

KAMPUCHEAN ACTION FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION

Situation Analysis: Four Studies in Dropout and Retention in Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia



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ABSTRACT

It is general good practice as well as common sense that before beginning any new education development project, the implementing agency – local or international, state-run or non-governmental – should assess local needs and the local context. Without solid grounding in the desire, motivations, and background of the stakeholders themselves, education projects that aim to affect behavior or attitudes will be at best, inefficient, and at worst, counter-productive. This report is an example of research undertaken by a local NGO to inform a pilot project to improve access and quality of education to vulnerable children in one district in Kampong Cham Province, Cambodia. The research includes four areas of inquiry, listed below, and is intended to be both an example of good practice for those implementing new education projects in Cambodia, as well as a working reference to guide stakeholders and NGO practitioners designing the menu of interventions in the district.

- *Girls' and Boys' Motivation to Attend School*
- *Student Dropout and Impact of Labor Demands on Enrollment*
- *Relevant Areas for Life Skills Education for Girls and Boys*
- *Culturally-mediated Impediments to Educational Access for Girls*

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Country Profile

Socioeconomic Environment		
Total Population (000)	13,091	2004
GDP per capita (US \$)	297	2002
Gross Domestic Product (billions USD)	3.9	2002
Occupation Classification: Agriculture	0.74	2004
Occupation Classification: Industry	0.07	2004
Occupation Classification: Services	0.19	2004
Education Expenditure (% gov't exp)	18.5	2005
Defense expenditure (% of gov't exp)	37.0	2000
Radio sets per 1,000 population	78	2000
Television sets per 1,000 population	60	2000
Average Household Size	5.1	2004
Life Expectancy at birth	57.4	2001
% child labor force (as a % children 10-14)	11.9	1998
Official development (% of GNP)	11.9	1998
Female employment rate (%)	97.2	2000
Male employment rate (%)	97.9	2000
Debt service (% of exports)	1	1998
Education Indicators		
National NER (primary level)	0.913	2006
NER for females (primary level)	0.897	2006
National NER (lower secondary)	0.313	2006
NER for females (lower secondary)	0.304	2006
Total Primary School Repetition Rate	0.139	2006
Female Primary School Repetition Rate	0.124	2006
Total Primary Survival Rate (Grades 1-6)	0.526	2006
Female Primary Survival Rate (Grades 1-6)	0.518	2006
Total Transition Rate to Lower Secondary	0.806	2006
Female Transition Rate to Lower Second.	0.787	2006
Total Primary Schools	6,277	2006
Total Lower Secondary Schools	670	2006
Total Primary School Enrollment (000)	2,558	2006
Total LSS Enrollment (000)	310	2006
Pupil Teacher Ratio (Primary)	50.8	2006
Pupil Class Ratio (Primary)	41.3	2006
Total Primary School Teachers	50,378	2006
Total Primary Classes	61,901	2006
Teacher-Class Gap (Primary)	11,523	2006
Gender Parity Index for Primary enrollment	0.90	2006
Gender Parity Index for LSS Enrollment	0.82	2006

Historical Background

An estimated 2 million people (out of a prewar population of 7.5 million) were killed during the genocidal Khmer Rouge period, 1975-79. Civil War was ended in 1991 with the Paris Peace Accords. The international community spent an estimated \$1.8 billion to organize national elections in 1993. A new constitution was proclaimed later that year after free and fair elections and continues to the present day. Parliamentary elections have since occurred in 1998 and 2003 with the next election scheduled for 2008. The former socialist party that expelled the Khmer Rouge (known as the Cambodian People's Party or CPP) is currently the majority party ruling in coalition with the Royalists (FUNCINPEC).

Education System

Basic education comprises Grades 1-9. Upper secondary extends from Grades 10-12. The education system was virtually destroyed during the Khmer Rouge era. The 1980s saw a period of reconstruction followed by major supply-side investments (e.g., infrastructure, textbooks) in the 1990s. Efficiency indicators nevertheless remained static during this period. The first decade of the 21st century inaugurated a pro-poor educational reform movement that incorporated many demand-side interventions to complement supply-side ones (e.g., school breakfasts, scholarships, etc). Access indicators have improved markedly since then but quality remains very low and textbook and teacher shortages have recently emerged as major and intractable problems.

Economy

Destroyed by decades of war, civil strife, political instability, and economic depletion, infrastructure, human capital, and social services are slowly being rebuilt. GDP increased from \$US 1.9 billion in 1991 to \$US 3.9 billion in 2002. Nevertheless, an estimated 38% of households still live below the poverty line.

MAP OF CAMBODIA



1. INTRODUCTION

This research has been undertaken by Kampuchean Action for Primary Education (KAPE), a local education NGO, with support from Plan International Cambodia and Plan International Australia in order to inform pilot interventions for the REACH project, which is intended to assist vulnerable children, particularly girls and minority groups, to improve their life choices and livelihood options by increasing their chances of staying in school or accessing other educational opportunities. The results of this report will be presented to stakeholders, namely school directors, teachers, and district and provincial education officials, to help them design a series of programs in their own schools.

Over the past twenty years, Cambodia has made major strides towards achieving equitable access to education. Reforms over the past eight years have led to dramatic increases in net enrollment, particularly among the poorest quintile of the population¹. However, net enrollment levels in the primary education sector have been relatively static at about 90% for the last several years and it is believed that the 10% of the school-going age population still not in school primarily comprises minority groups, children in remote areas, and migrant children. Furthermore, it is generally accepted that efforts to improve educational quality have shown disappointing results (e.g., Wheeler, 1998; Bredenberg, 2004; Bernard, 2005).

A number of complex supply and demand-side factors contribute to the remaining barriers to access, as well as poor instructional quality² and these complex factors require a complex set of interventions, relevant to the local context. There is no one “magic bullet” to solve educational challenges in Cambodia; and one must understand local needs, strengths, priorities, and attitudes to diagnose and treat issues in an area.

To that end, the four research inquiries in this study seek to understand factors relating to educational access and quality in the Dambae District of Kampong Cham in order to inform the community's efforts towards more effective and relevant change. KAPE also hopes that this research will be an example of good practice for donors and implementing organizations who would like to develop new programs or expand existing programs to new regions.

The report will begin by discussing various aspects of the research scope and design. It will go on to give some background information about the local context. Next, the research findings will be presented and summarized for each study. Finally, the report will present recommendations on the general types of interventions that stakeholders should consider given the findings about the current educational issues in Dambae, as well as a short reflection on the research process and suggestions for improvement in the researchers' own practice.

2. FOCUS AND SCOPE

This research was undertaken with the goal to inform the project design for REACH over the next four years, as

¹ Pro-poor policies have mainly taken the form of changes in financing of state schools including the provision of operating budgets, which have enabled the abolition of school fees, and the introduction of need-based scholarships for vulnerable groups at lower secondary school level. MoEYS has also worked closely with the World Food Program to introduce school breakfast programs in food insecure areas as a means of improving enrollment.

² Prominent supply-side factors impeding participation rates in Cambodia's educational system include (i) chronic teacher shortages; (ii) pervasiveness of incomplete schools; (iii) low educational relevance and quality; (iv) physical constraints in educational provision; (v) poor living and working conditions among teachers; and (vi) exclusionary ‘push-out’ factors. The latter of these refers in particular to low sensitivity to the needs of girls, ethnic minorities, and disabled children. Important demand-side factors include (i) restrictive school access due to direct costs; (ii) exclusionary ‘pull-out factors’ due to the lower perceived value of education in comparison to income generating activities; and (iii) socio-economic ‘pull-out’ factors relating to such problems as opportunity costs, morning hunger among poor children, and other financial factors.

well as provide a structured set of insights to policy makers and staff on a local and national level to better understand the main educational challenges of a particular district. The attitudes and indicators measured in the surveys can also serve as a baseline by which to judge incremental improvements effected by the project. Finally, the researchers strongly believe that it is valuable and necessary to seek information and input from local stakeholders to inform local project objectives and design, and we hope that this research report will be a positive example for other agencies undertaking similar projects as well as an opportunity to reflect on our own agency's practice.

The study is limited to the Dambae district in Kampong Cham Province, where REACH will initially be implemented. The research, like the proposed project, focuses on students in upper-primary school (mostly grades 5 and 6). Prior research shows that dropout rates for girls accelerate rapidly after Grade 4 because of the perceived need to earn income or work at home³. For that reason, interventions that begin at the point of entry to lower secondary school would only help the children who had managed to reach this grade level whereas students at highest-risk would already have been screened out.

3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

3.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW OF DAMBAE

Table 3.1: Facts about Kampong Cham and Dambae

	Dambae District	Kampong Cham
Total population	71,972	1,783,548
% of population in agriculture	94%	86%
Cham minority (as % of pop)	20%	6%
Out migration (as % of pop)	0.54%	4.3%
Families with thatch-roof house	40%	37%
Literacy rate	80%	82%
Children out of school (6-17)	22%	18%

Source: Dept of Planning, Kampong Cham Province, 2005/2007

Dambae district is located in Kampong Cham province in Northeastern Cambodia. Kampong Cham has the largest population of any province in Cambodia, about 19% of the total population of Cambodia, which offers the potential for large economies to scale for development projects.

The Mekong River splits Kampong Cham province in half. Dambae is located in the northeast of the province, approximately 80 kilometers from the provincial capital. Dambae borders four other districts: Ponya Krek, Tbong Khmum, Krouch Chma, and Memot, and borders Kratie province to the northeast.

Most of the land in Dambae is Mekong river-basin and red soil. With important exceptions, the red soil and Mekong basin areas tend to be the most fertile of all the land in Kampong Cham, so it is unsurprising that 94% of Dambae's population is involved in agriculture. The red soil areas lend themselves particularly well to the cultivation of rubber trees, one of the leading industries in Dambae. These plantations employ a significant proportion of the population in Kampong Cham⁴ and account for a large part of the district-to-district migration (and child labor) that occurs in the province.

