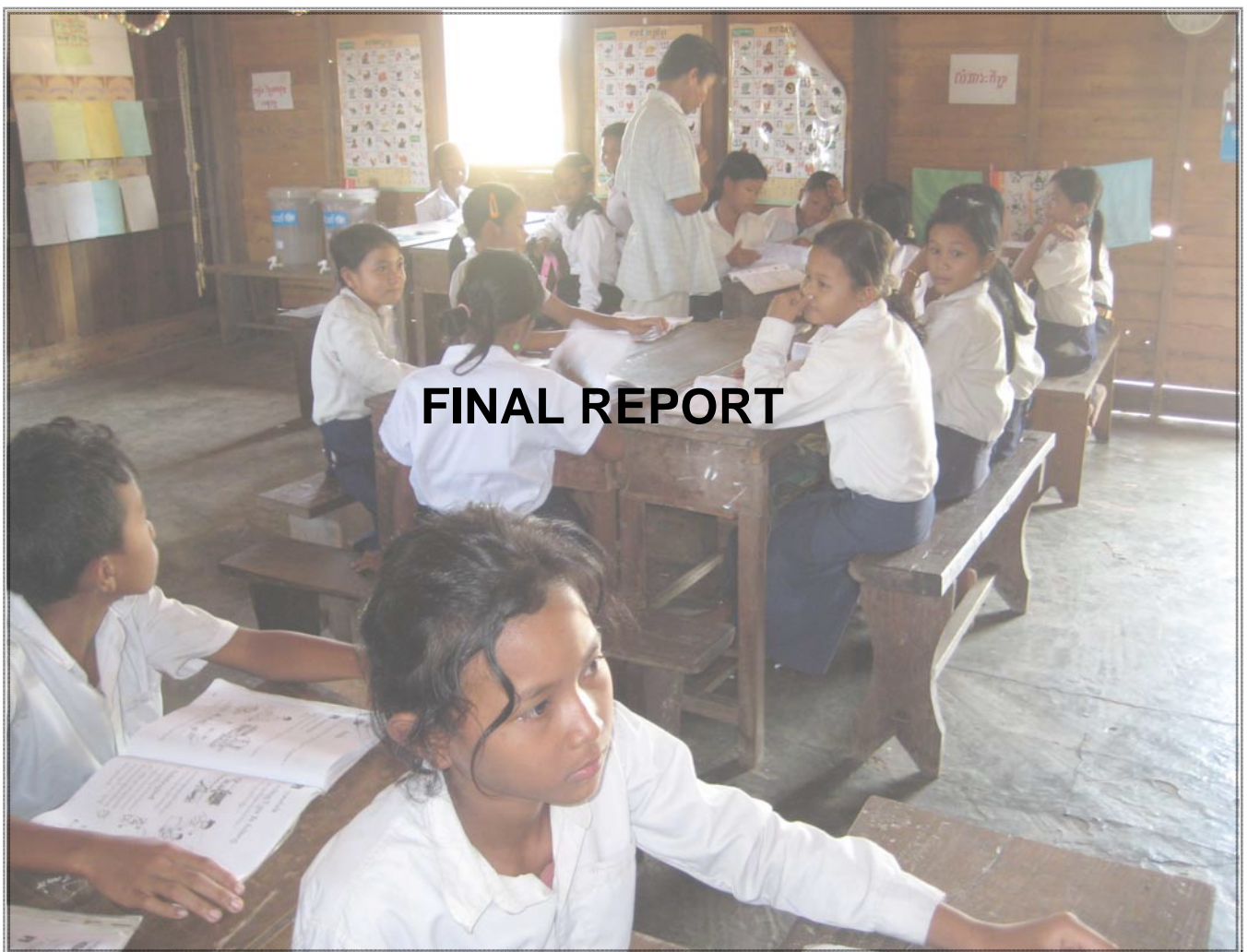


**UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FUND
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CAMBODIA

**Evaluation of Accelerated Learning and
Multi-grade Teaching Programmes**



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Overall evaluation objectives:

1. To evaluate the Accelerated Learning programme and Multi-grade teaching project, with focus on relevance to national priorities, effectiveness in achieving desired objectives, and potential sustainability for the long term;
2. Based on the findings of the evaluation, generate recommendations for future improvement of the programmes, including recommendations for the CFS MasterPlan 2011-2015;

The consultant would like to record his indebtedness to those involved in the evaluation, especially those who took time to visit schools, participate in discussions and answer questions. The contributions of Accelerated learning and Multi-grade teachers, many of them school principals, are particularly appreciated.

ABBREVIATIONS

A/L	Accelerated learning
AOP	Annual Operational Plan
CAR	Council for Administrative Reform
CCA	Common Country Assessment
CFS	Child-Friendly School
DP	Development Partner
DOE	District Office of Education
DTMT	District Training and Monitoring Team
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
EFA NPA	Education For All National Plan of Action
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESSP	Education Sector Support Program
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HAR	Harmonisation, Alignment and Results
MDA	Mid Decade Assessment (of EFA)
MGT	Multi-grade teaching
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport
MTR	Mid Term Review
NEC	National Education Conference
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NFE(D)	Non Formal Education (Department)
PED	Primary Education Department
PD	Planning Department
POE	Provincial Office of Education
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
SCN	Save the Children, Norway (in Cambodia)
ToRs	Terms of Reference
TTD	Teacher Training Department
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Fund

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

(A summary of the 12 sets of Recommendations from this evaluation is included as Annex 8. Most have relevance for the revision of the CFS Master Plan)

INTRODUCTION

- The two programmes, Accelerated learning and Multi-grade teaching were introduced in Cambodian schools in response to two associated problems: a **gap in enrolment** and **overage children**.
- MGT has been applied since 2003 and now operates in 10 provinces or municipalities (Kompong Thom, Stung Treng, Kompong Speu, Prey Veng, Otdar Meanchey, Svay Rieng, Kampot, Takeo, Kandal and Kep). A/L has been applied since 2006.
- The evaluation took place from 16th March 2010. Over the following 2 month period at least 100 stakeholders were consulted in 4 locations and at central and decentralised levels of the Ministry.
- Central records for MGT and on overage enrolment, net enrolment and gross enrolment ratios (NER and GER) were examined from 2004/5, as well as survival rates and numbers of “complete” schools (i.e. schools offering teaching of grades 1 to 6). Central data on A/L is sometimes confused with that on equivalency. However provincial records are accurate and readily available.

MoEYS Guidelines

- The situation with regard to salary incentives and local arrangements for teacher deployment in Cambodia is governed by practices that have become widespread rather than by regulation. In October 2009 the Ministry issued a set of Guidelines whose effect was to bring these practices back within existing rules.
- Flexibility has been applied to class-size norms for primary schools (officially 50 students). This has allowed an increase in double-shift teaching from 5,431 schools in 2004/5 to 5,993 in 2008/9. Between 2004/5 and 2008/9 the numbers of MGT and contract teachers have also risen (MGT from 518 teaching in 665 schools to 1172 in 941 schools; contract teachers from 740 to 2,214). There were more A/L teachers in 2008/9 than in 2004/5 also (the programme was started in most provinces in 2006), but national data is not available. Data are still not kept separately for A/L and the Non Formal Education (NFE) equivalency programme except at provincial level.

FINDINGS

- The evaluation findings are presented and discussed in the report below under the three headings: **Relevance, Effectiveness** and **Sustainability**.

RELEVANCE

a. National Priorities

- A/L and MGT are mentioned in several policy documents: The ESP 2006-2010 lists MGT as one of the strategies to achieve the outcome and targets of the Equitable Access policy. A/L is not mentioned in the ESP 2006-2010, nor in ESSP 2006-2010. The ESSP 2006 -2010 states that there will be an Action Plan for introduction of multi-grade teaching (p45).
- The ESSP 2006-2010 also includes a reference to plans for the development of the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) programme. MGT occurs briefly in the CFS Master Plan as does A/L. MGT is included in the Education For All (EFA) National Plan of

Action (NPA) 2003 – 2015 and is linked to double-shifting in smaller schools. The EFA Mid Decade Assessment (MDA) refers to MGT as an effective strategy for addressing teacher shortages and incomplete schools in rural areas.

b. Size of the Problem

- The size of the problem was estimated through a data set with figures from MoEYS EMIS records between 2004/5 and 2008/9. EMIS were especially helpful in extracting data on MGT from their records. These show a steady rise in the number of schools, classes and teachers using MGT since 2004/5. Both Government and Contract teachers have increased in number.
- The total number of MGT classes in Otdar Meanchey is currently thought to be 143, over double the number (68) recorded by EMIS for 2008/9. In most cases newly appointed MGT teachers have not yet received training and there is a need for immediate support and also a long-term strategy.
- In Stung Treng things are different. The number of classes recorded at central level for 2008/9 was 114. The POE reported the same number for this year, and this lack of change seemed to be confirmed from visits to schools.
- The potential size of A/L programmes nationally is judged from the number of overage students in primary schools. EMIS data on the population at age 6, age 6 new intake in Grade 1 (from which the %age of correct age enrolment can be calculated), primary GER and NER were examined to indicate the size and persistence or gradual elimination of the problem.
- Central records for overage enrolment suggest little change since 2004/5, just over 20% of primary population. An indicator of elimination of overage enrolment is low and falling GER. At 120% for the whole Kingdom GER is not yet low. The trend for the last 3 years in Kg. Speu and Prey Veng is downwards, though not significantly. In remote provinces including Stung Treng the recent trend is in the opposite direction.
- Figures for A/L programme schools, teachers and classes are not recorded centrally. There is confusion with Re-entry and Equivalency programmes. 10,684 students (3,766 girls) are enrolled in “Equivalency Programmes/ Accelerated Classes” according to NEC. There were 656 Equivalency or Accelerated learning teachers (235 females), (Unofficial translation, NEC Report, March 2010, p60). It is not possible to establish student numbers in the separate A/L programme.
- Budget implications of plans for expansion of Re-entry Equivalency and A/L programmes need to be examined.

c. Links between programmes

- Policy priority was gained from analysis of the broader context. The weakness of linkages to strategic plans is cited in a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of UNICEF Education Pilots and Early Childhood Development Initiatives, 2006-2008, in 2008: “pilot projects have not maintained as close linkages as needed” (p3).
- A/L and MGT are associated with ESP, ESSP and EFA plans, but more as options, not as key strategies and with little focus on recorded outputs/comes. Similarly the CFS programme provides a broad context for A/L and MGT, but the links are not strong either conceptually or in terms of management oversight.
- NEC reports still focus more on inputs than outputs and plans for “scaling up” of the A/L programme (p118) risk double counting.
- At provincial and district level there was a much greater sense, at least in most areas, that these two programmes are making a contribution to an improved education

system. Until recently A/L was positively associated with education reform in most areas. MGT is also understood clearly as a long-term strategy for providing education in sparsely populated areas of Otdar Meanchey. From reports, MGT is more associated with serious challenges in the system in Stung Treng. In terms of quality assurance, nowhere was there an explicit link between either programme and curriculum outcomes or student achievement standards.

d. Persistence

- The 2003 EFA National Plan of Action 2003-2015 considered MGT a temporary solution. The POE Director in Stung Treng also sees MGT as a temporary, and regrettable, strategy. POE in Otdar Meanchey, on the other hand, expects to include MGT in its programme strategy for the foreseeable future.
- The number of MGT classes this year has jumped in some areas and it is hard to separate the long-term need from this temporary reaction to tightening of the Ministry norms. However, there may always be some communities where it is uneconomic to provide a complete set of teachers for a population of below 300 children.
- A “complete” primary school is one that offers all 6 grades. If a school is complete it may not need a MGT programme, drop-out may be reduced, and overage enrolment may fall also. The number of complete schools has risen steadily in most provinces since 2004/5. With more complete schools the need for MGT and A/L programmes should be reduced.
- EMIS figures also show a rise in survival rates to grade 6 except more recently in remote areas. Survival for girls is also steadily improving, except in remoter areas, including Stung Treng. Nationally rates are still very low (around 60%), meaning a large number of students still drop out and may be eligible for re-entry or A/L in the future. The need for such programmes is likely to remain for particular populations and it is important to identify where these populations are and to plan support and monitoring at school, district and province level.
- Age 6 intake figures at grade 1 also show a steady rise for girls as well as boys and broadly for urban, rural and remote areas. In this sense, the need for A/L classes, at least for grade 1 students, is gradually being reduced. Grade 1 enrolments into A/L are also falling though the impact of the new Ministry Guideline has undoubtedly been felt by the A/L programme and may result in making the programme less attractive to students. Although at the moment the teachers in these classes were both energetic and dedicated to the improvement of opportunity for their community, there is a strong risk that the situation will deteriorate.
- To summarise a complex situation, there are long-term trends which suggest the continuing need for MGT classes in small rural communities. It is important to identify these and to separate them in terms of planning and support from those affected by the immediate impact of MoEYS Guidelines.
- The need for A/L classes seems to be diminishing. In this sense the programme is remarkably successful. However, there are immediate concerns thrown up by the Guidelines where DOE staff and school principals need help and flexibility in supporting some excellent teachers.

