIONS efforts to engage UNICEF.

Answer/Response from OPTIONS: As the current technical report details, OPTIONS has continued to work with UNICEF on a number of fronts around province-level coordination, support for child protection networks, and collaboration with the provincial and district-level Offices of Social Affairs. While in principle UNICEF is highly supportive of our efforts to collaborate, and in fact mandates such collaboration through its funding support to the OPTIONS activities in Prey Veng, collaboration is not easy to operationalize at the field-level, when each agency is busy trying to implement its programs. There continue to be pressures on the limited human resources at the district level, with both OPTIONS and UNICEF working with the same government counterparts. But these pressures do not have significant negative implications for project implementation, so OPTIONS is able to move forward with its work. To help address local level coordination, and to support the mainstreaming of our efforts into the government’s own system of education support services, OPTIONS has begun to hold district and province level planning meetings together with relevant government departments, and has invited UNICEF to be part of these. The first such meeting took place in February, hosted by the Provincial Office of Education. UNICEF staff was present and actively engaged. A second meeting will take place following the Khmer New Year holiday in the middle of April. We are hopeful that these and other efforts will help address the resource constraint issues, which sometimes lead to unintended “competition” among OPTIONS and UNICEF.

Comment #8: On pg. 42 of the TPR, under the section on Partners, there is mention of utilizing NGO “subgrant” funds. Please be reminded that per USDOL regulations, grantees are unable to subgrant any funds to NGOs. If OPTIONS decides to move forward with outsourcing social services to treat child abuse and exploitation victims (which USDOL thinks is a great way of servicing needy children), it must do so under sub-contract mechanism, following the regulation and guidelines relating to subcontracting USG funds.

Response from OPTIONS: The reference to a subgrant was a mistake. Thank you for raising our attention to this.

Question/Comment #9: USDOL is pleased to learn additional information on the “Understanding Child Work” initiative. We look forward to continued updates on the project and would be grateful for any reports and data that are disseminated. This will be very useful in our research undertakings in Cambodia.

Response from OPTIONS: Unfortunately, the UCW project has not yet released the report that was presented in draft (through a group presentation) in early fall 2005. We have inquired with colleagues at ILO-IPEC about the status of the report, and they said that the report is still under review by the agencies collaborating in the project (UNICEF, World Bank, and ILO-IPEC). As soon as the report or any other relevant data becomes available, we will be pleased to pass it on to USDOL.

Thank you for your thorough comments and questions. We appreciate USDOL’s support.