Besides the select few wealth who grow rubber, the most common crop is cassava. Dambae is home to a cassava factory, which produces flour from the crops grown by local farmers. Farmers also grow rice, cashew and others crops, though large-scale vegetable farming appears to be less common because of the lack of local markets and the difficulty of transport for perishable goods. Both children and adults from landless families generally go to work on nearby rubber plantations, or in cassava growing or production (especially peeling the cassava root). Children can earn 8000 riel (\$2) per day, and older children and adults more. Perhaps thanks to the abundance of

³ CARE-MoEYS, *Survey on Girls' Education in Cambodia*, Phnom Penh, 1998.

⁴ In all, there are seven large rubber plantations in Kampong Cham that were formerly state-owned but which are now being privatized (though maintaining some element of state control).

fertile land in the district, out-migration to other provinces is low when compared with the provincial average (see Table 3.1).

Recently, Kampong Cham has benefited from better economic integration with the construction of a major bridge spanning the Mekong River in 2001. Situated in the provincial capital, the bridge connects the eastern and western sides of the province. Although the east possesses a majority of the red soil land area, it is considered to be behind in terms of economic development largely because it was cut off until recently from commerce from the western side. Now, districts like Dambae are catching up – factories are being built and new markets are opening to goods.

The construction of tertiary laterite roads by the TRIP project hastened the penetration of the countryside, enabling the expansion of development projects and commerce to previously inaccessible areas. In particular, a new road through Dambae to Kratie province has greatly facilitated local travel; however, TRIP has suspended projects in Dambae and there are still many hard-to-reach areas of the province. For example, Sambo Meas Primary School (a school in the study) is located 6 km from this main road. In normal conditions, these 6 km can take staff up to 40 minutes to traverse in a car. In rainy conditions, the path is only accessible by motorcycle or by foot.

With a preponderance of fertile land and large-scale plantations for fruit, tobacco, and rubber, Kampong Cham has a reputation for being an affluent province. However, a large segment of the population still lives in poverty. As of 2006, 37% of households in Kampong Cham lived in thatch roof houses, a proxy for poverty (Dept of Provincial Planning, 2006); Dambae is reported to have the third highest rate of poverty within the province⁵. Though new statistics are not available, since 2006, researchers have noticed economic growth in the province, evidenced by better conditions for some families and a number of building projects. However, it is not clear to what extent new wealth is distributed versus concentrated in the hands of a few. Furthermore, as the research discussion will show, increasing wealth does not necessarily mean improvement in educational access or quality.

3.2 EDUCATION IN KAMPONG CHAM AND DAMBAE

As the most populated province in the country, Kampong Cham also has the largest number of primary schools (753) and the largest student population in the country⁶ (EMIS, 2006). As of 2006, Dambae district had a total of 48 schools and 19,465 students, or about 5.5% of the total student population in the province.

Recent trends in Kampong Cham and in Dambae mirror national trends: a decrease in primary school Net Enrollment Rates (NER), expansion in NER at lower secondary school level, and spiking repetition rates in primary school. These trends are more serious in Kampong Cham, which is already far below the national average in terms of overall enrollment and worse off in terms of repetition and dropout. For example, NER in Kampong Cham slipped from 91.6% in 2004 to 87.3% in 2005, the most recent year for which data is available. This compares with a national decline from 91.9% to only 91.3%.

The repetition rate in Kampong Cham exceeds the national average by 1.5%, and trends show a steady *increase* in repetition from 2002 to 2006. Similarly, dropout at primary level is reported to be 13.6% in Kampong Cham compared with a rate of 11.7% nationally. In Dambae, dropout is at an abysmal 22.6%, and 24.3% for girls, the worst in Kampong Cham and nearly double the provincial average. It is important to note, however, that dropout levels in upper primary school appear to be dropping from historically high levels earlier in the decade. For example, dropout at Grade 6 in Kampong Cham was reported to be 13.7% in 2005, down from 18.0% three years earlier.

Of the 15 districts in Kampong Cham, Dambae is the only one that appears among the five worst performers for

⁵ World Food Program, *Estimation of Poverty Rates at Commune Level*, Phnom Penh: WFP, 2002.

⁶ Kampong Cham has 352,721 students or 13.1% of the national primary school population.

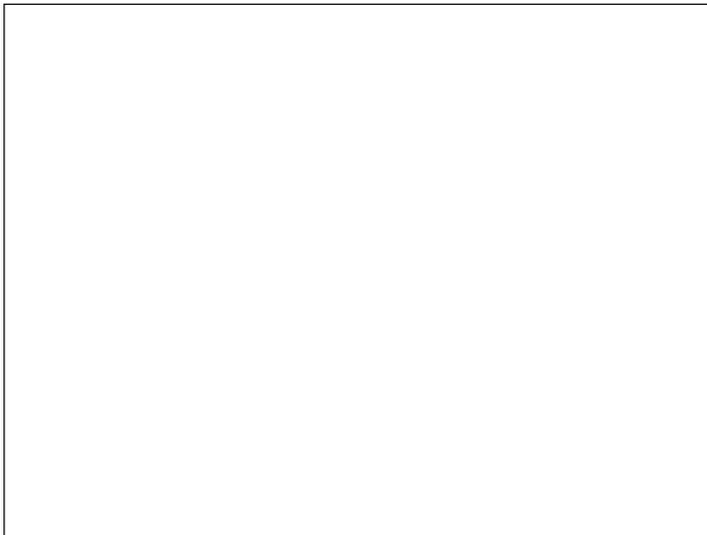
all education efficiency indicators (includes total and female repetition, dropout and net-enrollment levels). At the primary school level in Dambae, one girl in four drops out each year and at lower secondary school level, nearly one in two. Study two discusses in more detail dropout trends in Kampong Cham and Dambae.

3.3 GIRLS EDUCATION IN KAMPONG CHAM AND DAMBAE DISTRICT

Research indicates that girls' education is one of the single most cost-effective investments to improve living standards in the developing world. Girls who have completed lower secondary education or above tend to have smaller and healthier families, higher income, and children who are less likely to repeat. At national level in Cambodia, however, there continues to be many problems with educational opportunities for girls, particularly at the upper primary and lower secondary school levels. According to the most recent publication of government statistics (2005-2006), girls have not yet achieved parity with boys for enrollment at any level (EMIS)⁷. The government reports that 93.0% of boys aged between 6 and 11 years old are now enrolled in primary school compared with 89.7% among girls and although net enrollment levels (NER) drops precipitously for both sexes at lower secondary school level, it is worse among girls. National dropout levels among girls are also higher for girls than boys⁸.

In Kampong Cham Province, rates of participation among children and particularly girls are worse than the national average. As noted, the province saw a decline in rates of participation in the basic education cycle over the past several years despite significant government investment⁹. For girls, there was a slip from 89.1% to 83.6% during the same period. Although participation rates at lower secondary school level are still increasing, due largely to support of scholarship programs by NGOs, rates of increase have been slower than at national level. Only one girl in five who starts first grade actually makes it to lower secondary school level, compared to one in three at national level.

3.4 CHAMS IN KAMPONG CHAM AND DAMBAE DISTRICT



The Chams are one of Cambodia's largest ethnic groups and are distinguished from ethnic Khmers by their religion (Islam) and by the language they speak. They are most heavily concentrated in Kampong Cham Province where they began settling in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries¹⁰ but also live in Kandal, Kampong Chhnang, and Takeo Provinces. It is estimated that there are about 500,000 people of Cham ethnicity in Cambodia comprising about 5% of the country's population (Ing-Britt and Ovesen, 2004).

As noted, Kampong Cham Province has one of the largest concentrations of Cham people in the entire country, where they comprise 8% of the total population. Dambae district has the second highest concentration of Cham of all the districts in Kam-

⁷At primary school level, the gender parity index for enrollment is still only 0.89 dropping to 0.77 at lower secondary school level (an index of 1.0 indicates parity).

⁸ 12.1% for primary school (11.4% for boys) and 23.5% at lower secondary school level (21.4% for boys)

⁹ For example, primary level NER in the province has slipped from 91.6% in 2002 to 87.3% in 2005/6.

¹⁰The Chams originally lived in an Indianized kingdom called Champa in central Vietnam and eventually moved to Cambodia in a number of successive migrations where they formed a very close relationship with the Cambodian royal family.

pong Cham at 20% of the total population, second only to Krouchma (Kampong Cham Dept of Planning, 2004). Dambae is home to five mosques and three Islamic schools (Kampong Cham Dept of Religion and Cults 2008). The three schools serve 2,673 students which is 14% of the total number of students in the state system in Dambae. There are 39 tuans, or teachers, in the Islamic schools, five of whom are women. Though official statistics do not report how many students in Islamic schools also attend state schools, a previous study by KAPE showed that 4 of ten schools reported that *all* their children also attended state school; 2 reported that *most* attended and the other 4 reported that *half or less than half* attended state schools (2007).

The issue of the minority status of Cham Muslims is highly sensitive matter in contemporary Cambodian society. The government officially defines the Cham Muslims as a religious minority but not an ethnic minority. That is, they are simply Khmers who practice Islam. When speaking Khmer, it is considered politically incorrect to refer to the Chams as such, though this usage is generally accepted in English. Rather, when referring to the Chams in formal settings or in official documents, it is customary to use *Khmer Islam*.

The same KAPE study cited above showed that many Chams in Kampong Cham appear to endorse the status quo themselves¹¹ and would rather not differentiate themselves ethnically from the majority Khmers. However, the same report went on to explain that the Cham community in Kampong Cham believed their cultural heritage to be unique and important and often lived in separate villages than the Khmer majority¹². The study concluded that though the Chams in Kampong Cham would like to be seen as assimilating into Cambodian society, they also maintain a separate cultural heritage and language that distinguishes them from the majority¹³.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

4.1 DATA COLLECTION

4.1.1 Primary Data

The data collection instruments and methodology were designed by KAPE with feedback from Plan Australia and Plan Cambodia to get both a quantitative and qualitative view of education at three schools in Dambae from the perspective of school staff, teachers, current and former students, and their parents. To that end, the study used 8 data collection tools targeting each of these groups through interviews, surveys, and focus groups (see Table 4.1 below for details). Besides these 8 main tools, the REACH team collaborated with staff from the CFSRA project¹⁴ to collect information for study 4¹⁵.