EFFECTIVENESS

a. Are the programmes effective?

- Education staff at all levels (teachers to central department staff) say that A/L is a success, but MGT is problematic. This is despite the fact that support for both in terms of training and materials is similar, class sizes are similar and the demands on the teacher are not so different. The financial incentive (+60% vs 0%) definitely favours the MGT teacher, but apparent characteristics of schools and communities

do not appear to differ markedly, except in Stung Treng where several schools are in ethnic minority areas.

- Measures of success cover inputs and programme characteristics rather than results, though in some respects these are impressive. Measures of success for A/L included the fact that students enrolled in large numbers and that the drop-out and failure rates (in the end of year test) were low, although figures for enrolment, retention, promotion and completion were not emphasised by any of the respondents as measures of success.
- A serious problem in terms of any measure of education quality or effectiveness is that there is currently no reliable standard for comparing regular and multi-grade or accelerated classes. Reliable end of year testing is technically difficult without a precise and explicit standard to aim for. The most commonly used standard still seems to be whether or not the teacher or student has “finished the book”.
- Several teachers and principals were asked how students from A/L and MGT programmes compared with students from regular classes. Answers were that A/L students could perform better since they were older, more motivated, etc. but those in MGT classes were inevitably weaker than in regular classes. However, several felt that low quality was certainly not inevitable.

b. Quality or Access issues?

- When the evaluation asked this question the most frequent reply was that MGT and A/L are programmes that aim to increase enrolment, so they are access programmes. And quality is commonly shown by promotion and drop out rates.
- The distinction between quality, not simply efficiency, and access is important because the response to the problem will be different depending on the different understandings and measures of success will differ also.
- In the case of A/L the programme largely addresses access and efficiency, and from measures of achievement discussed above (enrolment and promotion) it seems to be successful. However, the low priority apparently given to the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are worrying. If children are unable to read with understanding by the end of grade 3 they must be at risk of failing or dropping out. This is surely a priority quality target.
- The same issues are true of MGT. If the programme is understood as a strategy for providing access the need is for training, incentives, materials, classroom organisation, timetabling, etc. Success is measured by enrolment, survival rates, falling drop out, etc. If quality is an important criterion and measure of success then promotion and survival are also important, but so is student achievement on basic skills. In general problems and solutions facing the MGT programme were closely tied to the general situation for education in the province

c. Management or Technical Response?

- Is the current response largely management or technical and which is more appropriate? The selection and preparation of teachers for A/L were identified consistently as key components in programme success. A/L training is short and largely involves an examination and discussion of materials. TTD has provided 6 days of training to over 1700 MGT teachers, and teachers are provided with a salary incentive
- In the schools visited, relations between the principal, the teachers and the community were good and seen as critical in Kg Speu and Prey Veng. In Otdar Meanchey the school cluster seemed to play a key support role. Community involvement in the school in Stung Treng was more difficult and less settled.

- Any school programme depends on provision of basic infrastructure and a strong relationship to the community. These non-technical criteria are essential before any programme can operate let alone one with special characteristics. In this sense management issues come before technical ones.
- Both programmes have materials developed with UNICEF support. The student materials in A/L classes were, by contrast to those in MGT programmes, seen in use in all classes visited. Given the state of affairs in the MGT schools visited it would seem that the MGT Teacher's Book deals in more detail than appropriate with conceptual issues. A more pragmatic approach may be better.
- The management of A/L programmes was impressive though the broad numbers alone do not reveal the whole picture. Nevertheless, one can see that the programme is being actively managed at local level, at least in terms of access and support.
- Technical support for both programmes is provided by Trainers at POE and DOE levels. Each district has identified a District Training and Monitoring Team (DTMT). The Team is supported under the CFS programme and MoEYS is making use of FTI funding to further develop capacity.

d. Monitoring and Evaluation

- The lack of a precise and widely understood objective for each programme makes them harder to evaluate. There is a need for an M&E framework. This is not yet in place, though as shown, data and monitoring are available, in rather fragmented form at various levels. National provincial and district data, at least for the A/L programme suggest positive progress Results for MGT are more mixed and less easy to determine.
- The development of a central Annual Operational Plan (AOP) is a major step forward and still a fairly new development. This is essentially, the M&E framework to be applied to the two programmes.
- The difficulty is that macro-level planning is disconnected from more detailed plans at sub-national levels. The outputs for these programmes and activity areas are very general and do not translate easily into provincial level inputs, or, more importantly, into outputs or results.
- Field visits confirmed the mismatch of demand with trained teachers. A more explicit strategy for retaining trained staff in schools where they can use their skills was discussed with POE staff in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng. Central Ministry data suggest that the training is not always being made best use of.

SUSTAINABILITY

a. Measures of Sustainability

- To achieve mainstreaming, "Emphasis should be given to aligning with existing MoEYS structures" (UNICEF MTR p4). The set of questions in this area of the evaluation were designed to test ownership by MoEYS, harmonisation with other DP programmes, alignment with MoEYS structures and measurement of results through MoEYS systems and according to MoEYS criteria.
- Ownership and alignment should be seen in terms of local management and support systems, i.e. planning, reporting and performance monitoring. This was more evident in the A/L provinces, which is a cause for concern. The need for MGT programmes, is likely to be more durable and systems in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng (and

other provinces) should be strengthened as a matter of priority to increase sustainability.

- It has been argued above that explicit measures of student performance in these special programmes should be against the same standards used for regular classes. A focus on results will also support Cambodia's Harmonisation Alignment and Results (HAR) Plan of Action, 2006.
- UNICEF does not see either A/L or MGT as an externally managed project. It is a measure of success that none of the MoEYS respondents in the field saw either programme in this way either. Clarification of the role of central MoEYS staff in terms of performance oversight through data monitoring and the occasional provincial visit would be beneficial.
- There was no evidence from discussion or visits of other projects or programmes running parallel A/L or MGT activities.

b. Links to Policy & Practice

- Both programmes are quite well integrated with MoEYS policy and practice, though clearer policy goals and more explicit management objectives at local level would be welcome. Broad links to better student achievement is also needed to guide teachers and students, and to tell parents and education staff what students are learning.
- The Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) programme, provides a logical "home" for the A/L and MGT programmes. Both are included as specific sub-programmes under the broader umbrella of CFS, though the extensive CFS materials do not do more than mention the programmes and give few details as to how either programme should operate. CFS aims to provide a framework and not a separate set of activities. This should allow the A/L and MGT pilots to link with other broad CFS activities such as teacher training. Teaching ideas for regular classes are often as applicable to MGT or A/L classes.
- The A/L teachers interviewed did not find the planning of their lessons a problem, perhaps because of the materials, many MGT teachers said they needed more help. It is not at all clear what would be useful unless more specific textbooks were available. CFS and other teaching materials are often badly stored and neglected. Several respondents clearly found the amount of material already distributed overwhelming. A storage system and a means of listing what materials have been received is a priority.
- The popularity of the A/L sets comes partly from the fact that they can be given directly to the children and seem to require no additional planning or preparation. On the other hand it remains unclear whether the children are actually learning what is required by the curriculum.

c. Proportionate and Organic Response

- MoEYS is committed to continue and to expand the programmes. However, the size of need is difficult to determine. The policy base for both programmes is also not strong. Clearer policies and performance measurement are needed since without evidence the argument for expansion is weak and without policy the programmes will not be sustained.
- At school and district level the presence of overage students in most classes is common. Moreover, some school directors and DOE staff who heard informally about A/L have asked for details of the programme and organised training for themselves without outside support. Thus there is some evidence of capacity to solve problems locally.

- It is not clear why some trained, prepared and experienced teachers should find MGT teaching as demanding as they claimed. In Stung Treng the overwhelming assessment was that MGT is an unsatisfactory system.
- Equally it is hard to explain why a teacher in an A/L class close to a town centre that had dwindled to a manageable dozen students be so discouraged, while a rural area counterpart suddenly obliged to teach over 50 students in the same class, half A/L and half normal grade 1, with no incentive payment should remain motivated and effective. School, district and POE leadership may be involved.
- A professional commitment to the children in the community was one striking component of the most positive schools in Kg Speu and Prey Veng provinces. Teachers know their communities and are aware of providing a service to the families there.
- “Participation by children, families and communities” is the 5th Dimension of the CFS programme, and this participation seems to be a strong characteristic of a positive school environment. To achieve this situation the CFS materials can provide some ideas, but can also appear daunting and almost present a barrier if they are seen as programmes that must be followed in every detail.

d. Curriculum & Standards Training

- TTD will spend 5003.8m riels on training and implementation of the Basic Education Curriculum and Standards this year. Other departments also plan to spend budget on related activity. Value for money would be shown by a substantial impact on teaching and student performance across all programmes. However they need to be implemented with an emphasis on results, i.e. measurement of students achieving the expected standards.
- From school visits and in discussion with POE and DOE staff there is still no explicit link between current school programmes and the Standards. Awareness of the 2006 Curriculum and the Student Achievement or Curriculum Standards at POE and DOE level was minimal, and while the Standards posters were displayed in some schools, they were not claimed to be in use and no connection was made to the A/L or MGT programmes.
- The Standards are able to provide a guide for teachers and principals to the student achievement they should be aiming for in MGT, A/L and regular classes. In addition, using these Standards would make it possible to compare performance of students in regular, MGT and A/L programmes. Without this it is not possible to judge the effectiveness of spending on training programmes or the success of special programmes such as MGT or A/L. Student “performance” simply means being able to read and write confidently by the start of grade 4, an essential target for all students.
- The School Self Assessment (SSA) component of the final CFS Dimension attempts to institutionalise reporting on children’s performance to the local community through a “school report card” or Evaluation Tool. What is new in this Dimension is the inclusion of student performance against the Curriculum Standards, and the sharing of this information with the community.
- From observations, implementation of CFS has not yet reached this point of development. In addition, before thinking of sharing information on performance with parents, there is currently little sense of school performance on the part of principals and teachers internally. References to standard learning achievement must surely be the next step in linking all school programmes to a national standard in the most basic of skills.

INTRODUCTION

UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport's (MoEYS) Accelerated learning (A/L) programme through the development of student materials and teacher training in 50 pilot schools in Kompong Speu and Prey Veng provinces since 2006. The programme aims to attract over-age children to enrol or re-enrol in school by offering the chance to complete the six-year primary education cycle in three years. An associated objective is to reduce recorded dropout rates in primary schools. The materials for grades 1&2 (Year 1), 3&4 (Year 2) and 5&6 (Year 3) are aligned with the national curriculum¹.

A second MoEYS initiative aimed at disadvantaged groups in rural and remote areas, is Multi-grade teaching (MGT). A Multi-grade class has two or three grades in one classroom with one teacher. Combining grades to form a Multi-grade class allows a school to offer a full cycle of primary education to students without leaving their community. Based on a one-year pilot in Stung Treng province in 2006 a training mechanism was developed and tested, and a range of materials were produced.

The aim of the current task is to document and evaluate both programmes to measure impact and to provide recommendations for further quality improvement and expansion.

APPROACH

The approach to this evaluation followed the Terms of Reference (ToRs) included as Annex 1 and in discussions with UNICEF. The agreed Work Plan Schedule as actually followed is shown in Annex 2.

As explained in the ToRs, the two programmes, Accelerated learning and Multi-grade teaching were introduced in Cambodian schools in response to two associated problems: a **gap in enrolment** and **overage children**. The problems and the programmes proposed as solutions were linked as the "main current challenges in the Education Sector" (United Nations, Common Country Assessment – UN CCA, 2009).

The ToRs states that each of these problems requires creativity and adaptation of approach to reach a solution. The evaluation focused on how the two programmes are being applied to the two problem areas, and also the extent to which they are seen as connected. Being connected is important because: i. The assignment was focused on the application of the two initiatives by the Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport (MoEYS), and not, for example, on student outcomes through testing. The time would have been insufficient for such an approach, and the results of less immediate application. Management capacity was given a higher priority than classroom teaching technique, therefore; ii. UNICEF appreciates that, in the past, donor support for education in Cambodia has been fragmentary, and this has posed problems for management at all levels. Establishing and reinforcing links between programmes

¹ Before mid 2006 the Primary Education curriculum was that developed in 1996. In mid 2006 a revised Basic Education Curriculum was approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport. Text-books based on this curriculum are being developed.

promotes harmonisation, alignment, sustainability and ownership on the part of hard-worked bureaucracies.

According to the Teacher Training Department (TTD) MGT has been applied since 2003 and now operates in 10 provinces or municipalities (Kompong Thom, Stung Treng, Kompong Speu, Prey Veng, Otdar Meanchey, Svay Rieng, Kampot, Takeo, Kandal and Kep). A/L has been applied since 2006 though the documentation of policy and strategy, and especially of results, has not been substantial. The current evaluation seeks to address these gaps.