¹¹ When asked how different Chams and Khmers are in general, 97% of Cham community respondents in a 2007 survey by KAPE responded that they are only “a little different” or “not very different.” When asked how they wished to be designated as a social group, 92% endorsed the politically correct usage, Khmer Islam though, ominously, no one endorsed the designation of Cambodian or Khmer (KAPE 2007).

¹² For example, everyone in the sample indicated that their Cham cultural heritage was either “important” or “very important” to them. Similarly, 89% indicated that they preferred to speak the Cham language at home, though most were fluent in Khmer. Finally, almost two-thirds of respondents (64%) indicated that they lived in villages that were exclusively Cham while about 35% reported that they lived in a village that was mixed in terms of its ethnic composition (KAPE, 2007).

¹³ The above findings echo a similar assessment by Collins in which he notes that many Chams feel insecure living 'in someone else's house' (i.e., in a country dominated by ethnic Khmer) and feel that they have to be deferential to their 'hosts' (1996). At the same time, there is a fear of losing one's cultural identity. He notes that many Chams have turned to Islam as a means to buttress the distinction between themselves and the ethnic Khmer.

¹⁴ Child friendly schools in remote areas (CFSRA) is another project administered by KAPE and sponsored by Plan Cambodia in Dambae province.

¹⁵ This included a short teacher survey on language proficiency among Cham students in Dambae, as well information from the school director in Veal Touch school on student dropout and repetition rates. Of the teachers selected for the language survey, the majority taught grades one and two; some taught grades 5 and 6. Researchers expected the most pronounced

The research was generally limited to three schools in Dambae, which had been selected as pilot schools for the REACH project – Veal Touch, Samboo Meas and Charthmei. The research for study 4, to do with Cham minority students, included six schools in Dambae. Veal Touch was one of this group, but Charthmei and Samboo Meas were excluded as they do not have any Cham students. As explained previously, data collection focused on upper-primary school, in part because dropout rates tend to increase in grades 5 and 6, and in part because researchers assumed student informants in these grades could read and write and would be more likely to be able to share their opinions.

Student informants were originally selected at random from grades 5 and 6; however, because many students were absent, and many out-of-school students were unreachable even after 2-3 attempts, some substitutions were made. The survey and the focus groups for students-in-school took place simultaneously, so a different group of students participated in each. Rather than select parents at random, researchers interviewed the parents of the children already involved in the research¹⁶. Teachers were selected at random at Charthmei school, but in Samboo Meas and Veal Touch, there were only 5-6 teachers, so they were all included. All three school directors were interviewed.

The KAPE research team collected data in March 2008. The main team consisted of four main members, 2 male, 2 female, all Khmer. Other experienced staff also participated when extra help was necessary. Surveys, interviews, observations and focus groups for students-in-school, teachers, and directors all took place at school. Interviews for students-out-of-school and all parents took place at home, or at the place of employment (generally out in the field). The surveys and focus groups for students-in-school and interviews for teachers and directors took place simultaneously at each school. There were private areas set up for the director, the teachers, the students in the survey, and the focus group. One researcher administered the student survey, two facilitated and recorded observations from the focus group, one conducted teacher interviews, and one conducted interviews with the director. For interviews with students out-of-school and their parents, two researchers went together. In each meeting, one researcher interviewed the student, while the other interviewed the parent out-of-earshot so that they could both have privacy responding.

The research team encountered some significant challenges in the data collection process. To start, the timeline for research activities was especially tight, so activities were planned to be as efficient as possible. Though school directors agreed to a date for interviews and surveys at school, on the appointed day, more than half of the students were absent which meant that researchers were required to select new students to replace the missing group. Researchers faced other challenges as well, including:

- Many students had trouble writing during the student survey, which meant that the form took over 2 hours to complete rather than the expected half-hour.
- During the focus group, boys tended to be more vocal than girls, despite facilitators' attempts to include everyone in the discussion.
- Researchers spent many hours searching for parents and students out-of-school, and sometimes could not locate them at all. Some families were not at home, even after 2 or 3 attempts. Some had migrated to other districts.
- Even when researchers were able to make an appointment with parents, informants often did not show up.
- Some parents did not want to interrupt their work to participate

issues with language proficiency to occur in the lower grades, and were also interested in challenges faced by students as they got ready to transition to lower secondary school.

¹⁶

All parents of children in the study were interviewed except the parents of students in the focus groups and parent/guardians who could not be located after multiple attempts.

Table 4.1: Primary Data Collection Tools

Study	Source	Data Collection Instrument	No. of Participants (total/female)	Details
1, 2, 3	Students in school	Self-administered questionnaire	50p/26p Charthmei: 18P/12P Sambo Meas:15p/11p Veal Touch: 17p/3p	-- random selection -- 5 th and 6 th grade
1, 2, 3	Students in school	Focus group – researcher observation notes	30p/17p Charthmei: 10P/6P Sambo Meas:10p/6p Veal Touch: 10p/5p	-- random selection (different students from survey) -- 10 students/school -- 5 th and 6 th grade
1, 2, 3	Students out of school	Interview	23p/14p Charthmei: 4P/3P Sambo Meas:9p/7p Veal Touch: 10p/4p	-- random selection from list of dropouts -- one-on-one at home
1, 2, 3, 4	Parents in school	Interview	Total: 50p/27 Charthmei: 15P/10P Sambo Meas:20p/7p Veal Touch: 15p/10p	-- parents of students surveyed -- interviewed at home
1, 2, 3, 4	Parents of students out of school	Interview	20p/14p Charthmei: 6P/5P Sambo Meas:8p/5p Veal Touch: 6p/4p	-- parents of students interviewed -- one-on-one at home
1, 2, 3,	Teachers	Interview	20p/6p Charthmei: 9P/5P Sambo Meas:5p/0p Veal Touch: 6p/1p	-- all teachers in Sambo Meas/Veal Touch -- 9 teachers in Charthmei
1, 2, 3	Teachers	Classroom observation	19p/6p Charthmei: 8P/5P Sambo Meas:6p/0p Veal Touch: 5p/1p	-- same teachers interviewed -- 45 minutes of observation
1, 2, 3, 4	Director	Interview	3p/0p Charthmei: 1P/0P Sambo Meas:1p/0p Veal Touch: 1p/0p	-- all three school directors interviewed
4	Teachers – Veal Touch + 5 other Dambae schools	Interview (about student language proficiency)	20p	-- chosen from grades 1, 2, 5, and 6 -- no Cham teachers included because no Cham teachers at these schools
4	Director (Veal Touch)	Data form	N/A	-- student names, ethnicity, exam performance and status (drop, repeat, pass) -- except for ethnicity, information is data generally recorded by the school director.

See Appendix for all data collection instruments

4.1.2 Secondary Data

The main secondary sources used for this study were a study on Khmer language proficiency among Cham children conducted by the ESCUP project in 2006 and an Educational Needs Assessment of Cham and Migrant populations undertaken by KAPE in 2007. Both studies employed a combination of interviews, focus groups and surveys to collect their research and a concerted effort was made to ensure that those conducting the interviews and large group discussions were themselves of Cham ethnicity so that there would be a maximum level of openness in answering questions, particularly with respect to those questions that pertained to attitudes towards individuals of Khmer ethnicity.

For study 3, we also looked at data from school self-assessment forms provided by KAPE's CFSRA project, described above. The 12 schools surveyed are also in Dambae District. The forms help schools measure themselves across six "Child Friendly School" (CFS) dimensions. Our research was particularly interested in dimension 2 which covers teaching and learning practices.

In addition to these two sources, this report is also informed by government statistical profiles of Kampong Cham Province and the education system as well as seminal research tracts on the Cham community in Cambodia¹⁷

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

All the data from the focus groups, surveys, and interviews was aggregated. The team worked together to code the qualitative questions, which tended to have straightforward and similar responses across informants. Questions with more detailed or unique responses were noted for follow-up. After entering the data, simple percentage tabulations were calculated.

In order to get a very basic understanding of the factors surrounding motivation to attend school, dropout, ethnicity, and gender the researchers then undertook some simple correlational analysis. Depending on whether the variables being considered were interval variables (like age, or rate of attendance) or nominal variables (like male/female), both Pearson's correlation coefficient and Chi-squared were used respectively. A few key relationships were considered, including:

- Student dropout status and student attitudes, behaviors and characteristics
- Student dropout status and parent attitudes, behaviors and characteristics
- Student gender and student attitudes, behaviors and characteristics
- Students' level of motivation to attend school and student attitudes, behaviors and characteristics
- Students' ethnicity and students dropout status and class rank

After the quantitative analysis was complete, the findings were re-sorted into themes for the four studies, then researchers turned back to the qualitative data for a "sanity check" and to fill in the blanks. Students', parents', teachers', and directors' comments were added to the quantitative data under each theme. Then, the aggregation of both the quantitative information and qualitative details were used to shape the four case studies.

5. STUDY 1: GIRLS' AND BOYS' MOTIVATION TO ATTEND SCHOOL

The first study in this research project attempted to understand how motivated students are to attend school in

¹⁷ Among government documents, the Statistical Yearbooks for the education sector that are prepared each year by the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) have been essential for basic information on education indicators. Another important study in the area of Cham ethnic groups is an anthropological tract compiled by William Collins in 1996 entitled, *The Chams of Cambodia*. This study is widely recognized by many anthropologists as the most comprehensive study of the Chams in recent times.

Dambae, and what factors affect this motivation. To answer this question, the research looked at students' expectations for school and for their future, students' occupational goals, and the prevalence of gender-fixed behaviors against three main measures of student motivation – (1) attendance, (2) a student's desire to continue school, and (3) a student's expectation that he or she would be able to continue school. For the most part, we used information given by students themselves as the basis for correlational analysis on the relationship between students' self-reported level of motivation and their self-reported attitudes and behaviors¹⁸.