The geographical focus of the evaluation was on central level departments of MoEYS, and on four rural provinces, Prey Veng and Kompong Speu, where the focus was on A/L, and Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng, where the focus was on MGT. Three of these provinces are rural, border provinces with remote areas. The fourth also has rural areas with districts that are difficult to access at certain times of year, even though the principal town is only an hour's drive from Phnom Penh. The particular circumstances of each province are described in more detail in the section on field visits.

The evaluation was approached in the following manner. A desk study of existing documentation was undertaken in the initial period. A draft Work Plan was prepared for discussion with UNICEF and the Primary Education Department (PED) of the Ministry. The Work Plan consisted of:

1. A narrative section summarising the approach and findings of the desk study
2. A draft matrix (Annex 4) summarising a set of 13 questions under 3 headings:
 - a. **Relevance** to national priorities
 - b. **Effectiveness** in achieving objectives
 - c. **Sustainability**
3. An expanded draft of these questions (Annex 5)
4. A Work Plan Schedule (Annex 2, subsequently slightly modified)
5. Extracts from a draft data set extracted from the Education Management Information System (EMIS) figures for years 2004/5 to 2007/8. Additional data from the two most recent years (2008/9 and 2009/10) were added during the consultancy.

VISITS & CONSULTATIONS

The evaluation took place from 16th March 2010. Over the following 2 month period at least 100 stakeholders were consulted in 4 locations and at central and decentralised levels of the Ministry. The table below summarises the numbers of respondents. Annex 3 gives the schedule of visits in the 4 provinces. 17 Primary schools with A/L or MGT programmes were visited and Principals or teachers from a number of additional schools were consulted.

	PED	TTD	EMIS	POE	DOE	School Principal	Teacher	Cluster	NGO/TA	Total
Central	5	2	2						4	13
Kg Speu				1	6	3	1	-	1	12
Prey Veng				2	6	6	5	-	1	20
Otdar Meanchey				3	7	7	10	4	1	32
Stung Treng				3	1	7	11	-	1	23
Respondent Total	5	2	2	9	20	23	27	4	8	100

With the resources available it was only possible to visit a small number of schools in 4 provinces, and they cannot be taken as a representative sample of all those locations where A/L and MGT programmes are being conducted. For practical reasons the field level evaluation concentrated on A/L in Kg Speu and Prey Veng provinces, and on MGT in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng provinces. In fact central data on the total number of schools in Cambodia operating the programmes is incomplete and complicated by changes since the beginning of the school year responding to the recent Ministry Guideline on class size norms, double shifting and employment of contract teachers. The impact of the Guideline is examined in further detail below, but EMIS records from 2008/9 show that nationwide 941 schools had MGT programmes (1599 classes). In the current school year (2009/10) there are Accelerated learning programmes in at least 76 schools, (41 and 35 schools respectively) in Kompong Speu and Prey Veng, the two provinces where the A/L programmes were evaluated.

The EMIS system collects data on MGT, though it is not included in the annual publication of Education Statistics and Indicators. Central records for MGT and on overage enrolment, net enrolment and gross enrolment ratios (NER and GER) were examined from 2004/5, as well as survival rates and numbers of “complete” schools (i.e. schools offering teaching of grades 1 to 6). Full data for 2009/10 had not been officially released at the time of writing.

Central data on A/L is sometimes combined with that on equivalency so the picture is less clear (see below). However the provincial records in Kg Speu and Prey Veng appeared to be both accurate and readily available. Staff at schools, the Provincial and District Offices of Education (POE and DOE) produced and discussed largely matching records since 2006. Comparing data with experience on visits, therefore, the findings of the evaluation can be presented with reasonable confidence as representative of the real situation in Cambodia.

EVALUATION TOOL

The selected questions to be asked and answered during the consultancy were extracted from the objectives. They also derived from the programme materials and background documentation provided. This included the Education Strategic Plan (ESP), 2006-2010, Education Sector Support Program (ESSP), 2006-2010, Education For All National Plan of Action (EFA NPA), 2003 – 2015, Child Friendly Schools Programme (CFS), Mid-Term Review (MTR) of UNICEF Education Pilots and Early Childhood Development Initiatives, 2006 – 2008, etc. A summarised set of questions was turned into a matrix for use as an evaluation instrument. It is included as Annex 4. The expanded set of questions is shown as Annex 5, and a summary of findings using the Evaluation Tool matrix is given below.

MoEYS GUIDELINES

An important contextual issue for the two programmes concerns salary incentives and local arrangements for teacher deployment. To some extent the situation in Cambodia is governed by practices that have become widespread rather than by regulation. At the start of the 2009/10 school year the Ministry issued a set of Guidelines whose effect was to bring these practices back within existing rules. The Guidelines have had a serious impact on A/L and MGT programmes, not least because they reached several schools after the start of the school year (in some cases, apparently, not until November or December 2009) when programmes based on past practice had been operating for up to three months. However, the extent of the impact on student drop out and promotion will not be known until data is collected next year.

Multi-grade teaching operates in rural or remote schools where it may anyway be hard to attract teachers. The current level of teacher remuneration is recognised as having a negative effect on motivation throughout the Cambodian system, and on education quality. Strategic civil service reform under the Council for Administrative Reform (CAR) has the long-term goal of improving salaries and performance of education staff, and annual increases have gradually improved the situation over the last 5 years. At the same time, personnel management strategies provide incentives for teachers in remote and rural areas and for those carrying out additional or difficult tasks, such as teaching in multi-grade classes.

One such strategy is that where pupil numbers are large or where teachers are few schools may apply a two shift system. This means that the same teacher teaches one class in the morning and another in the afternoon. Another strategy is that schools where there is a shortage of teachers have been allowed to recruit local staff, possibly with few qualifications, on annual contract.

All these practices have major implications for central budgets. Teachers who teach double shifts are paid an additional 100% of their basic salary (paid at the end of the school year). There is thus an incentive for teachers to teach two shifts rather than one. The length of shift, quality of preparation or of teaching may be lower in schools where double shifts operate². Contract teachers are paid less than a qualified teacher, but allow local expenditure of central budgets according to local perception of need. Justifications for the use of contract teachers include their local commitment, availability and experience. Teachers of multi-grade classes are paid an additional 60% of their basic salary (again paid at the end of the year). A/L teachers, on the other hand, do not receive additional payments for teaching two grades in one class at an accelerated rate.

Official Ministry class-size norms for primary schools are 50 students (PTR at primary level has been 1:50 for at least 10 years) though in practice a degree of flexibility has been allowed. An effect of this flexible application of the norm has been to contribute to a gradual increase in double-shift teaching (from 5,431 schools in 2004/5 to 5,993 in 2008/9). Between 2004/5 and 2008/9 the numbers of MGT and contract teachers have also risen (MGT from 518 teaching in 665 schools to 1172 in 941 schools; contract teachers from 740 to 2,214). There were more A/L teachers in 2008/9 than in 2004/5 also (the programme was started in most provinces in 2006), but national data is not available³. Data are still not kept separately for A/L and the Non Formal Education (NFE) equivalency programme except at provincial level.

The class size for A/L teaching in both Kg Speu and Prey Veng was set at 25 in 2006 when the programmes were started, i.e. half the primary PTR norm. This smaller class size, the availability of materials and the brief training are the only incentives for A/L teachers.

² "Having a lot of contracted teachers, multi-grade teachers and double shift teachers affects the quality of teaching". (Unofficial translation, National Education Congress Report, March 2010, p73)

³ Save the Children Norway (SCN) in Cambodia have shared a presentation on their Operation Rescue/Accelerated Learning programme from 2003. However, figures, even for the limited project are not available.

FINDINGS

The evaluation findings are presented and discussed under the three headings: **Relevance, Effectiveness** and **Sustainability**. A modified version of the Evaluation Tool is used to provide a summary of the findings for each programme and at each level. This summary is shown in Annex 6.

RELEVANCE

a. National Priorities

An estimate of importance of the two programmes to national priorities was gained from an examination of documented references in policy and strategic plans and reports.

The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2006-2010 lists MGT as one of the strategies to achieve the outcome and targets of the Equitable Access policy. It is given as an Access-related strategy relevant to “border, remote and/or ethnic minority areas” (ESP, p12). The Multi-grade strategy is linked to double shifting and to incomplete school expansion. The programme is not described as addressing quality issues, though there is discussion of efficiency and of performance-based incentives in relation to MGT, and of encouraging teachers to take on additional duties. There is a Target-Action plan for introduction of MGT in 2006. A/L is not specifically mentioned in the ESP 2006-2010.

Similarly, following the ESP, the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) 2006-2010 states that there will be an Action Plan for introduction of multi-grade teaching (p45). None of the respondents in the evaluation was able to confirm whether the Action Plan had actually been developed. This seems unlikely and certainly was not referred to in discussion of future planning. Again there is no mention of A/L programmes in ESSP 2006-2010.

The ESSP 2006-2010 also includes a reference to plans for the development of the Child Friendly Schools (CFS) programme. This is listed under 2.3 Primary Education Access, Quality & Efficiency. MGT is mentioned as one of a number of “Programmes and Activities”. These include strengthening and expanding the child friendly schools program “with improved school management”:

- Strengthen and expand the child friendly school program with improved school management, inclusive education and special education, multi grade teaching, bilingual education, revised curriculum and minimum learning standards, libraries and local life skills programs, such as prevention of HIV/AIDS and other health problems. (ESSP 2006-2010, p6)

MGT is included in the Education For All (EFA) National Plan of Action (NPA) 2003 – 2015 and is linked to double-shifting in smaller schools:

Multi-grade schools are considered a sound longer-term strategy for smaller communities, knowing that multi-grade schools in many countries have a long and

valuable tradition, and a well-developed and comprehensive literature (EFA NPA, p41)

The EFA Mid Decade Assessment (MDA) refers to MGT as an effective strategy for addressing teacher shortages and incomplete schools in rural areas, but where “specific pedagogical training” is available for teachers is available (EFA, MDA, p218)

The MDA also proposes “Training for teachers in ‘accelerated learning’ techniques for older children” (p217). It points out that the “provision for rapid progression... will require greater flexibility and understanding on the part of both teachers and school directors in managing the progress of overage children in the school system.”

There are a number of references to the most appropriate application of the Multi-grade teaching programme, i.e. “Where class size is small” (EFA, MDA p213), “especially for remote, incomplete schools” (ESSP p16). However, although, as pointed out, MGT gets a passing reference in ESSP as a possible strategy related to CFS there is no reference to MGT in the CFS Policy document. This is perhaps an oversight. “Accelerated classes” are mentioned in the Policy as one of a number of “Specific Activities ...to respond with the real needs of school in the provinces” (p7).

MGT is mentioned in the CFS Master Plan in reference to training and the cost of developing modules (p5 & p23), but no details are given. A/L is also mentioned under suggestions for “Core or Specific Activity Modules”(p12). The CFS Greenbook lists both MGT and A/L among Activities under Dimension II Effective Teaching and Learning stating that teacher training should be provided (2.2.2, p7). The fact that the item “methodologies for children with special needs” is included in the same paragraph may explain why at least the A/L programme is currently the responsibility of the Special Education Office within the Primary Education Department. Neither programme seems to have a “natural home” at central level. It is not, therefore, surprising that, while data associated with overage enrolment and school completion are included in the annual EMIS publication of education statistics, no numbers of either MGT or A/L classes, schools or teachers are shown.

In summary, MGT and A/L are seen as among a number of strategic options for managers mainly related to improved access and efficiency. Policy acknowledges the need for training and materials, and both are provided by MoEYS (with UNICEF support). However, the policy base is not strong and performance records at central level, while available, are not immediately accessible. Given the progress in education system development, it may now be time to make more explicit both the policy and strategic bases for reaching the final 5 or 10% of the population for whom absorption into the system will require greater creativity.

RECOMMENDATION 1

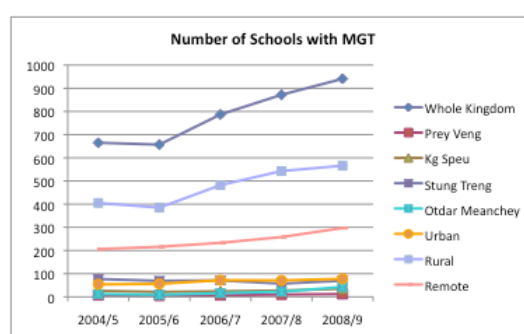
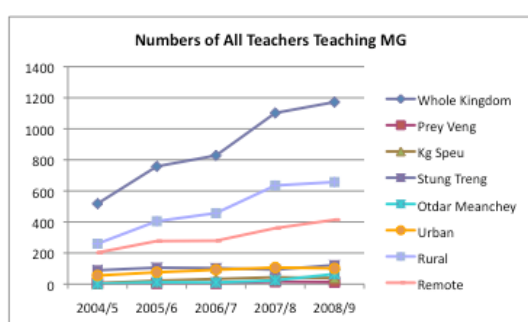
- a. As explained below, both programmes are substantial (MGT takes place in at least 1000 schools; primary level GER is over 120% with overage enrolment at 20%). It would be worth developing clearer policy statements on them at ESP level and below (including the CFS Master Plan) against which performance in terms of both inputs and outputs could be monitored.

b. Size of the Problem

To establish the size of the problem a data set was established with figures from the MoEYS EMIS records between 2004/5 and 2008/9. Data on the current year (2009/2010) are not yet available as a published set from EMIS, though some figures

were released at the National Education Conference (NEC). Included in the data set are records of Overage Enrolment in Grade 1, GER, NER, Survival to Grade 6 and Numbers of Complete Schools. The data are disaggregated for gender and rural urban and remote areas as well as for the 4 provinces identified for the evaluation. Overall the data are thought to provide a reasonable view of the trends in some of these areas⁴.