5.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question in the study summarizes the research objectives above:

Primary Research Question: How motivated are children to attend school and what factors affect this motivation?

Researchers previous experience working in Kampong Cham and their knowledge of Dambae district suggested some specific areas of inquiry with regards to the different factors that might affect student motivation. Hence the auxiliary questions, which narrow the focus of the research:

Research Question 2: Does there exist severe treatment of children both in school and at home, which selectively impacts girls' motivation to attend school more than that of boys?

Research Question 3: What are children's general expectations of life in general and school in particular and do these differ among boys and girls?

Research Question 4: Are children failure oriented or success-oriented (both in academic and non-academic aspects of their lives)?

Research Question 5: To what extent do children have occupational goals and what factors (e.g., role models, the availability of specialist support for remediation, career counseling, etc) affect the formation of these goals?

5.2 RESEARCH VARIABLES AND SAMPLING

Table 5.1 below shows the eight research variables considered in this study, the scope and source for each. As noted above, the study relied heavily on the survey of students-in-school, but also included information from other data-collection tools as relevant.

Table 5.1: Study 1, Research Variables and Sources for Data

Variable	Scope	Source
A1. Children's motivation to attend school (with focus on degree)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews
B1. The prevalence of severe treatment in and out-of-school that impacts on motivation among boys and girls	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews; teacher interviews
C1. Influence of Role Models	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school

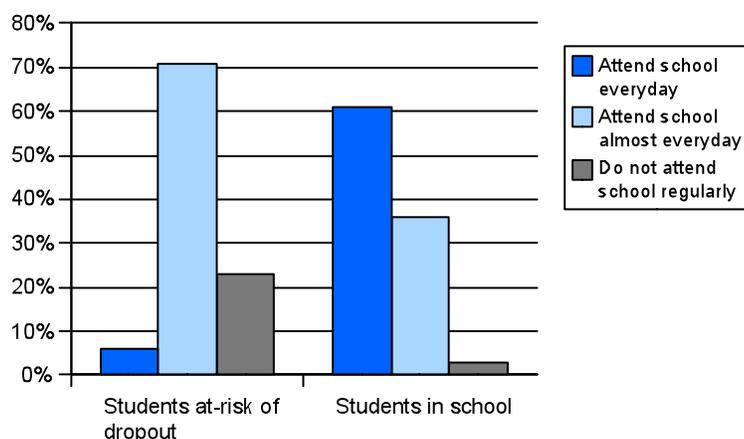
¹⁸ Where possible, we also looked at the relationship between dropout and student attitudes. Finally, where it made sense (for example, when we wanted to judge the relationship between parent attitudes toward education and students' motivation), we looked at student attendance (as reported by parents) against parent opinions.

D1. Perception of Success, both academic and otherwise	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school
E1. Indirect/Direct Costs of Education	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews
F1. Perception of gender roles among children, school personnel, and parents	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews; teacher interviews
G1. Gender-fixed behaviors among children	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews; teacher interviews; teacher observations; director interviews
H1. Children's expectations of school (and perceived differences between boys and girls)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school
I1. Children's occupational goals (and perceived differences between boys and girls)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Survey of students-in-school; interviews with students-out-of-school

5.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.3.1 Student Motivation -- Attendance and Engagement

Chart 5.1: Attendance of students at-risk v. students in school



In general, 42% of the students in school who were surveyed said that they attend school everyday. 48% reported that they go to school almost everyday, and 10% don't go regularly. Parents responded similarly. Both classroom observations and teacher interviews confirm low-levels of attendance, though teachers tended to report higher levels of attendance than researchers observed.

January stands out as the month when the most students tend to be absent, according to parent interviews, and rates tend to steady out again in April. This is unsurprising given that December and January are the main seasons for the cassava harvest.

There are no significant differences in self-reported attendance rates between boys and girls in any of the schools or in recorded attendance. Unsurprisingly, though, students who don't attend school regularly are more likely to be at-risk for dropout after primary school¹⁹ ($\chi^2(2, N=50) = 15.45, p < .05$), which is illustrated in Chart 5.1 above. Of students who are at-risk of dropout, only 5% attend school regularly. It is unclear whether low attendance causes dropout or that the same factors which cause low attendance also cause dropout, but it's highly likely that both are the case.

School	All students engaged and participating	Most students engaged; some not	Half or fewer are engaged
Samboo Meas	33%	17%	70%
Veal Touch	0%	20%	80%
Charthmei	29%	0%	71%

As noted in Table 5.2, when students were actually in school, researchers observed that in over 70% of classrooms (80% in Veal Touch), only half or less than half of the students were engaged in the lesson. This is cer-

¹⁹

“Risk of dropout” is determined by whether a student indicates that he/she only expects to complete primary school.

tainly a cause for concern; however, as will be discussed in the next section, even if we could infer teaching quality from this data, the data shows that teaching quality by itself is not correlated with our measures of student motivation or on dropout, possibly because students face more pressing issues (e.g. whether or not a teacher is present at all).

5.3.2 Student Motivation -- Desire and Expectations to Continue School

Chart 5.2: Students' desire versus expectation for continuing school

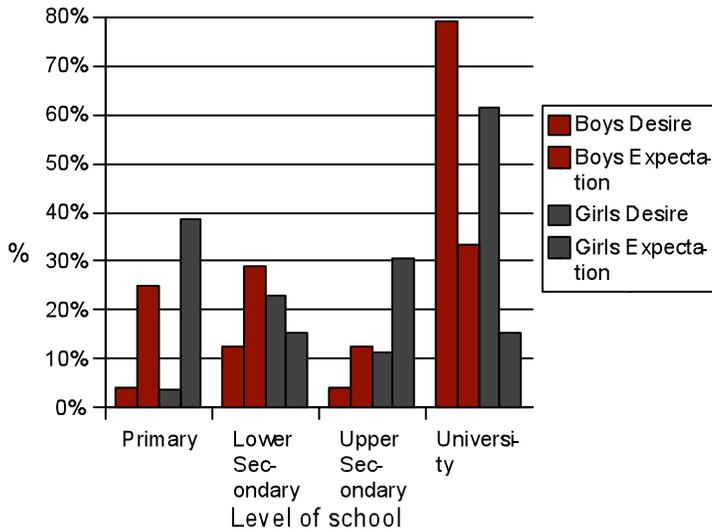


Chart 5.2 shows that the majority of students, both boys and girls *hope* to continue school until the university level²⁰. However, a majority of both boys and girls only *expect* to reach primary or lower secondary school. The average difference between students' desire to study and students' expectations is almost one complete level (0.92 of a level), which means that on average, students who want to finish university only expect to finish upper secondary school and those who hope to finish lower secondary school only expect to finish primary school. Again, there is no significant relationship between a students' gender and the gap between their hopes and expectations for staying in school.

Of those students who believed they wouldn't continue school as long as they hoped, 58% explained it was because they were poor, and many specifically mentioned having no money for remediation. Among all 5th and 6th graders surveyed, 62% are already paying for extra lessons to improve their weakest subject and 98% said they would participate in remediation if such a program were free.

veyed, 62% are already paying for extra lessons to improve their weakest subject and 98% said they would participate in remediation if such a program were free.

5.3.3 School quality, educational relevance and general attitudes towards school

The research looked at school quality and relevance of the curriculum from a variety of perspectives, asking the students themselves, asking parents, asking teachers, and actually observing in the classroom. Overall, findings suggested that school cleanliness, teacher quality, and students' beliefs about school relevance *do not have any statistical relationship* with student attendance or students' hopes and expectations for staying in school. However, the research did uncover an even more basic problem: excessive teacher absences.

Table 5.3: Students' attitude toward attending school
(Pearson correlation coefficients, $p < 0.5$)

	Picked school in the top 3 favorite activities		Student feels happy when in school	
	M	F	M	F
Desire to study	-0.06	N/A	-0.37	0.31
Expect to study	0.26	N/A	-0.12	0.49
Attendance	0.14	0	-0.04	0.14

Students' general attitude toward school varied across the three schools. In Charthmei, all students surveyed picked school as one of their top three favorite activities, compared to 94% of students in Samboo Meas and 69% of students at Veal Touch. Across all three schools, 36% of students said they always feel happy at school; 60% said they feel happy "sometimes" and 4% "never" feel happy. Happiness was not significantly different between the three schools. In general, girls were

²⁰

There was no significant difference between boys' and girls' stated desires to continue in school.

more likely than boys to pick school as one of their top three favorite activities ($\chi^2(1, N=50) = 7.39, p < .05$), but were no more likely to feel happy at school. Interestingly, as shown in Table 5.3, girls who feel happy in school are more likely to *believe* that they'll continue in school for longer than girls who are less happy, but the same relationship doesn't hold for boys.

Similarly, if a parent thinks her child is happier, he or she is more likely to also *believe* that the student will be able to stay in school longer ($r(71)=0.24, p < .05$), but not any more or less likely to *want* the student will stay in school longer. Attendance levels (as reported by parents) are also positively related to how happy parents believe their children to be ($r(71)=0.36, p < 0.5$).

Researchers scored the physical condition of the three schools surveyed and the general classroom environment in each and found that conditions varied quite a bit from school to school. These physical differences from school to school are tangible reminders of the importance of developing interventions that fit the school context and allowing stakeholders (in this case school directors, teachers, students, and community members) to participate in the selection of the most relevant programs for the given context.

As can be seen in Tables 5.4 and 5.5 below, in terms of basic appearance and cleanliness, Samboo Meas appears to be the best of the three schools, but Charthmei appears to be doing the most in terms of creating a positive environment for learning. Veal Touch scores the lowest on both counts, and also lacks toilet facilities. Our analysis did not find any correlation between student attendance or student motivation to continue school and measures of school cleanliness or classroom environment; however, students *do notice* the environment and lack of basic sanitation²¹, and a clean, well-kept school environment can be considered a “comfort factor,” but in the end there are stronger factors at play that affect attendance and desire to continue school.