As pointed out above, there are no published data at central level showing the number of A/L or MGT classes, teachers, schools, etc. However, the EMIS office of the Ministry's Planning Department were extremely helpful in extracting data on MGT from their records. These show a steady rise in the number of schools, classes and teachers using MGT since 2004/5⁵. Both Government and Contract teachers have increased in number. However growth by province is not uniform and, in fact, numbers reported at central level do not appear to have changed greatly in those provinces covered by this evaluation.



Year	No. of Govt. Teachers		No. of Contract Teachers		Total Teachers	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
2004/5	270	30	248	31	518	60
2005/6	342	36	416	84	758	120
2006/7	410	55	418	77	828	132
2007/8	607	100	495	80	1102	180
2008/9	620	91	552	108	1172	199

Table 1. Growth in Numbers of MGT Teachers Nationally

Figures for MGT in the current year were not available at central level, and experience on the field visit to one province showed a very fluid situation brought about in response to the Ministry Guideline discussed above. Otdar Meanchey POE reported a drop of 40% in double shifting this year compared to last. The number of contract teachers had been cut from 73 to 43. The total number of MGT classes in the province is currently thought to be 143, over double the number (68) recorded by EMIS for 2008/9. In Banteay Ampil District in the Province, for example, there were 6 classes last year and there are currently 35. In Samrong District there were 18 classes last year and there are 38 this year. In Chongkal District the rise has been from 6 to 17 classes and in Anlong Veng District from 14 to 23 classes. In most cases newly appointed MGT teachers have not yet received training since the stricter application of the Guideline took place without time to plan for this.

As discussed with POE staff at the end of the visit there is a need for immediate support to improve the current situation, and also a long-term strategy for support to

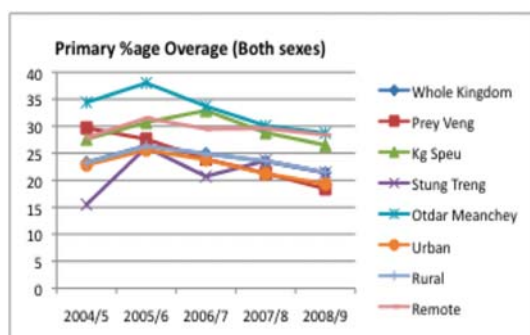
⁴ Clearly some of the data relate also to the Persistence of the problem discussed in a section below

⁵ It should be noted that the MGT data, while extremely useful, have not been subject to the normal EMIS cleaning process and may not be completely reliable. Also note that the steep rise in MGT schools and teachers is clearly not taking place in the 4 provinces investigated.

MGT. Many regular class techniques and materials (e.g. groupwork and games) are suitable for MGT, but all teachers need to be familiar with MGT. The POE director has a good appreciation of the importance of planning for continued programmes in rural areas. Training is also to be included in Thursday technical meetings.

The situation in Stung Treng seems to be different. The number of classes recorded at central level for 2008/9 was 114. The POE reported the same number for this year, and this lack of change seemed to be confirmed from visits to schools. Figures at POE level took some time to disaggregate from the number of teachers doing double shifting and/or multi-grade (total 216). School principals and teachers from the 9 schools consulted (of 70 in the province) did report changes in student numbers and teachers. However, no overall pattern was clear and provincial data were not available. POE staff see MGT as a widespread problem that can only be solved by increased numbers of teachers. The shortage of students in small communities and the weak state of education quality generally seem to be more critical characteristics of the province.

At central level the potential size of A/L programmes nationally can be judged from the number of overage students in primary schools. As stated, EMIS does not report the number of A/L classes, but it does show data on the population at age 6, age 6 new intake in Grade 1 (from which the %age of correct age enrolment can be calculated), primary GER and NER. These are presented in a later section to indicate trends and hence to show the persistence or gradual elimination of the problem.

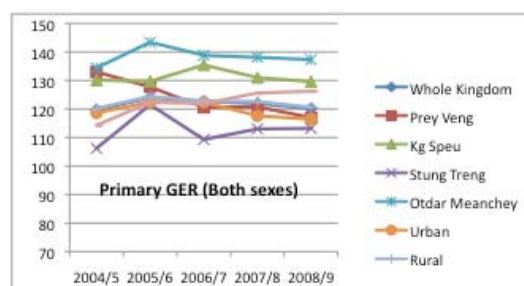


Central records for overage enrolment in primary schools suggest a relatively small change since 2004/5 and that the national level remains just over 20% of the enrolled primary population. Some provinces have performed better than others. Otdar Meanchey, for example, has shown a steady fall from 38% in 2005/6 to 28.7% in 2008/9. Accelerated Learning addresses “overage” enrolment, not “incorrect age” enrolment. The data available cover both, though it is known

that underage enrolment, for example in Grade 1 is also a fairly common experience in urban areas.

The A/L programme started in Kg Speu Province in 2006/7, reportedly based on SCN experience in Prey Veng. Possibly this was only a presentation made by SCN at a workshop in Prey Veng on “Operation Rescue/Accelerated Learning” in 2003 or thereafter. In fact, according to POE Prey Veng, there was no A/L programme before 2006/7, and SCN has only been able to provide an outline presentation for a proposed programme. It is not known whether such a programme actually took place.

An indicator of the gradual elimination of overage enrolment would be a low and falling GER. At 120% for the whole Kingdom GER is not yet low, though it is falling. The trend for the last 3 years in the two provinces examined (Kg. Speu and Prey Veng) is downwards, though not significantly. In remote provinces (including Stung Treng) the recent trend is in the opposite direction.



Data presented at the recent National Education Conference (NEC) show that primary GER rose in 2009/10 to 125.1% (girls 122.5%). This is described in the conference report as a “remarkable increase” and is explained by:

“many children dropping out and moving to and enrolling in other places with their family members. Besides this, more schools were built in remote and disadvantage areas, so some over-school-age children could register and study” (Unofficial translation, NEC Report, March 2010, p18). Child-Friendly School strategies and policies were also identified as causes of the increase in enrolment.

As this implies, an increase in GER is not in itself a bad thing. Correct age enrolment is the long-term objective, but a high GER may well mean that students who have previously dropped out are returning to school.

As indicated earlier, the figures for A/L programme schools, teachers and classes are not recorded centrally, and there is some confusion with the Non Formal Education Department's (NFED) Re-entry and Equivalency programmes. All programmes may apply to overage students who have dropped out of school and may be seeking to complete their education. Figures reported for NFED at the National Education Congress show there are currently 10,684 students (3,766 girls) enrolled in “Equivalency Programmes/Accelerated Classes” in Cambodia. There were reportedly 656 Equivalency or Accelerated learning teachers (235 females), (Unofficial translation, NEC Report, March 2010, p60).

NEC data also indicated that there were 26, 533 students (12,783 girls) who completed Re-entry courses during the year taught by 1,435 teachers (361 females)⁶.

The Equivalency, Re-entry and A/L programmes are managed by different departments at central level in MoEYS, and often by different offices and individuals at province and district levels. For this reason, it is hard to establish exactly how many students are enrolled nationally in the separate A/L programme. From discussion on provincial visits, staff responsible for A/L were unfamiliar with the details of the Equivalency or Re-entry programmes and there appears to be no management mechanism for deciding whether overage students qualify for one or the other, or whether in fact the same students are reported by both.

The Primary Education Department (PED) and Special Education Office have expressed the intention to expand the programme to all provinces, though no figures are given in the NEC forward plan for the coming year. Target figures reported for NFED at the NEC are to train 25,000 students for re-entry annually.

The budget implications of these related and possibly competing plans are significant since teachers are paid an incentive for teaching Re-entry classes (short, vacation courses) and Equivalency programmes, but receive no additional payment for teaching A/L classes⁷.

⁶ Elsewhere the NEC Report has slightly different figures: “**A. 4 Re-entry Programme:** The programme was conducted in 22 Capitals/Provinces. There were 1441 classes representing 57.64% compared to the annual plan. The total number of students who enrolled in this programme was 26,649 representing 106.60% (ESSP benchmark is 25000) among them there were 12,423 female students or 82.80% (ESSP benchmark is 60%). A total of 23,845 students, representing 95.38% compared to the plan, were sent back to formal primary schools”. (Unofficial translation, NEC Report, March 2010, p36).

⁷ Budget for Re-entry and Equivalency according to the MoEYS Annual Operational Plan, (AOP) 2009 is 11,436.93m riels, of which 8,604.93m are from NGO/DPs. No detailed disaggregated figures for A/L are

RECOMMENDATION 2

- a. Figures for overage students are published nationally, but details of A/L programmes are not. MGT programme details are available, but not published regularly. It would be helpful if both were reported reliably and regularly at central level.
- b. Responsibility for the management of all aspects of the programmes, including budgets, at central and decentralised levels should be clarified.

c. Links between programmes

As discussed above, a sense of relevance and policy priority can be gained from analysis of the position of the two programmes within the broader context of education reform initiatives. This also has an impact on sustainability, effectiveness and management issues. The weakness of linkages to major strategic plans is cited in a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of UNICEF Education Pilots and Early Childhood Development Initiatives, 2006-2008, in 2008: “pilot projects have not maintained as close linkages as needed” (p3).

The AL and MGT programmes may also be linked to each other, at school level, in that students in incomplete schools may repeat the final class in a school where they cannot be promoted as there is no class for them. They may thus find themselves overage and be reported as such simply because the school has no class where they would be “right-age”. The “solution” to the overage problem in this case would not be to offer accelerated classes, but to construct classes in the incomplete school. This issue was discussed on field visits and is examined below in the section on Persistence.

Discussion of policy documentation has established that A/L and MGT are associated with ESP, ESSP and EFA plans, but more as options, not as key strategies and with little focus on recorded outputs/comes. Similarly the CFS programme provides a broad context for A/L and MGT, but the links are not strong either conceptually or in terms of management oversight. At provincial and district level respondents agreed that the programmes were linked to both the first and second Dimensions of CFS (All Children have Access to Schooling and Effective Teaching and Learning). However, the scope (and complexity) of CFS suggested to several respondents that the programmes could be broadly accommodated under a number of headings. These are not key components or strategies. CFS is discussed in more detail below.

NEC reports still focus more on inputs than outputs. For example, an expenditure of \$82,109 out of a budget from the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Catalytic Fund of \$131,700 was used in 2008/9 to train 425 multi-grade teachers. 1310 copies of the MGT manual were produced also. EMIS figures suggest a total of 1,599 MGT classes in 2008/9 and TTD figures show that there were 1615 teachers teaching MTG two grades in one class programmes and 106 teaching 3 grades in one class. However, there is no separate data on drop out or promotion rates from MGT programmes, so we cannot judge their success.

Figures quoted centrally for students re-entering primary school may be related to programmes other than A/L (e.g. NFED reports a total of 23,845 students being sent

presented in the AOP. A/L is one of several activities related to the implementation of CFS, which together have a substantial budget covered by Govt and Development Partners (DPs).

back to formal primary schools). And forward plans for coming years suggest that programmes will target substantial numbers of students and teachers. For example, NFED reported at NEC that its plans include: “Promoting the implementation of the non-formal education equivalency program in order to encourage at least 25,000 students per year for school re-entry (Unofficial translation, NEC Report, March 2010, p119). It would be helpful if the target number referred to a total out of school population that might be scheduled for re-entry. This would allow tracking of performance in terms of a final goal, i.e. all eligible children re-absorbed into the system.

There is a danger that the Re-entry and A/L programmes are competing for funding, students and staff time at various levels. PED’s entry in the National Education Conference Report refers to plans for “scaling up” of the A/L programme (p118). There’s also the possibility of double counting. Moreover, the variation in cost is likely to be considerable also. Since the populations eligible for the programmes are more or less the same, the recurrent budget implications need to be considered.