Table 5.4: Classroom Learning Environment by school

School	No special Actions Taken	% of classrooms that meet the criteria					
		Show student work	Displays changed recently	Decor reflects class activities	Child-friendly (CFS) -- e.g. nature/science table	Materials well-kept & accessible	Posters of key points of lessons
Samboo Meas	67%	33%	0%	67%	0%	0%	17%
Veal Touch	60%	0%	0%	60%	40%	0%	20%
Charthmei	0%	13%	0%	63%	13%	25%	38%

Table 5.5: School cleanliness and maintenance by school

School	% of classrooms that meet the criteria				
	Classrooms are clean	Doors and windows are well-maintained	Furniture and other classroom equipment is well-kept	Teacher's desk and student tables are well-arranged	The classroom has small and large boards for instruction
Samboo Meas	83%	100%	100%	100%	17%
Veal Touch	40%	80%	20%	60%	0%
Charthmei	63%	100%	50%	63%	0%

Analysis also showed no relationship between motivation levels and students' concern about teacher quality, but qualitative responses uncovered a related issue of excessive teacher absence. Less than 10% of students rated

²¹

When asked what they disliked most about their school, 63% talked about the school environment: 17% said generally “bad environment”; 19% too much rubbish; 17% no toilet; 10% cow lives in the compound

“low quality of teaching” in the top three of a list of barriers to attending school and no students selected it in the top two. It's likely that students are relatively less concerned about the quality of teaching because they are dealing with more immediate issues, like whether the teacher shows up at all²². When asked what they disliked most about their school, an astonishing 27% of students said (sans prompt) that they disliked having too much free time and play. Students who believed another school was better than their own wrote that the main reason was that teachers at the other school came to school more.

In general, parents were more critical than their children of educational quality: 35% cited “low quality of teaching” as a barrier to attendance and 28% said they were “not satisfied” with the quality of education at their local school. Again, most parents were concerned about the general lack of teachers rather than issues with pedagogy²³. Parents who hoped their children would stay in school longer, were more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of education at their local school, perhaps because they believe they are making an investment by forgoing income to send their child to school, and are more likely to be critical of the return on their investment ($r(71)=-0.26$, $p<.05$).

Table 5.6: Student's attitudes about educational relevance

	School is related to future life		Student's education is useful for future		Subjects in school are important to his/her future occupation		School has been useful for his/her future	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Desire to study	-0.1	-0.01	N/A	-0.19	N/A	-0.15	N/A	-0.19
Expect to study	-0.26	0.03	N/A	-0.06	N/A	0.22	N/A	-0.06
Attendance	-0.2	-0.11	N/A	0.13	N/A	0.1	N/A	0.13

Many interventions today (such as pre-vocational life skills) assume that students who believe that education is more relevant to their lives will be more likely to stay in school, however, as seen in Table 5.6, our analysis found no correlation between how useful students believed school to be and their attendance or motivation to continue. In fact, students may believe that education is “useful,” but this perspective might not make much of a difference unless students understand more about what school is immediately useful *for*. Though most students responded that school is “very useful²⁴,” they described this “usefulness” in general and distant terms²⁵. This seems to indi

²²

The research tools didn't address teacher absence from the perspective of the teachers. However, team members with experience in the field note that most teachers need to travel long distances to reach the school and do not make a high enough salary to survive on teaching alone. High rates of student absence mean that teachers can show up to classes of as few as 5 students. Teachers who depend on money from remediation have less incentive to come to school, and even those who don't charge for extra tutoring are less likely to be motivated if they expect very few students to show up. When teachers choose not to come to school, then students also decide to come less, perpetuating a downward spiral of attendance across the board.

²³

A majority of parents mentioned teacher absence as a problem, unprompted by interviewers. When asked to explain their level of satisfaction with the quality of local education, about a third of parents said their rating was based on the fact that teachers were absent a lot. On the other hand, 23% of parents with children in school said their positive rating was based on the fact that teachers “pay attention” to teaching, which seems to indicate that parents aren't worried about teaching quality as much as about teacher attendance.

²⁴

By and large, both students in school and students who had already dropped out believed that school is “very useful” to their lives (88% students in school; 83% of children out of school). Over 90% of students in school believed that at least one subject they were currently learning in school would help them in their ideal occupation.

²⁵

When asked an open-ended question about how education would help them in the future, students gave very general responses: a little over a third said school would lead to a “good future”; about a third said it would give them more knowledge and help them earn more. Only 16% said school would help them find a job; and only 6% said it would help them learn a specific skill.

cate that (in Dambae at least) students generally agree that school is important to their lives, but have a shallow understanding of *why*. Few appear to understand the link between more schooling and a higher income and fewer (if any) are clear on how school might be applied in their daily lives (e.g. learning vegetable growing to augment family income).

5.3.4 Punishment and Repetition

The data showed that a large majority of teachers disagreed (40%) or strongly disagreed (50%) with the idea that corporal punishment was acceptable some of the time. 88% of all parents interviewed had never heard of a case of the teacher punishing students at school; however of children in school, 16% had seen the teacher punish another child, and 30% of children who had dropped out reported that they had been punished themselves. Both students and parents in Veal Touch school reported instances of children being hit with a stick. Other methods of punishment cited by parents and students included not being allowed in the classroom, making the student stand in front of the classroom, scolding, and swearing.

Table 5.7: Punishment and Repetition

	Seen teacher punish children		Repeated a grade	
	M	F	M	F
Desire to study	0.13	-0.5	-0.3	-0.08
Expect to study	0.03	-0.4	-0.3	-0.28
Attendance	-0.25	-0.18	-0.54	-0.28

According to Pearson correlational analysis, girls who have seen the teacher punish a student are less likely to want to continue in school and less likely to believe that they will be able to continue. The same relationship didn't hold true for boys. Correlational analysis also showed that students who had seen someone punished or been punished themselves were more likely to dropout ($\chi^2 (1, N=73) = 4.84, p<.05$). This could be true for a variety of

reasons: because students who dropout are disruptive and tend to get punished more, because students who see others' punished no longer want to come to school, or because teachers who punish students more also tend to have classes with more dropout.

Though it didn't come up in student surveys, in the student focus group, students in Charthmei raised the issue of domestic violence as a reason for not coming to school.

Unsurprisingly, boys who repeated a grade tend to attend school less (see Table 5.7). Repetition also had had a negative, but not significant effect on girls. Students who dropped out were also more likely to be repeaters than those still in school ($\chi^2 (1, N=72) = 4.46, p<.05$).

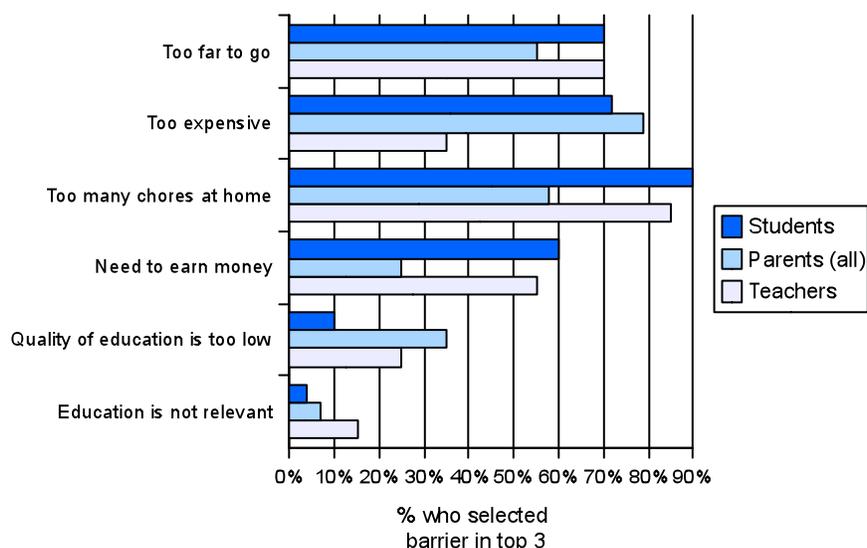
5.3.5 Perceived barriers to going to school

A primary concern of this study was to understand what parents, students, and teachers perceive to be the major barriers to going to school²⁶. Research showed that the main issues from the perspective of the families are teacher absences and lack of capital, which means that students need to earn money for the family, they are needed to work at home, and they have no funds for remediation.

²⁶

The reasons for low attendance and the reasons for dropout are slightly different, as will be discussed below, but because low attendance and risk-of-dropout are so highly correlated, we consider both simultaneously.

Chart 5.3: Top three barriers to going to school -- students, parents, and teachers



When asked in an open question to describe the reason why they don't attend school everyday, 66% of students in school said it was because of housework.²⁷ When asked the same question, 43% of parents of these students said the main reason was that teachers were absent. Only 17% blamed housework but this 17% all said it was housework *and* the frequent teacher absences, suggesting that were they sure that the teachers would be present, *parents might forgo the value of their children's labor and send them to school*. Parents of children out of school tended to agree that housework was a major reason for low attendance (52%), but also mentioned the

lack of funds for remediation (21%)²⁸.