At provincial and district level there was a much greater sense, at least in most areas, that these two programmes are making a contribution to an improved education system. More is said below about measures of success, but getting all school age children into classes is a clearly understood objective in all parts of Kg Speu and Prey Veng and generally is seen as successful. Until recently, at least, A/L was positively associated with education reform. MGT is also understood clearly as a long-term strategy for providing education in sparsely populated areas of Otdar Meanchey. Unfortunately MGT is more associated in the perceptions of respondents, with weaknesses of the education system in Stung Treng. In terms of quality assurance, nowhere was there an explicit link between either programme and curriculum outcomes or student achievement standards.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Overall both programmes are understood by most respondents as relevant in their contribution to mainstream goals (see the ToRs for this evaluation⁸). However, given the level of development, it is now appropriate to monitor the contribution to wider objectives in the CFS Master Plan, for example, through:

- a. Clearer identification of expected results, and
- b. More explicit statements of programme objectives

d. Persistence

An aspect of relevance that is important for planning is whether the circumstances that prompted the application of the programmes are persistent or temporary. Interestingly in 2003 the EFA National Plan of Action 2003-2015 considered MGT as a temporary solution: “Short-term measures to accommodate the overage bulge in enrolment over 2003/08 will include maintenance of double shift classroom and teacher usage and expansion of multi-grade teaching provision” (EFA NPA, p12). Certainly the POE Director in Stung Treng sees MGT as a temporary, and regrettable, strategy. POE in Otdar Meanchey, on the other hand, expects to include MGT in its programme strategy for the foreseeable future.

As described above (Size of the Problem) the number of MGT classes this year has jumped in some areas. It is hard to separate the long-term need from this temporary

⁸ “The rapid mainstreaming of multi-grade teaching demonstrates how an emphasis on reaching the unreached can support a transition to national coverage”

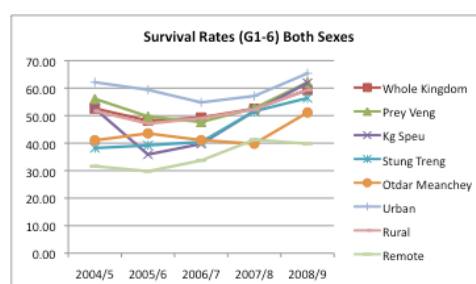
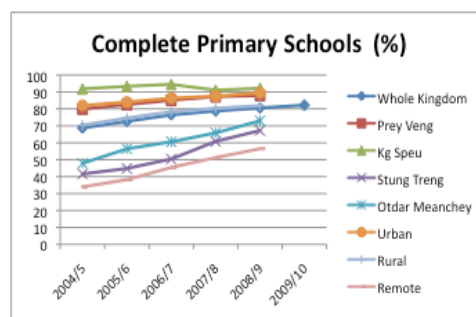
reaction to tightening of the Ministry norms. However, education staff throughout Otdar Meanchey appreciate that there may always be some communities where it is uneconomic to provide a complete set of 6 classrooms and teachers for a school age population of well below 300 children (as required by the norms). Many schools on field visits in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng were smaller than half this size. MGT with support, planning and monitoring can be seen as a sensible strategy for education of reasonable quality and not a temporary stop-gap offering inevitably low quality education.

Cambodia has a substantial number of overage children both in and out of its primary schools. This is shown by both overage enrolment and GER figures reported annually by EMIS (see above). However the situation is clearly fluid. Economically Cambodia is developing, with GDP growth rates between 5 and 10% yearly over the last 5 years at least. Although the population remains largely rural and agricultural, communications between the capital and rural areas (roads and telephone links, television and internet, etc.) are changing perceptions, expectations and behaviours throughout the country. This study did not examine these changes in any detail, but the NEC report refers to patterns of shifting population (“children dropping out and moving to and enrolling in other places with their family members” Unofficial translation, NEC Report, March 2010, p18), and in all four provinces education staff reported instances of migration, seasonal in Stung Treng and Otdar Meanchey, economic in Prey Veng and related to development of rural areas in Kg Speu.

Several government and DP programmes address strategies related to enrolment and retention of students and, although not directly attributable, the impact of these can be seen in various statistical trends. Those related to A/L and MTG may include NER, school completion, survival rates and correct age intake in Grade 1.

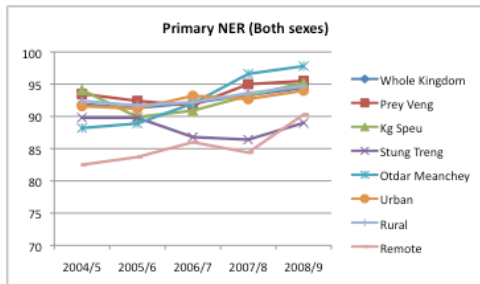
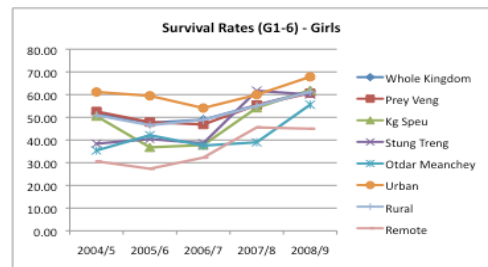
A “complete” primary school is one that offers all 6 grades. Reasons for being “incomplete” include a lack of classrooms, a lack of teachers and a shortage of students. Students may drop out for various reasons. Poverty, low perception of the relevance of education, lack of learning, low expectations of future opportunity, teacher absenteeism, etc. However, if a school is complete it may not need a MGT programme, drop-out may be reduced, and thus overage enrolment may fall also. Background documentation for this evaluation referred to multi-grade teaching “for incomplete schools, especially in thinly populated communities” (MTR of UNICEF Pilots, p1), and MGT specifically “to address the problem of incomplete cycle schools, ... including selective use of double shifts and multi-grade classes” (ESSP, p29 Facilities Development Program).

EMIS records data on several aspects of schooling related to the two programmes allowing inferences to be made about their long-term relevance. In particular the number of complete schools can be shown to have risen steadily in most provinces since 2004/5. The current FTI programme aims to reduce the number of incomplete schools further by over 600 in the next two years, particularly in rural and remote areas. The budget allocation in the original FTI plan was \$32.64m over 3 years for school construction: “Classroom space use will be maximized to accommodate all grades, inclusive of double shifting or multi-grade schooling, where appropriate.” With more complete schools the

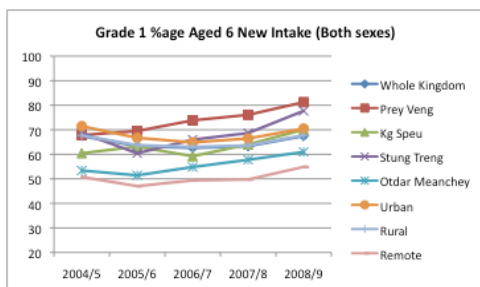


need for MGT and A/L programmes should be reduced.

A/L addresses overage enrolment and students who have dropped out and return to school, but in a class below their “right age”. The UNICEF MTR claims that: “The likelihood of the over-age children to stay in school and complete grade six is small unless some means of accelerated learning can be provided”. (UNICEF MTR, p10). It is not possible to make such a clear causal link on the basis of national data, but EMIS figures do show a rise in survival rates to grade 6 except more recently in remote areas. Survival for girls is also steadily improving, except in remoter areas, including Stung Treng. Nationally rates are still very low (around 60%), meaning a large number of students still drop out and may be eligible for re-entry or A/L in the future, though the trend is reducing. The need for such programmes is likely to remain, therefore, but for particular populations. The need, therefore, is to identify more accurately where these populations are and to plan adequate support and monitoring. This has to be done at school, district and province level, and experience from field visits to at least three of the 4 provinces examined, suggests that this is certainly possible.



Two further sets of EMIS data shed some light on the situation. GER was discussed in an earlier section. Rising NER also suggests an improvement in right age enrolment. Figures from Prey Veng and Stung Treng suggest a closer examination would be justified. But, on the whole, the picture is moderately encouraging.



EMIS also report figures for age 6 intake at grade 1, and these also show a steady rise. As discussed in an earlier section, nationally the percentage of overage children in Primary schools has been falling fairly consistently since 2005/6. The chart on the left shows that the percentage of age 6, “right age” new enrolments into Grade 6 has been rising. This is the case for girls as well as boys and broadly for urban, rural and remote areas. In this sense, the need for A/L classes, at least for grade 1 students, is gradually

being reduced. This national pattern was confirmed by visits to districts and schools.

At the start of the current year (2009/10) a total of 2,389 students (1,105 girls) enrolled in 58 A/L classes (all grades) in Kg Speu. This is down from 3,369 (1,548 girls) in 2008/9, which at that time was 2.5% of all primary enrolments in the province. In Prey Veng there are currently 965 students enrolled (510 girls). This too is down from 1,645 (736 girls) in the previous year and despite the fact that 1,421 students (658 girls) passed the end of year test. An indicator of the size of the A/L programme is that between them the two provinces visited for this evaluation accounted for 31.4% of those reportedly in Equivalency/ Accelerated Learning in the 2010 NEC Report.

Looking specifically at the grade 1 enrolments into A/L shows that, in general, the number of those entering the programme at this point is falling. The situation is complicated by the cautious and uneven approach to introduction of the programme. For example, in Preah Sdach District, Prey Veng Province it was only in the second

year of the pilot (2007/8), that 4 A/L classes were opened in 3 (of 8) clusters regarded as “difficult”⁹.

In addition the impact of the new Ministry Guideline has undoubtedly been felt by the A/L programme and may result in making the programme less attractive to students. Numbers have had to increase from between 25 and 30 to the norm of 50 students per class. In addition, schools have had to reduce the number of teachers on double shifts by 50%. This means that a principal who allowed a teacher to teach a double shift as an incentive for teaching one of these shifts to an A/L class, may no longer have this option. In fact, to meet the reinforced application of the norms some rural area teachers observed were teaching classes which combined 27 mixed grade, overage A/L students with a further 27 right age students. These were effectively multi-grade classes though not attracting the MTG incentive of an additional 60% salary. Although at the moment the teachers in these classes were both energetic and dedicated to the improvement of opportunity for their community, there is a strong risk that the situation will deteriorate.

The resulting increase in dropout or repetition rates will take time to show up as a provincial or national pattern, by which time the positive impact of the programme will have been lost so early remedial action is needed. At school and DOE level there are reports that A/L enrolments have already fallen in the higher grades, where students are closer to completion anyway and may doubt the value in staying in school once they have some basic skills.

Following the progress of cohorts from district records, for example, in Kong Pisey District, Kg Speu shows that the number of students who enrolled in the 6 A/L classes at the start of this year was 273 (110 girls). In 2008/9 349 students (148 girls) had passed the end of year test in 8 classes. At the end of the first semester of the current school year there were only 246 students (87 girls) left in A/L classes, a drop of 103 students or 30%. DOE staff said that some of these students had been re-absorbed into regular classes as they reached “right age”, though it was not possible to test this.

In Prey Veng a similar situation was reported. 415 students (193 girls) enrolled in Yr 1 in 2007/8. At the end of the year 345 students (163 girls) passed the final test. The following year (2008/9) 415 students (193 girls again) enrolled for Yr 2, and 351 completed the year and passed (166 girls). However, there are currently only 221 students (97 girls) in the Yr 3 programme in the province.

District records indicate a remarkable lack of drop-out from A/L programmes and this was confirmed several times in discussion. Nevertheless things seem to be changing since the start of the year. The number of classes and the number of teachers has fallen, especially in the higher grades: For example, in 2008/9 in Oudong District, Kg Speu there were 3 Yr 2 classes (Grade 3&4). This year there is only one Yr 3 class (Grade 5&6). This is despite the fact that this is the first year the district has opened enrolment in A/L to over-age students in all schools (and there are more Yr 1 classes than in the two previous years).

Meanwhile, looking at the longer term, one can already see that the number of Yr1 (Gr1&2) students entering A/L programmes is falling. For example, in Kg Speu grade 1 A/L enrolment numbers are as follows:

- 2006/7 (4 district pilot): 1116 (521 girls)
- 2007/8 (7 districts): 1808 (844 girls)

⁹ The main criterion is that schools are difficult for staff from DOE to access.

- 2008/9 (7 districts): 1008 (429 girls)
- 2009/10 (7 districts): 698 (305 girls)

According to provincial and district staff and the school principals questioned, the reason for the steady decline is that there are fewer overage students in the districts who are eligible for this class. It is not because the classes are less popular or effective.

To summarise a complex situation, therefore, there are long-term trends, which suggest the continuing need for MGT classes in small rural communities. It is important to identify these and to separate them in terms of planning and support from those affected by the immediate impact of MoEYS Guidelines.

The need for A/L classes seems to be diminishing. In this sense the programme is remarkably successful. However, there are immediate concerns thrown up by the Guidelines where DOE staff and school principals need help and flexibility in supporting some excellent teachers.

RECOMMENDATION 4

- a. Help is needed for principals and districts to provide immediate strengthening for the two programmes, even though this is close to the end of the school year. Otherwise individual students may suffer.
- b. Support is needed for longer-term planning, identifying schools which will continue to need MGT or A/L and developing appropriate district level support programmes for them.

EFFECTIVENESS

The 4 areas of enquiry under this heading are closely related. In addition several issues of effectiveness and quality have been touched on in earlier sections. These are referred to in the text.

a. Are the programmes effective?