In another question, parents, teachers and students in school were given a choice of six different barriers to attending school, and were asked to rate the top three barriers. Chart 5.3 shows the results. Most interestingly:

Table 5.8: Student focus group reasons for going/not going to school, and relative effect by gender

	Charthmei	Samboo Meas	Veal Touch
Poor	30 (girl)	20 (both)	15 (both)
Do housework, look after siblings, look after cow	20 (girl)	30 (girl)	15 (girl)
Teachers are absent a lot	10 (boy)	20 (both)	20 (girl)
School environment (generally bad; no garden; rubbish)		10 (both)	15 (both)
Parents force to stop study	20 (girl)		
Violence in the family	20 (boy)		
No toilet			20 (girl)
Students are slow learners (embarrassed/frustrated)		10 (girl)	5 (boy)
Teacher quality is bad		10 (both)	
Classmates fight			5 (girl)

- 1 Parents tended to see “housework” or chores as a less pressing concern than did students and teachers
- 2 Teachers tended to underestimate the problem of cost as compared with parents and students
- 3 Parents tended to be most concerned about quality of education, while students tended to be least concerned

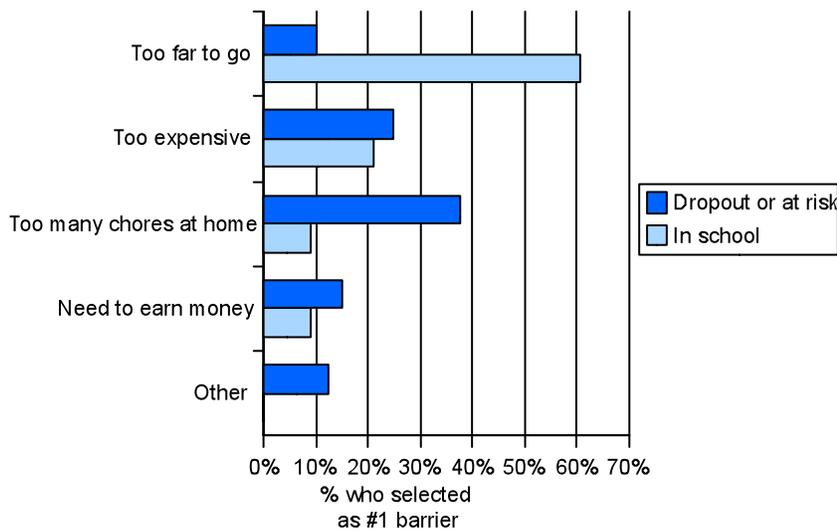
²⁷

According to focus groups and interviews, “housework” encompasses a variety of household labor, but generally has to do with helping the family with the cassava crop, or helping to look after very young siblings.

²⁸

As noted previously, a majority of students (58%) also mentioned lack of money for remediation as the reason why they could not continue to study to as high a level as they wanted.

Chart 5.4: Top barrier to going to school -- students dropped out/at-risk v. in school



In order help elicit additional responses from the children, one section of the focus group discussion centered around student motivations for attending or not attending school. Students were encouraged to give both positive and negative motivations, and initially came up with both: e.g. “get knowledge,” “meet friends,” “too poor.” However, when students in each school were asked to collectively rate the relative importance of each reason, they only selected negative reasons. Table 5.8 gives a summary of the students' rating (totaling 100% for each school) and whether they believe a reason affects boys more, girls more, or both equally. Again, the same three reasons bubble to the top in all three schools -- poverty, housework, and teacher ab-

sences -- but the data also sheds light on the disproportionate burden that these issues place on girls. For example, in all three schools, students independently asserted that girls are more likely to have to stay home to do housework.

The first part of the research analysis focused on looking at the responses of each group. The second part of the analysis looked at the way responses were related to students' motivation and dropout. First, we looked at what children who dropped out cited as their number one reasons for dropping out and compared this to the number one barrier to attending school for children who were still attending school.

The reasons that children out of school gave for dropping out were different from the issues that kept current students out of school as can be seen in Chart 5.4. Students in school tended to cite distance as a major problem, while those who dropped out tended to say it was because they had “too many chores” or housework. It's possible that distance to school is at the top-of-mind for students who are still in school and still making the trip, and it is not the clincher reason that causes students to drop out, but only one of the first symptoms in a downward spiral (see the Section Summary).

Interestingly, top reasons for not going to school did not vary significantly between boys and girls. However, the relationship between what students cited as top issues, and their levels of motivation and attendance did vary between boys and girls. For example:

- Boys who say it's too expensive tend to have higher attendance; possibly because boys who attend school are more likely to feel the pain of remediation costs;
- Boys who say “earning money for the family” is a barrier to school are more likely to be absent; similarly, parents who said their students needed to earn money were less likely to believe their students would stay in school as long ($r(71)=0.25, p<0.5$)
- Girls who say there are too many chores at home are more likely to want to study further , but there is no similar relationship for boys.

Table 5.9: Reasons cited in students' top three barriers to attending school (students in-school only)

	Too far to go		Too expensive		Too many chores at home		Need to earn money for the family		Quality of teachers is too low		School does not help me in my daily life	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Desire to study	0.3	-0.13	0.12	0.26	-0.18	0.4	-0.11	-0.08	-0.11	-0.09	0.1	-0.27
Expect to study	0.02	0.18	0.06	0.19	0.07	0.06	0.03	-0.33	-0.07	0.2	0.26	-0.04
Attendance	0.22	0.18	0.5	-0.07	0	0.38	-0.45	0.01	-0.18	-0.38	0.2	-0.1

5.3.6 Perception of Gender Roles and Gender-Fixed Behaviors

In the classrooms surveyed, teachers seemed to treat boys and girls' relatively equally: 94% of students said that the teacher calls on boys and girls equally, and over 90% said that the teacher didn't favor either boys or girls to do more tasks. When it came to selecting a class leader, however, it seemed that traditional gender roles still held sway; of the 75% of classes with a leader, 82% were boys, and only 18% were girls. These leaders were largely selected by the students themselves, and not designated by the teacher, which implies that the children themselves have some existing bias towards boys as leaders.

With one exception, children out of school were more likely than students in school to think that specific chores at home belonged to either boys or girls, instead of to both equally²⁹ (see Chart 5.6) All students tended to think boys should do work that required more physical labor (chop wood and carry water). In the rest of the cases, when students didn't believe chores should be done by children of both sexes, the burden fell upon girls.

The research asked respondents to agree or disagree with the following ten statements related to gender equity:

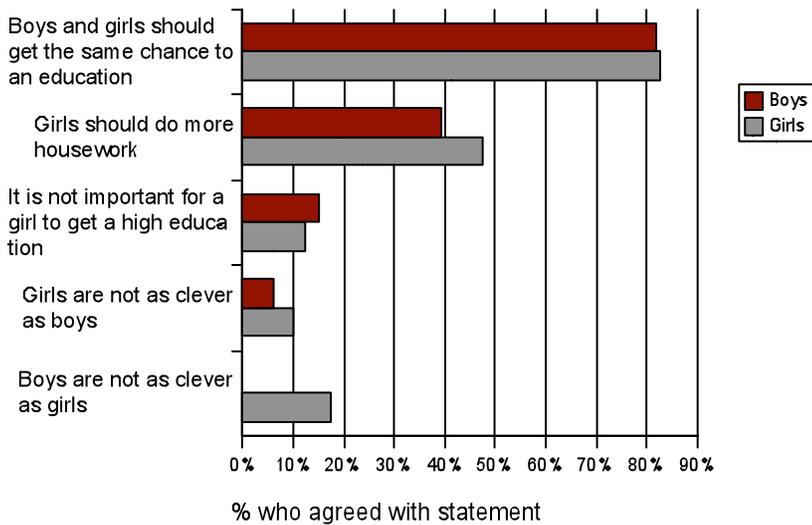
- *Boys should study more than girls*
- *Boys and girls should get the same chance to an education*
- *I want my daughter to stay in school (My mother wants me to stay in school)*
- *I want my son to stay in school (My father wants me to stay in school)*
- *It is not important for girls to get an education school*
- *Girls should do more housework than boys*
- *Girls are not as clever as boys*
- *Boys are not as clever as girls*
- *Men make better teachers*
- *Women make better teachers*

The overall levels of students' responses are shown in Chart 5.5. Of note,

- More than 80% of students agreed that boys and girls should get the same chance to an education
- More than 40% of students agreed that girls should do more housework than boys

²⁹

The only exception was cultivation of vegetables, which children out of school seemed to largely consider as a task for both sexes.

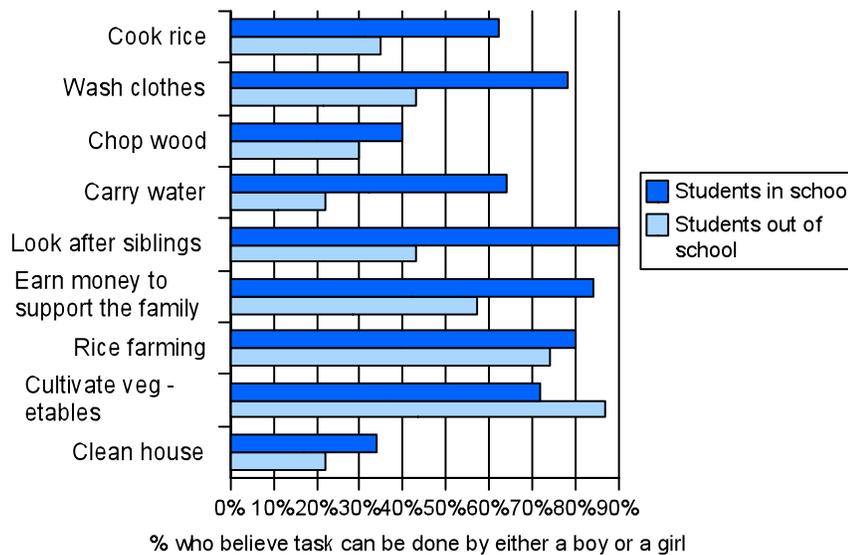


There was no significant difference between responses of parents of students-in-school and parents of students out-of-school to these gender statements, perhaps signifying that parents' beliefs about gender have a limited direct effect on dropout. There were also no significant differences between responses from boys and girls in school, except girls were somewhat more likely to agree that "Boys are not as clever as girls."

However, girls who were still in school were more likely than their peers who had dropped out to disagree with the statement "It is not important for a girl to get a high education" ($\chi^2 (2, N=40) = 6.12, p<.05$). This seems to indicate that students who have dropped out sense even more keenly the opportunity they are losing. Conversely, when looking at the group of children in school, boys who attend school less are more likely to agree that it's not important for girls to stay in school.

Unsurprisingly, girls who had dropped out or were at risk of dropping out were more likely to agree that girls should do more housework ($\chi^2 (2, N=40) = 7.3, p<.05$). Very telling was the fact that boys who attend school were more likely to agree that girls should do more housework, while girls who attend school more are more likely to disagree (see Table 5.10). This makes us wonder whether perhaps boys understand that their attendance at school comes at the expense of girls' shouldering a bigger proportion of the work at home.