The general reaction to the two programmes from education staff at all levels (teachers to central department staff) is that, at least until the current school year, A/L is a success, but MGT is problematic. This is rather surprising given that the support for both in terms of training and materials is similar, class sizes are similar and the demands on the teacher are not so different. The financial incentive (+60% vs 0%) definitely favours the MGT teacher, but apparent characteristics of schools and communities do not appear to differ markedly, except in Stung Treng where several schools are in ethnic minority areas.

A key question under this heading is what is meant by “effectiveness” The records that exist largely relate to the measures of efficiency discussed above: reduction in overage enrolment, increase in completion rates, etc. The decision to expand the A/L programme in 2007/8 after the “one year pilot” referred to in the ToRs for this evaluation was based, according to Kg Speu and Prey Veng staff on the success of the programme. Stated measures of success tended to cover inputs and programme characteristics rather than results, though in some respects these are impressive. Measures of success included:

- Students enrolled in substantial numbers. They were attracted by:
 - The speed of the programme

- The small class size: A district could open an A/L class with 25 students (MoEYS norm is 50 students in regular primary classes)
- Not having to mix with regular class students with whom they would have felt ashamed as they were clearly over-age
- Having a “last chance” to get an education
- The quality of the instruction. This was felt to be good because the teachers had been specially chosen
- Students were able to cope with more speed because they were older
- Teachers received additional training
- Community was involved
- The materials were good and popular with teachers and students

Some of these are factors the students perhaps did not know before the start of the programme, so they fail to explain why they enrolled. Some are things the principal or DoE Director said that parents were told and had the effect of attracting the students. In some cases the reasons why the programme worked, such as community involvement, can also be considered a positive outcome of the programme. Without being able to identify an overwhelming cause of programme popularity, it is nevertheless the case that students enrolled in large numbers and that the drop-out and failure rates (in the end of year test) were low, e.g.:

Kg Speu 2008/9				
Class	Enrolled	Pass rate/ Promotion	Failed/Repetition %	Drop out %
Grade 1	24206	72.6	18.1	9.3
A/L Year 1	1008	88.39	13.52	1.63

According to the POE, in Kg Speu 2008/9 1008 students enrolled in 24 A/L Yr 1 (Gr1&2) classes in 7 districts in 24 schools; the pass rate was 88.39%, 13.52% failed and only 1.63% dropped out. This compares with a promotion rate of 72.6%, a repetition rate of 18.1% and drop out rate of 9.3 reported by EMIS for the whole Province, Gr1.

This pattern was repeated in most years where figures were available and in some schools in Prey Veng Province, although with considerable variation. Principals of two of the 7 schools visited reported serious problems with the programme. In two schools visited students had dropped out and teachers were reluctant to continue. Migration of families was given as a major problem.

The evaluation ToRs state that “At the end of school year 2009/10, the first cohort from accelerated classes will be completing the programme and graduating from grade 6” (UNICEF ToRs, p1). One of the major attractions of the A/L programme, according to respondents, is that over-age students can study 6 grades in 3 years, twice as fast as in regular classes. Some Kg Speu students have in fact already completed the 3 year programme and thus there are some figures for promotion and completion: In 2008/9 1218 students (609 girls) entered Yr 3 classes (Grades 5 & 6) in Kg Speu. 1132 successfully completed the year (561 girls). The majority of these had followed the programme as intended from 2006/7 though there had obviously been additions (116 started in Yr 1 in 2006/7).

In fact, in some schools the principal reported that when students reach the “right age” for a class they leave the A/L programme and re-enter regular classes. It is not known whether this was understood by the students who joined the programme or whether it has had an impact on drop out and whether if it is applied now in reaction to the MoEYS Guideline, it will make the programme less attractive. The risk certainly

exists that the programme will now fail to attract and retain students in the way it has done.

It was, in any event, striking that, although the figures for enrolment, retention, promotion and completion were available, they were not emphasised by any of the respondents as measures of success. Apart from the low failure rate there was little evidence, apart from teachers' judgments, (frequently very positive: "A/L students learn faster than those in normal classes"; "The results of A/L classes are better than normal classes") that the programme was more or less successful than regular classes in terms of student outcomes.

A serious problem in terms of any measure of education quality or effectiveness is that there is currently no reliable standard for comparing regular and multi-grade or accelerated classes. From World Bank (WB) supported sample testing programmes quality is known to be seriously weak at Grade 4. The principal of Ang Kdei Primary School (Kg Speu) reported that roughly 50% of regular Grade 3 students could read and write. Other principals mentioned this as a problem for both A/L Yr 2 and regular Grade 4 students.

Routine end of year testing is carried out by class teachers and moderated in schools through technical year groups. The schools visited on the evaluation reported they included tests for accelerated, MGT and regular classes in their moderation. However, developing comparable tests for different groups in school is technically difficult, especially without a precise and explicit standard to aim for. The most commonly used standard still seems to be whether or not the teacher or student has "finished the book".

Several teachers and principals were asked how students from A/L and MGT programmes compared with students from regular classes by grade 3 or 4. For example, teachers were asked if more MGT or A/L students could read and write and were numerate. Impressions given were that A/L students could perform better since they were older, more motivated, etc. Some opinions were that students in MGT classes were inevitably weaker than in regular classes. This was partly explained by the shortage of time available to the teacher for teaching two classes in one. Some MGT classes were very poorly equipped, making the teacher's task more difficult. However, the fact is that MGT classes are often smaller, and where teachers have materials and training as well as incentives, poor quality is certainly not inevitable. Several classes seen were impressively cheerful and teachers clearly serious and creative. A number rejected the argument that quality was bound to be weak, and thought there was no reason why MGT students should learn less well than others. Certainly with a motivated teacher, provided with equipment and support this ought to be true and a clearer, more positive understanding of expected performance might help.



RECOMMENDATION 5

- a. Make more explicit use of the moderately reliable measures of quality and efficiency, which are widely available, (i.e. promotion and completion rates, etc.) to refer to school performance.
- b. Base plans for support and strengthening school performance on these explicit measures.

b. Quality or Access issues?

Following from the last section it is useful to consider whether the programmes are currently considered as addressing problems of quality or access. In addition it is worth examining briefly what quality means in the Cambodian system.

When the evaluation asked staff at POE and DOE this question the most frequent reply was that MGT and A/L are programmes that aim to increase enrolment, so they are access programmes. Where the response was that they address quality issues, further questioning revealed that quality is commonly understood to be shown by promotion and drop out rates. MGT in particular, was seen as “a strategy for completing incomplete schools”¹⁰.

The conflation of quality and efficiency has been a standard perception since the development of the ESP and ESSP in the early 2000s. In around 2003 the view began to be argued more forcefully, mainly by NGOs, that a measure of education quality was needed related to “what is happening in the classroom”. This argument led to two developments, the adoption of the Child Friendly Schools programme, especially the Effective Teaching and Learning Dimension, and the new Basic Education Curriculum and set of Student Achievement Standards. These programmes are discussed in more detail below, though they have already been touched upon.

The distinction between quality, meaning student achievement and not simply efficiency, and access is important for two reasons. On the one hand the response to the problem will be different depending on the understanding of what the problem is. And on the other the measures of success will differ also.

In the case of the A/L programme the problem is that of overage children. Where they stay in school they are often repeating classes and at risk of dropping out because they are ashamed of their position. If they are out of school they will be educationally below the level of their peers and thus also embarrassed by their lack of ability. In this view the programme largely addresses access and efficiency, and from measures of achievement discussed above (enrolment and promotion) it seems to be very successful.

As pointed out, measures of success in terms of quality or achievement are rarely examined. But quality and relevance will almost always play a role in the way the problem has arisen also. Children drop out or fail to progress because of lack of learning. This must also be the responsibility of the teacher and so related to the quality of teaching. In particular the low priority given to the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are worrying. If children are unable to read with understanding by the end of grade 3 they must be at risk of failing or dropping out. Yet an almost uniform response from teachers and principals is that between 30% and 40% of grade 4 students cannot read satisfactorily. This is surely a priority quality target.

Greater reliability of end of year tests is technically difficult to achieve. But it would be easier if there were a clear and easily understood set of basic skills which teachers had to impart.

¹⁰ The phrase is used in the Preface to the Multigrade Teacher’s Guide developed by UNICEF as part of JFPR 2/CAM 9061: Improving Primary School Access in Disadvantaged Communes. “In this project multigrade teaching was seen as one strategy for completing incomplete schools”.

The same issues are true of the MGT programme. If the programme is understood as a strategy for providing access the need is for one set of support mechanisms: training for teachers, incentives, materials, classroom organisation, timetabling, etc. Success is measured by enrolment, survival rates, falling drop out, etc. If quality is an important criterion and measure of success then promotion and survival are also important, but so is student achievement on basic skills.

As stated, in both provinces where MGT programmes were examined there were mixed perceptions on the inherent quality of MGT programmes. UNICEF support staff, on the other hand, confirmed expectations that student achievement in MGT classes should be at least comparable to that in normal classes¹¹. Problems and solutions facing the MGT programme were closely tied to the general situation for education in the province. In this sense, then, the promotion of A/L and MGT as simply options available to managers for achieving common goals, is correct.

RECOMMENDATION 6

- a. Use common measures of success in quality and access for special programmes and regular classes.
- b. Be much more explicit about measures of student performance by referring to specific standards and skills.

c. Management or Technical Response?

Following the argument in the last section it is necessary to detail what is being done to increase the effectiveness of the programmes through both technical and management mechanisms. There are a number of references in the documentation suggesting that the problems are more a matter for management rather than teaching technique. At the same time the evaluation ToRs refer to “creative strategies” which are needed to address the gap in enrolment and also to “adapting pedagogical approaches” required to address the problem of overage children. Is the current response largely management or technical and which is more appropriate?

As has been explained, the popularity of the A/L classes is attributed to the selection of good teachers and the materials developed with UNICEF support. The selection and preparation of teachers were identified consistently as key components in programme success. Surprisingly neither were thought to be problematic despite the fact that these students require more effort to teach, because they need to cover two grades in one year, and might have been thought of as problem learners, school refusers, etc.

A/L training is provided, but this is quite short and from the programmes it largely involves an examination and discussion of the materials themselves. Some advisers consulted by the evaluation felt that this was inadequate. The training should include a greater appreciation of the underlying concepts, in other words there should be more attention to technical aspects.

It was striking that, in the schools visited, relations between the principal, the teachers and the community were good and seen as critical in Kg Speu and Prey Veng. In Otdar Meanchey the school cluster seemed to play a key support role.

Community involvement in the school in Stung Treng was more difficult and less settled. At the time of visiting, on 26th/27th April, a week after Khmer New Year, most

¹¹ In Otdar Meanchey a research study was designed on the basis that student performance in both MGT and regular classes could be compared.

schools were not operating properly and celebrations were continuing in the community as they had been since 5th April. Many teachers did not live in the community, some travelling considerable distances on bad roads to school daily. In one school the housing provided by the community for the teacher was in disrepair and in another there was evidence of very severe flooding (see picture right. The flood level is above the level of the window-sill). In one Otdar Meanchey school (shown in the section above) classroom equipment was in a very poor state.



The development of any school programme depends on provision of basic infrastructure and a strong relationship to the community. These non-technical criteria are essential before any programme can operate let alone one with special characteristics. In this sense management issues need to be addressed before technical ones.

The MGT programme also has materials in the form of a handbook developed with UNICEF support. This was produced on request by teachers and principals, though it wasn't immediately accessible, suggesting that it wasn't in everyday use. As explained, TTD has provided 6 days of training to over 1700 MGT teachers, and teachers are provided with a salary incentive.

The student materials in A/L classes were, by contrast to those in MGT programmes, seen in use in all classes visited. Given the state of affairs in the MGT schools visited it would seem that the MGT Teacher's Book is over-ambitious (over 50 pages) and deals in more detail than appropriate with conceptual issues. Organising and planning classes appear halfway through the book, for example, after sections on Child as Learner and Peer Learning, which must be covered in mainstream teacher training. A more pragmatic approach may be better.

Specifically this would mean developing materials that were more like a step by step MGT textbook, as the A/L materials are. The A/L materials are also "re-useable" in the sense that they are printed on plastic-covered paper that can be wiped clean once students have written answers on them with felt-pens. These materials are essentially exercises, with instructions for student use, but very little guidance for the teacher. While it is certainly desirable for a teacher to understand the pedagogy behind the practice, it may be more realistic to provide learning materials rather than more teaching guides. Guides are useful on pre-service courses, but it is clear that few practising teachers actually read the theoretical sections of the materials they are given.

An alternative would be to identify key sections from the regular class textbooks being developed, for example for grades 1 and 2, and to present these in a combined MGT textbook. The sections could be thematically linked or linked in terms of skills. It may be appropriate to select only the essential sections (following the student achievement/minimum standards) and to omit others. This would at least, pre-empt the excuse that teaching two grades at once doesn't allow time to complete the syllabus.