Chart 5.6: Belief that chores are gender-neutral -- students in school v. out of school



5.3.7 Perceptions of Success, Occupational Goals and Expectations for the Future

One part of students' level of motivation may have to do with their personal hopes and goals. In the study, we identified children's general and specific goals for the future and then compared hopefulness to children's current level of motivation. In general, we found that students who were more generally hopeful were also more motivated to stay in school and that students who had already dropped out were less hopeful and less likely to think about the future.

Table 5.10: Students agreement with gender-value statements

	Boys should study more than girls		Boys and girls should get the same chance to an education		My father wants me to stay in school		My mother wants me to stay in school		It is not important for girls to get an education		Girls should do more house-work than boys		Girls are not as clever as boys		Boys are not as clever as girls	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Desire to study	-0.38	-0.17	0	-0.2	-0.1	0.1	-0.14	0.09	0.04	0.04	0.21	-0.26	0.12	-0.23	0.01	-0.36
Expect to study	-0.09	0.1	0	-0.35	0.27	-0.24	0.29	-0.29	-0.25	0.04	0.33	0.49	0.23	-0.16	-0.06	-0.27
Attendance	-0.1	-0.27	0	-0.16	-0.1	-0.16	0.14	-0.28	0.41	-0.03	0.51	0.41	0.26	-0.23	0.2	-0.14

A majority of students surveyed (56%) described “success” in terms of studying to a high level. When asked to explain, students said that they believed this was success because it meant they'd “have knowledge,” “get a good job,” “earn a lot of money,” “have a lot of friends,” “become a leader,” and “make [their] parents happy.”

When asked to name someone they admire, 20% named a farmer (many, their own parents); 18%, a teacher; 14%, a masseuse, 14% a musician; 10% a doctor; and 10% a car repairman. Beyond their own parents and relatives, many children seem to look up to their teachers, which makes it even more critical that teachers fulfill their responsibilities by coming to school. In terms of male versus female teachers, both girls and boys preferred female teachers slightly (overall 22% for female teachers versus 8% for male teachers). When asked to explain, students mentioned that female teachers “come to school more” and “are nicer when you ask questions/won't scold.”

Though many children cited their own parents as role models, whether or not children reported that parents talked to them about the importance of school had no correlation with dropout. It didn't differ between boys and girls, and didn't appear to have any relationship with levels of motivation for children.

On average, students were able to name about 3.5 different professions; there was no significant difference between the number of professions that girls could list versus boys. Clearly, each student's understanding of the job field is limited; however, when together, students in three focus groups were able to come up with a total of 46 distinct jobs. When asked whether jobs were for men, women, or both, children at each school responded slightly differently, but for 11 out of the 46 jobs on the list, all focus groups agreed that they were for men only (commune or district chief; carpenter; driver; electrician; engineer; fisherman; forest worker; minister; painter; soldier; telephone repair). On the other hand, the groups only identified 3 jobs as exclusive to women (midwife, costumier, beautician). When asked whether there were any differences between men and women when looking for a job, all three focus groups separately agreed that *girls have more chances than boys* in the job market – specifically, employers are more likely to hire and promote them.

Given the types of role models that children chose, it was unsurprising that 24% of students in school said they hoped to be a teacher and 27% hoped to be a doctor. Sadly, of children who had dropped out, 19% still wanted to be a doctor, but the next largest group (also 19%) said they never thought about what they wanted to be³⁰. No matter what the children chose, 98% said there was at least one subject in school that was important to performing their occupation of choice.

Overall, 36% of students interviewed said they were very hopeful for the future, 36% said they were somewhat hopeful, 2% said not at all hopeful and a whopping 20% said they didn't know. Students at Charthmei were dis-

³⁰ Other things children mentioned: farmer, dressmaker, police, hairdresser, singer, businessman, NGO staff, engineer, phone repairman, manager, moto repair, costumier, rubber farming, driver, salesman, and factory worker.

tinctly more hopeful (61% were very hopeful). There were no significant differences between girls' and boys' levels of hopefulness or how much they thought about the future.

Table 5.11: Students' expectations for the future

	Think often about the future		Believe things will be better in the future		Afraid of the future		More hopeful about his/her future		More hopeful that going to school will improve his/her life	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Desire to study	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	-0.06	0.6
Expect to study	0.32	0.27	0.35	0.35	0.18	N/A	-0.27	0.47	0.49	0.66
Attendance	0.29	0.22	0.19	0.15	0.06	0.14	-0.21	0.49	0.26	0.44

According to the Pearson's correlational analysis shown in Table 5.11, the amount that students thought about the future and the extent to which they believed their situation would improve *did not* have any significant relationship with levels of motivation or with attendance. However, for girls, there was a very strong positive relationship between general hopefulness for the future and how long they expected to be able to study; as well as between hopefulness and attendance. For both boys and girls, the hope that going to school would improve their life was also positively correlated with a number of measures of motivation, though the correlations were again stronger for girls

A look at students who had dropped out or were at risk showed that they tend to think about the future less often than their peers in school ($\chi^2 (3, N=73) = 19.68, p<.05$); they tend to believe the future will be worse than the present ($\chi^2 (3, N=73) = 14.39, p<.05$) and they are less likely to believe that education will improve their future (perhaps because they are no longer attending school) ($\chi^2 (2, N=50) = 7.34, p<.05$).

5.4 SUMMARY

Table 5.12: Study 1 Summary

	General Findings	Boys	Girls
A1 Children's motivation level to go to school (as related to:)			
<i>School quality, educational relevance and general attitudes towards school (H1)</i>			
<i>Punishment and repetition (B1)</i>			
<i>Perceived barriers to attending school, including cost (E1)</i>			
<i>Perception of gender roles and gender-fixed behaviors (F1/G1)</i>			
<i>Perceptions of success and role models (C1/D1)</i>			
<i>Occupational goals and expectations for the future (I1)</i>			

6. STUDY 2: TRACER STUDIES ON STUDENT DROPOUT AND IMPACT OF LABOR DEMANDS ON ENROLLMENT

Dropout is a serious problem in Dambae district. Levels of dropout are high, even when compared dropout in with other, sometimes poorer, rural areas in Kampong Cham Province (EMIS 2005/06). This study attempts to shed some light on the severity of the problem and some of its causes, in order to inform ideas for change. The first section discusses general dropout trends in Dambae, as compared with trends in greater Kampong Cham. The next sections discuss the specific reasons for dropout cited by students who had left school and by their parents, as well as comfort factors that may have helped keep them in school. Finally, the last section describes students' current attitudes and their hopes (or lack thereof) for the future.

6.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given the objectives above, the primary research question for study two is as follows:

Primary Research Question: What factors lead children to drop out of primary school (e.g., distance to school, age, repetition history, economic factors, comfort factors, etc.)?

To understand this question more clearly, this research seeks to understand more about how and when dropout occurs, as well as specific measures that might help keep children in school

Research Question 2: What comfort factors help to keep children in school (i.e., what are the things that children enjoy or do not enjoy about school)?

Research Question 3: When does dropout accelerate (i.e., at what grade and age levels)?

Research Question 4: To what economic sectors in the district, if any, do prospective dropouts gravitate?

Research Question 5: Is there any link between migratory patterns and student dropout in districts?

6.2 RESEARCH VARIABLES AND SAMPLING

Table 6.1 shows the research variables and sources for data for Study 2. Since this study focuses on dropout, the main source for primary data was interviews with students-out-of-school and with their parents. In order to understand some of the larger trends at work in student dropout in the district, the research used secondary provincial-level data on migration, dropout, and levels of poverty.

Table 6.1: Study 2, Research Variables and Sources for Data

Variable	Scope	Source
A2. Factors linked to dropout (including distance to school, age, gender role models, ethnicity, curricular relevance, economic factors, repetition history, and comfort factors)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews
B2. Identification of comfort factors	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews; teacher interviews
C2. Characteristics of children who have dropped out	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Interviews with students-out-of-school; parents' interviews;

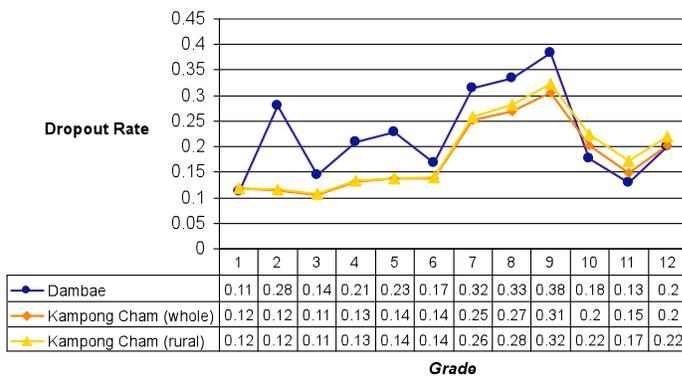
D2. Provincial Migration Patterns	Kampong Cham / Dambae District	Secondary: Department of Planning, Kampong Cham 2006
E2. Provincial Dropout Patterns	Kampong Cham / Dambae District	Secondary: EMIS, 2005/06; KAPE Girls' Secondary School Scholarship Dropout Tracer Survey 05/06, 06/07, 07/08
F2. Poverty Rates at District/Commune Level	Kampong Cham / Dambae District	Secondary: Department of Planning, Kampong Cham 2006

6.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.3.1 Trends in Dropout, Poverty, and Migration

Chart 6.1 shows dropout rates from grade 1 to grade 12 for all of Kampong Cham, rural Kampong Cham, and Dambae (EMIS, 2005/06). As noted, overall dropout rates in Dambae are higher than rates in the greater Kampong Cham. In general in both Kampong Cham and Dambae district, dropout rates increase from grades 1 to grade 9.

Table 6.1: Dropout Rates in Dambae and Kampong Cham 2005/2006



There is a spike in dropouts in grade 9 when students sit for the national Diplome Examination. Those who fail to pass are literally “pushed out” of the system. Therefore, it’s unsurprising to see dropout rates decrease dramatically in grades 10 through 12, since the remaining students are presumably only the “cream-of-the-crop.” This trend is even more pronounced in Dambae, perhaps because the remaining group who proceeds to grade 10 is even more select.