MGT classrooms were often cheerful places with the same evidence of students' and teachers' creativity found in good normal classes. The differences were the seating arrangements and the small numbers of students, usually separate grades facing separate blackboards. In some cases the separation

seemed too artificial, not easily permitting any interaction, but also not preventing distraction. Students not being actively taught were, in several classes, just left to sit with no work or other activity to get on with, though this may be explained by the presence of visitors.

The management of A/L programmes was impressive. Identification of students was straightforward according to most respondents making use of teachers, community leaders, school principals, village chiefs, the School Support Committee networks, meetings of parents, Yellow Family Books and school mapping. This has been carried out annually since 2005/6 All the above were cited as instruments and individuals used to identify where over-age children live and to link the education system with the community.

All principals and directors said that A/L teachers were selected because of their experience and enthusiasm. In fact most observed were remarkable for their energy, understanding and sense of purpose and commitment. Only in two schools in one District in Prey Veng did the programme seemed to be failing because the teachers had lost their original drive and energy.

In both provinces where the A/L programme was examined, pilots had been carried out in a limited number of districts in 2006/7 and then expanded cautiously, according to reported need and the ability to offer and monitor the classes. Measures of “success” on which the decision to expand were based are discussed above.

The ToRs for this evaluation suggest that a slower expansion of the programme would have been wiser but the approach seems to have been handled sensibly. In Preah Sdach District, Prey Veng Province, for example, it was only in the second year of the programme (2007/8), that 4 A/L classes were opened in 3 (of 8) clusters regarded as “difficult”¹². No other Yr 1 classes were offered in that year, so that trainers could concentrate on support to those classes. Mesang District only began to offer classes in 2008/9 (see below).

Detailed discussion with school and district staff confirm that the broad numbers alone do not reveal the whole picture. One cannot judge reliably from the national or provincial figures, how close the over-age population in a district is to zero, or whether the need for Yr 1 A/L classes has been eliminated. Nevertheless, one can see that the programme is being actively managed at local level, at least in terms of access and support.

	Whole Province	Preah Sdach District	Mesang District
2006/7	23	13	0
2007/8	15	4	0
2008/9	21	5	9
2009/10	14	3	12 reduced to 7

Table 2 Prey Veng - Yr1 A/L classes opened by year

Technical support for both programmes is provided by Trainers at POE and DOE levels. Each district has identified a District Training and Monitoring Team (DTMT). The Team is supported under the CFS programme and MoEYS is making use of FTI funding to further develop capacity.

One responsibility of the trainer is to prepare A/L teachers during a 5 day training programme. Some of these staff seem to be energetic and to provide effective support to the schools. However, training is fairly basic and it would not appear that it

¹² The main criterion is that schools are difficult for staff from DOE to access.

contributes in a major technical way to the success of the programme. No special pedagogical techniques are introduced. Given the short duration and the fact that A/L teachers change from year to year, making it unwise to invest in a specialist, this probably makes pragmatic sense.

RECOMMENDATION 7

- a. Strengthen basic management support, especially at sub-national level, for both programmes in line with improved support for regular programmes.
- b. Provide simpler, more pragmatic technical support for MGT programmes, possibly in the form of tailored learning materials.

d. Monitoring and Evaluation

As explained in earlier section the apparent lack of a precise and widely understood objective for each programme makes them harder to evaluate. The AL/MGT programmes were, “implemented without the benefit of a comprehensive, agreed conceptual framework, including M&E framework” (UNICEF MTR p2). This may account for the fact that there has so far been limited learning about impacts and this is one purpose of the current evaluation. The TORs state, “It is really important to document and evaluate the programme to measure its impact and to provide recommendations for further quality improvement and expansion” (UNICEF, ToRs p2).

The sections above have provided a considerable discussion of programme impacts and this section simply summarises the situation. In particular, it is accepted that there is a need for an M&E framework. This is not yet in place, though as shown, data and monitoring are available, in rather fragmented form at various levels. It is understood that, from 2010-11, Annual Operational Plans developed at provincial and district levels will form the basis of the national AOPs, and this should improve the clarity of links between central and decentralised planning and monitoring.

At central level the development of a comprehensive Annual Operational Plan (AOP) compiled from department and other sources, which shows broad objectives, budgets (government and DP) and timeframes in the form of a logframe is a major step forward that is still a fairly new development. This is essentially, the M&E framework to be applied to the two programmes.

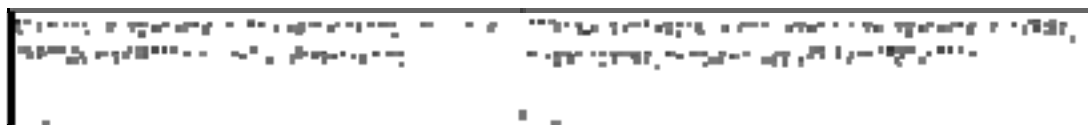
Under Sub-Programme 2: Strengthening of Quality and Efficiency of Primary Education (P1S2), for example, there are ESP/ESSP Targets, Annual Targets and Planned Results for the Development of the CFS programme. Within this envelope the schedule includes, under the heading of 3.2 Supervising on Monitoring and Evaluation of Implementation the following:

<p>3.2 Supervising on Monitoring and Evaluation of Implementation</p>

This monitoring is to take place in the first three quarters of the school year, is the responsibility of PED and the Special Education Office with a budget allocation from Govt/FTI as well as UNICEF. Multi-grade training also has entries:

<p>Multi-grade training</p>	<p>...</p>
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This programme has a budget of 526m riels. There are also sub-programmes managed by TTD covering the pre-service training of teachers in Training Centres:



The difficulty seems to be that this macro-level planning is disconnected from more detailed plans at sub-national levels. The outputs for these programmes and activity areas are very general and do not translate easily into provincial level inputs, or, more importantly, into outputs or results.

In terms of the effectiveness of the MGT programme, for example, the evaluation TORs refer to “The Ministry’s rapid scale up of the multi-grade approach” and say that the programme has had “a demonstrable effect in expanding student access to six years of primary education” (ToRs, p2).

From examination of data and discussion on visits it is not possible to attribute expanded access to MGT programmes with such certainty. Moreover, it’s clear that a tighter control of training inputs and use of trained teachers would benefit the programme. Field visits showed some mismatch of demand with trained teachers

Year	Numbers of MGT teachers trained	Numbers of MGT trained teachers not teaching
2004/5	18	118
2005/6	22	192
2006/7	66	236
2007/8	44	274
2008/9	115	336
Total	225	610

Table 3 Mismatch between training and use of teachers

and a more explicit strategy for retaining trained staff in schools where they can use their skills was agreed with POE staff in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng. Central Ministry data suggest that the training is not always being made best use of.

On the other hand, the TORs also refer to “positive results in terms of increased enrolment, higher retention rates, and improved promotion rates for over-age children” (p2). As set out above these results do seem to be shown by national provincial and district data, at least for the A/L programme. Results for MGT are more mixed and less easy to determine.

RECOMMENDATION 8

- a. Ensure the match up between central AOPs and M&E systems and the provincial/district level plans and results for the two programmes.
- b. Include selected more detailed measures of input and success in routine EMIS and/or CFS reporting.

SUSTAINABILITY

a. Measures of Sustainability

The UNICEF Mid Term Review report makes the point that, to achieve mainstreaming, “Emphasis should be given to aligning with existing MoEYS structures” (UNICEF MTR p4). The set of questions in this area of the evaluation were designed to test the sustainability of the programmes. Sustainable programmes demonstrate ownership by MoEYS, harmonisation with other DP programmes, alignment with MoEYS structures and measurement of results through MoEYS systems and according to MoEYS criteria.

Since the programmes are designed to help address special circumstances (where there is substantial overage enrolment or in remote areas where there is a shortage of classrooms, teachers or students) ownership and alignment should be seen in terms of local management and support systems, i.e. planning, reporting and performance monitoring. While the recent Ministry Guideline had definitely thrown management into some disarray, ownership and alignment was clear from field visits, presentation and discussion of detailed programme records with POE, DOE and school staff. This was more evident in the A/L provinces, which is perhaps a cause for concern. The need for MGT programmes, as argued above, is likely to be more durable. For this reason, management systems in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng (and other provinces) should be strengthened as a matter of priority to increase sustainability.

It has been argued above that explicit measures of student performance in these special programmes should be against the same standards used for regular classes. As discussed, the current weakness of performance management affects both these special programmes and also regular classes. The routine responsibilities of the POE and DOE DTMTs should include explicit success criteria for the A/L and MGT programmes in line with regular classes as mainstream strategies for achieving broad access and quality goals. A focus on results will also support Cambodia's Harmonisation Alignment and Results (HAR) Plan of Action, 2006.

A/L and MGT are programmes that are currently supported by UNICEF. This support is provided largely through Education Officers based in POEs as well as through specific activities budgeted in the AOP. As Cambodian nationals these staff are well integrated, but do enjoy separate, well-equipped offices and access to UNICEF transport. Plans to withdraw to a regional support role should encourage greater independence and responsibility of POE staff, but the local management tasks still require spelling out and strengthening. The priorities are: improved monitoring of quality including explicit student performance reporting and improved planning of long-term strategies (identification of schools, teachers, materials and classes) especially for MGT.

UNICEF does not see either A/L or MGT as an externally managed project, and it is a measure of success that none of the respondents in the field saw either programme in this way either. This would be easy given the strong local UNICEF presence in each province. At central level, on the other hand, the management roles and responsibilities of staff are less clear and a degree of dependence on external support was evident. Clarification of the role of central staff in terms of performance oversight through data monitoring and the occasional provincial visit would be beneficial. Technical capacity for training, on the other hand, appeared to be sound.

There was no evidence from discussion or visits of other projects or programmes running parallel A/L or MGT activities. Thus "transaction costs", i.e. the financial and staff time costs to MoEYS, as well as the confusion and loss of impact incurred by operating parallel systems are not problems that affect these programmes. None of the respondents referred to similar or parallel programmes or projects run by other organisations (e.g. Save the Children Norway's "Operation Rescue", an earlier A/L programme). External support (from UNICEF) in terms of materials development and contribution to training is, by this point, fairly limited and the ongoing additional programme costs are evenly shared with MoEYS as shown in the extract from the 2009/2010 combined MoEYS/DP AOP budget below.

Programme/Activity	Total budget	FTI (MoEYS)	UNICEF/Sida
PED A/L Workshops	1185.77	530.57	655.2
Research for Special Ed. (A/L) Masterplan development	304	160	144
Publication of A/L materials	400	240	160
Policy campaign for Special Ed. (A/L)	260	160	100
MGT Training (TTD)	526.8	526.8	00
MGT monitoring in TTCs	80	00	80

Table 4 Budget for MGT/A/L programme-related activity 2009/10 - M.Riels

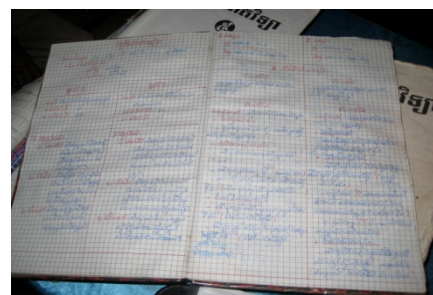
All respondents were asked how they saw the programme relating to their other duties and to the priorities of the Ministry in terms of inputs and results. As indicated there was no hesitation in expressing the value to the community, the students themselves and the objectives of the education system in getting all over-age children to complete school.

RECOMMENDATION 9

- a. Management systems in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng (and other provinces with MGT programmes) should be strengthened to increase sustainability. Tasks require spelling out and strengthening, e.g.: Improved monitoring of quality including explicit student performance reporting; improved planning of long-term strategies (identification of schools, teachers, materials and classes), etc.
- b. Clarification of the role of central staff in terms of performance monitoring through data analysis and occasional visits.

b. Links to Policy & Practice

This area of investigation repeated some of the earlier aspects of enquiry, but under the heading of Sustainability. As suggested above, both programmes are quite well integrated with MoEYS policy and practice, though clearer policy goals and more explicit management objectives at local level would be welcome. Broad links to better student achievement is also needed to guide teachers and students, and to tell parents and education staff what students are learning. Nevertheless, leaving aside the alarm caused by the recent reinforcement of the norms, most teachers appeared capable of planning and teaching their MGT and A/L classes, as they would do in regular programmes. The photograph shows a simple “double-entry” lesson plan developed last year by a MGT teacher in Stung Treng and being re-used this year.



There have already been references to the Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) programme, which provides a logical “home” for the A/L and MGT programmes. Both are included as specific sub-programmes under the broader umbrella of CFS, though the extensive CFS materials do not do more than mention the programmes and give few details as to how either programme should operate either in terms of policy (what exactly each programme should achieve, where and by when, under whose responsibility) or practice. Some of the few references to A/L or to Multi-grade teaching in the CFS materials have been quoted already. In addition, the CFS Framework document, 2005 (the “Green Book”) Dimension 1 has the following reference to what was a name used earlier by Save the Children, Norway:

1.2.8 Organizing Operation Rescue classes to assist out-of-school children who are over school age to study at primary level for 3 years and complete Grade 6.

Under “2.4 Support Programmes” there is also a reference to “Establishing accelerated learning programmes (two grades per year)” (2.4.6). It is worth noting that the A/L materials themselves make no reference to CFS, which they could do.

CFS is now the accepted and official Ministry policy for broad education programme development. Preparations are being made for the revision of the CFS Master Plan and several of the recommendations made in this report are relevant for this task, e.g. the prioritisation of explicit measures of student achievement and the curriculum standards. Implementation of CFS programmes provides several headings in the AOPs, for example. However, as explained by UNICEF staff, CFS aims to provide a framework and not a separate set of activities. This should allow the A/L and MGT pilots to link with other broad CFS activities such as teacher training through the Effective Teaching and Learning Dimension of the programme, which gives extensive practical guidance on methodologies for child centeredness. Teaching ideas for regular classes are often as applicable to MGT or A/L classes. There should be no need for teachers (many of whom have attended more than one NGO or project-run in-service training programme in addition to their initial training) to receive more than basic organisational training for A/L or MGT classes. The CFS materials, as well as the very many other practical guides and suggestions available in offices and schools, can easily be deployed for these special programmes as well as for regular classes. This is explicit in the ETL materials, e.g.:

Teachers can give learning games to students who finish their work quickly and have spare time. While these children are playing, the teacher can work with children who need direct assistance. Teachers of multi-grade classes can use learning games to provide learning activities to groups of students from one grade (INDEPENDENT LEARNING) while teaching children from another grade.

ELT teacher logbook, p18

On the other hand, while the A/L teachers interviewed for this evaluation did not find the planning of their lessons a problem, perhaps because of the materials, many of the MGT teachers expressed the need for more help. If more specific, tailored textbooks or learning materials, rather than teaching guides were available, this would be preferable.

At the same time, it needs to be pointed out that most schools have a large number



of CFS and other teaching materials, as do DOE and POE offices. These are often badly stored and neglected. No school or office had a list of the materials that had been provided over the last 5 years and most found it difficult to find things. For example, the CFS materials or the set of Basic Education Curriculum materials approved by MoEYS and provided in multiple copies to all schools and offices between 2006/7 had been received, but often couldn't be found. It certainly doesn't seem that more or separate teaching

materials for either programme are needed. Learning or practice materials for students would be preferable.

Several respondents clearly found the amount of material already distributed overwhelming. A storage system and a means of listing what materials have been received is a priority. There was definitely a sense that “more means less”, the more

training and materials there were, the more complex the activity of teaching seemed to become, even in a class of 12 students. The popularity of the A/L sets comes partly from the fact that they can be given directly to the children and seem to require no additional planning or preparation. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether the children are actually learning what is required by the curriculum and some way of checking this against the standards is needed.

RECOMMENDATION 10

- a. Help schools to make better use of what they have, rather than producing still more materials and guides.

c. Proportionate and Organic Response

It is clear from NEC and AOP documents that there is commitment on the part of MoEYS to continue and to expand the programmes. However, it is also clear, as argued in the first section of this report that the size of need is difficult to determine. There may be a tendency towards over-statement as there is some competition for funding. It is equally hard, therefore, to judge whether the planned response is proportionate. This is important in terms of sustainability since targets and budgets that are unnecessarily large will not be sustainable.

This section also considers whether implementation of these programmes is within the normal capacity of the school system. In other words are schools and offices sufficiently flexible to cope with special programmes of this sort, or will they always be regarded as unusual and thus at risk of being unsustainable.

It has been argued that the policy base for both programmes is not strong. Explicit references in CFS and other policy documents don't provide much authority or technical support. Clearer policies and performance measurement at central level are needed since without evidence the argument for expansion is weak and without policy the programmes will not be sustained.

At school and district level the presence of overage students in most classes is actually common. The practice of making substantial numbers of students repeat a grade (e.g. in 2008/9 nationally 18% repeated grade 1) means that most classes have some overage children. According to central MoEYS respondents, some school directors and DOE staff who heard informally about A/L have asked for details of the programme and organised training for themselves without outside support.

Teaching two grades separately in the same classroom (rather than two grades together at an accelerated rate) was clearly well within the capacity of a number of trained MGT teachers in Otdar Meanchey and Stung Treng who had been doing it for some years. There are schools in very rural areas of Otdar Meanchey, for example, where MGT has been practised for three years and seems well established. Sambour Meas primary school has two MGT classes (grades 2&3 and 4&5). There is no grade 6 in the school. Students continue in a sister school 3kilometres away, a system which works well, according to the principal, as relations between the two schools are close and the children are old enough to cope with the short distance. None drop out.

This kind of flexibility suggests a capacity to find ways of solving problems locally. With training and small class sizes the only difficulty for many MGT teachers was the need for planning to suit the available time. Teachers who had not prepared to teach MGT classes, and were pressed into these programmes in response to the stricter application of norms after the start of the year understandably felt unable to cope.

However it is not clear why some trained, prepared and experienced teachers should find MGT teaching as demanding as they claimed, especially since the programme attracts a 60% incentive payment. In Stung Treng the overwhelming assessment was that MGT is an unsatisfactory system.

Equally it is hard to explain the different reactions to their assignments from teachers in quite similar circumstances. Why should a teacher in an A/L class close to a town centre that had dwindled to a manageable dozen students be so discouraged, while a rural area counterpart suddenly obliged to teach over 50 students in the same class, half of them grades 1 and 2 A/L and half normal grade 1, with no incentive payment should remain motivated and effective. School, district and POE leadership may be involved. A teacher in Stung Treng suggested that “encouragement and praise are better than additional payments”.

It is hard to institutionalise these things, but a professional commitment to the children in the community was one striking component of the most positive schools in Kg Speu and Prey Veng provinces. Teachers know their communities and are aware of providing a service to the families there. In Toul Sompan primary school (Preah Sdach district of Prey Veng the principal has the teacher’s name and telephone number on a board outside each class, “so that parents can call the teacher if they find she is not in school”.

“Participation by children, families and communities” is the 5th Dimension of the CFS programme, and this participation seems to be a strong characteristic of a positive school environment. No doubt some guidance and support from POE and DOE staff can help to introduce this, but ultimately it depends on the principal and teachers in the school to foster good relations with parents and community leaders. In many schools this is exactly what happens and leads to local solutions being developed for local problems. In this sense programmes like MGT and A/L are organic and sustainable and rely only minimally on outside intervention. To achieve this situation the CFS materials can provide some ideas, but can also appear daunting and almost present a barrier if they are seen as programmes that must be followed in every detail.

RECOMMENDATION 11

- a. Determine the demand for the programmes more precisely to ensure that the response is proportionate and affordable in the long run.
- b. Support community monitoring and local flexibility rather than externally imposed manuals.

d. Curriculum & Standards Training

This final section of the evaluation findings considers the teaching of the curriculum and standards as elements of sustainable MGT and A/L programmes.

TTD plans to spend a major portion of its FTI allocation (5003.8m riels) on training and implementation of the Basic Education Curriculum and Standards this year. This is apart from the printing of documents and monitoring activities undertaken by other departments (19,086 and 3,845m riels respectively). If these activities are to represent value for money they should have a substantial impact on teaching and student performance across all programmes. However they need to be implemented with an emphasis on results, i.e. measurement of students achieving the expected standards.

The 2006 Basic Education Curriculum and the Student Achievement Standards (Curriculum Standards) were approved for distribution by MoEYS in 2006, printed and sent to all schools by mid 2007. The development of the A/L and MGT materials overlapped this distribution and the current programme materials are based on the old textbooks, now slowly being replaced, and the 1996 curriculum. Teachers still teach the (old) textbook, and are normally still assessed in terms of their ability to do this. There is, consequently, a built-in problem in teaching MGT classes if the objective is seen as completing the textbooks for both grades. Twice as many pages have to be taught in one year because there are two grades in the class! A/L programmes are released from this obligation by the separate programme materials, which act like a textbook, solving the problem of pacing and planning for the teacher. But the problem of achieving a common standard across all programmes remains.

From school visits and in discussion with POE and DOE staff there is still no explicit link between current school programmes and the Standards. Awareness of the 2006 Curriculum and the Student Achievement or Curriculum Standards at POE and DOE level was minimal, and while the Standards posters were displayed in some schools, they were not claimed to be in use and no connection was made to the A/L or MGT programmes. They were not even used as a measure of quality in regular classes according to the respondents.

The Standards are able to provide a guide for teachers and principals to the student achievement they should be aiming for in MGT, A/L and regular classes. They could also help parents to understand what their children are learning to do. As the principal of Pii Tnuu School (Phnom Sruich district, Kg Speu) said, parents still have little interest or understanding of education quality. They often had very little education themselves and rarely look at or sign their children's exercise books, as they should. Helping them to understand what their children are learning will benefit the children and the school, but it requires some effort. The Standards are presented on a simple poster summarising the 6 or 8 major achievements by subject area to be aimed at by the end of grades 3, 6 and 9.

In addition, using these Standards would make it possible to compare performance of students in regular, MGT and A/L programmes. Without this it is not possible to judge the effectiveness of spending on training programmes or the success of special programmes such as MGT or A/L.

Student "performance" doesn't have to be a very technical thing. Being able to read and write confidently by the start of grade 4 is an essential target for all students. The 2004 Curriculum/Student Achievement Standards have the following minimum goals for all students by the end of grade 3:

Figure 1 Extract from Student Achievement Standards – Khmer

READING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read aloud the letters of the alphabet and use knowledge of sound-letter relationships to assist in reading new words. • Read consonant clusters accurately. • Read high frequency, familiar words correctly at sight.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use strategies including context and sound analysis to read and understand simple introduced words.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately explain the meaning of common signs including road safety signs, warning signs and information posters.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify simple examples of and read and comprehend different text types including short stories, picture labels and captions, information notices and poetry.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predict developments and describe the important details of simple narrative texts by answering what, who, where, when, why and how questions.

WRITING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write the letters of the alphabet in simple form clearly and neatly.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write accurately from dictation short texts that include familiar and introduced two-syllable words in simple sentences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select appropriate word usage in simple sentences with missing words.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan, identify the purpose and write simple paragraphs of at least three related sentences about familiar people, places and events.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss and write in groups different endings to incomplete short narratives.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use accurately full stops, text breaks/commas, question marks, apostrophes and exclamation marks.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and use accurately in own writing main word types (nouns, verbs and adjectives).

If children can do all these things they will stand a good chance of being able to progress through the education system. If they can't, they are likely to fail and drop out. All MoEYS policy documents support this strategy for guiding performance, and yet it is not yet used in schools.

The School Self Assessment (SSA) component, a central part of the final CFS Dimension (Programme Support from the Education System), attempts to institutionalise reporting on children's performance to the local community through a "school report card" or Evaluation Tool. Much of the information on school performance is already collected routinely by the principal every year. Every school has a board with enrolment, progression and drop out numbers, disaggregated to show the performance of girls. What is new in this Dimension is the inclusion of student performance against the Curriculum Standards, and the sharing of this information with the community. The relevant page from the report is shown as Annex 7.

From observations, implementation of CFS has not yet reached this point of development. In addition, before thinking of sharing information on performance with parents, there is currently little sense of school performance on the part of principals and teachers internally. In schools where this is emerging there is a sense of purpose and accountability. On field visits, no school principal reported the number of students achieving a standard, but several teachers and principals asserted with some pride that no students dropped out of their classes. References to standard learning achievement must surely be the next step in linking all school programmes to a national standard in the most basic of skills.

RECOMMENDATION 12

- a. Ensure that all teaching programmes refer to student achievements such as whether or not children can read and write.
- b. Implement the SSA components of the CFS programme to strengthen local accountability and community participation.

CONCLUSION

The two “special” programmes A/L and MGT are being implemented with varying degrees of success in the 4 provinces visited, and others. Success seems largely to be related to the provision of inputs such as training and materials, and to the fact that, in the case of A/L, enrolments point to demand being satisfied.

While the need for A/L may eventually be eliminated as average children pass through the education system and right age enrolment becomes the norm, it is likely that there will always be a need for MGT programmes in rural schools with small student numbers. This needs greater recognition now that the Ministry is increasingly turning its attention to the needs of students and policy areas, which have not had as strong a focus in the past. A vehicle for this renewed focus could be the revision of the CFS Master Plan.

Currently A/L classes appear to operate successfully. Some MGT schools also run their programmes smoothly. In others MGT is clearly seen as a problem and, in line with weak performance in general, schools are not making a success of teaching the programme.

Data on the size of the programmes is not easily accessible at central level (though it is collected). At sub-national levels it is reasonably good for the A/L programme, but not yet satisfactory for MGT. This impacts capacity to support both in a proportionate and sustainable manner.

Much more attention to meeting and reporting on basic standards of achievement in all programmes is needed. Without this it is impossible to say whether money on training and support is being well-spent and whether programmes (including regular classes) are successful.