In Dambae, there also appears to be a spike in dropout in grade 2. This is difficult to explain as especially given the lack of a similar trend in Kampong Cham, and should be investigated further in future research. Without additional information, the team can only hypothesize that students in Dambae give school a try in the first grade, but many end up falling behind when they miss school when teachers are absent, or when they accompany their parents when they go to work in the field. By second grade, the curriculum becomes more difficult and students may have serious difficulty reading and writing. Parents who notice their children struggling may decide to pull their students out of school before they risk “wasting” additional investment.

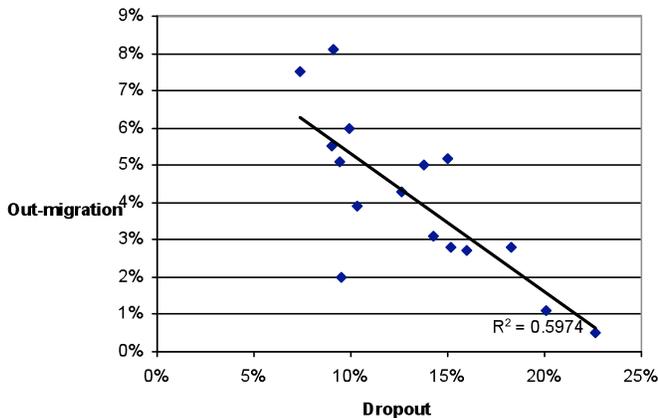


It is particularly eye-opening to look at dropout rates from another angle: the number of children who actually stay in school to complete basic education (through grade 9) or the entire school cycle (through grade 12). In 2005/2006, 4,559 new first graders entered schools in Dambae. Using promotion rates from 2005/2006, we can project the enrollment rates from this cohort as they progress from grade to grade. As shown in Chart 6.2, only 173 students, or 4% of the original cohort, will enter grade 9 together (the rest will dropout or stay back in another grade), and a depressing 30 students, or 0.6%, will graduate with their original class from grade 12. This is particularly disturbing given the fact that national policy stipulates that in order to be a teacher, students must complete grade 12. Obviously, there is a dearth of

local resources to take over as teachers for the next generation.

One major concern for education and children’s groups operating in Kampong Cham is the relationship between dropout and migration. As discussed earlier in the report, the rate of out-migration in Kampong Cham is relatively low compared to other districts in Kampong Cham (Dept of Planning, 2007), yet as shown above, the rate of dropout is relatively very high.

Table 6.3: Relationship between dropout and out-migration in Kampong Cham 2005/06



In fact, statistical analysis shows a strong negative relationship between dropout rates and out-migration from the province when considering the 16 districts in Kampong Cham. Districts with more out-migration tend to have less dropout and vice-versa. Reasons for this aren’t completely clear, and warrant additional investigation; however, since this in-depth analysis is outside the scope of this survey, we can offer only some tentative guesses. The team has seen that dropout in Kampong Cham is strongly related to economic opportunities within the province rather than in other provinces (working on family farms, rubber plantations, or in local factories). Therefore, it’s possible that in districts where there are many local opportunities to work, students have a very clear incentive to dropout and earn money (and often, move around in-district or in-province), whereas districts

where it’s more difficult to access these opportunities students dropout less, but people migrate more out of the province.

Our own limited data supports this hypothesis: of the 23 fifth and sixth graders out-of-school surveyed for this study, about one-third said they had migrated since dropping out and an additional 25% said they planned to mi-

Characteristics of students out of school (N=23)

Parents: 74% two living parents; 26% one living parent

Parents' Occupation: 85% farmer, 5% worker; 10% seller

Land-ownership: 62% of families own land

Siblings: 52% have five or more siblings; 78% in the oldest three siblings

Distance to school: 55% 0-1 km; 41% 1-3 km; 5% more than 5 km

Repetition: 32% repeated a grade

Family education: 30% parents didn't go to school; of 70% who attended school, 57% only studied to grade 1 or 2

SES: 33% thatch roof; 62% one peak

grate in the future. However, only one mentioned migration out of Kampong Cham (to Thailand), while the rest had moved to rubber plantations or other work within the province.

Contrary to general assumptions, when looking at dropout rates across all 16 provinces in Kampong Cham, analysis indicated no significant relationship between the poverty level and dropout rates in the district. This statistical observation corresponds with the team's experience speaking with local families. Even in families who have increased their relative income, parents want to keep students at home to help work the land and students themselves have strong incentive to leave school and earn money, especially when there is work to be had nearby.

In general, as has been noted in other research, the opportunity cost of going to school is a substantial barrier for most students³¹. The introduction of new economic opportunities in the area (such as new factories) means an increased opportunity cost for attending school. As students get older, the value of their labor, and thus the opportunity cost, increases

even more. In the past year, KAPE staff has noticed particularly high levels of dropout from the Girls' Secondary School Scholarship Program³², and has posited a correlation between the increased levels of dropout and economic development in Kampong Cham³³. It is not within the scope of the study to undertake rigorous analysis of the effect of development on dropout rates, but as shown in Table 6.2, tracer studies of dropouts from the Girls' Scholarship Program do show that a large, and increasing, percentage of students who are dropping are doing so

in order to do factory work, lending credence to the guess that economic development might contribute to dropout.

Table 6.2: Reasons for Dropout cited by KAPE scholarship recipients

	2005/06		2006/07		2007/08*	
	total	%	total	%	total*	%
Factory employment	85	39%	120	40%	48	53%
Poverty	15	7%	0	0%	19	21%
Household employment	84	39%	113	37%	8	9%
Marriage	18	8%	35	12%	4	4%
Family migration	9	4%	26	9%	7	8%
Entry into a temple	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%
Illness	2	1%	0	0%	1	1%
Vocational Training	0	0%	7	2%	2	2%
Death	0	0%	1	0%	1	1%
Total	216		302		91	
Total Beneficiaries	1706		1555		1076	

As of March 2008. Total dropout numbers will increase by the end of the year in July, but we assume that relative frequency of each reason will remain the same

³¹ See, for example, Bray (1999).

³² The Girls' Scholarship Program, operated by KAPE since 2001, is targeted at girls in vulnerable circumstances in five districts in Kampong Cham.

³³ Specifically, access to new markets for crops, made possible by improved roads, and the introduction of new factories.

6.3.2 Economic Factors on Dropout in Dambae

Most of the data in the following section comes from one-on-one interviews with 23 out-of-school students and their parents from three primary schools in Dambae district³⁴. The students all dropped out in the past year from fifth or sixth grade, and were initially chosen at random from a list of all students who had dropped out. As mentioned in the data collection section, some students who were originally selected had migrated, so the students chosen in the end consisted of those who could be located in Dambae.

Unsurprisingly, our research indicates that economic factors underlie many of the causes for dropout given by students, parents, and teachers. Even when economic factors were not cited as the primary reason for dropout, when asked to explain further, stakeholders identified economic factors as the underlying cause. For example, students said they dropout because they are “slow-learners.” Upon further investigation, students explained that they fell behind their classmates because they missed school to help their parents in the fields, and then lacked money to get extra help.

As noted in the previous section, opportunity cost is a significant, and possibly growing, barrier to staying in school. Of the students surveyed in this study, Chart 6.4 shows that 43% of respondents said they were currently working in the fields, 30% said they were employed at home (which likely includes helping in some way with the cassava crop), and 22% were working on a rubber plantation. Nearly all are now contributing directly or indirectly to family income.

Age and sibling-order certainly has a part to play in the calculation of opportunity costs for children remaining in school. It is common knowledge that older siblings have more responsibility to help their parents to look after the family, and are in a better position to contribute, since their labor is worth more than that of younger siblings. Of all the out-of-school children surveyed, 52% had 5 or more siblings and 78% were among the three oldest siblings in their family. Our statistical analysis compared students' age to whether or not they had dropped out and found a significant positive correlation between age and dropout ($r(73)=0.27, p<0.5$).

It is difficult to say how many students decide to dropout because their labor is necessary to provide very basic needs for the family (extreme poverty) versus those who live above basic subsistence level, but still do not send their children to school. In general, program staff have noticed that even when families' circumstances improve, children still stay home to work or go out to earn money³⁵. There is no completely scientific way to differentiate between families who cannot send their children to school without going hungry, versus those who could, but may not see the relative value. However, interventions should try to separate the groups with rough poverty-measurement tools, since each circumstance requires a different approach.

6.3.3 Teacher Absence

The problem of teacher absence is discussed in detail in study 1, and was mentioned frequently not only by students and their parents, but also by the teachers themselves and the school directors in the study. We did not highlight the issue in the original objectives of the REACH project, but based on the findings, the team *strongly sug-*

³⁴ Some statistics are cited from students and parents of students in school in order to draw comparisons.

³⁵ Especially if local education is perceived to be of low quality, and/or if teachers are frequently absent.

gests that interventions are designed to deal specifically with this problem.

Teacher absence appears to be caused by a variety of factors and has multiple effects. As explained in one-on-one interviews, teachers themselves are often poor, and most live far from the schools where they teach. In fact, the director and teachers at Sambo Meas Primary School live at the school during the week, since it would otherwise be impossible to make the trip each day. Many teachers have alternative means of income just to make ends meet. One new teacher in the study did not receive any income for a few months after starting, and had to return home frequently to get money from his parents. On top of this, high levels of student absence make it difficult for teachers to justify the long trip. Observers reported some classrooms with as few as 5 students present.

Teacher absence certainly contributes to student dropout. Students, parents and teachers all attested to this during the course of the research. Not only is there the obvious issue of less instruction time than national requirements dictate, but according to their own testimonials, students quickly become bored when teachers fail to appear. Parents who believe teachers never come to school (understandably) may not encourage their children to go to school. Students who begin to stay home fall behind in studies, and some eventually drop out.

6.3.4 The “Slow Learner” Phenomenon and Punishment in School

When asked why they dropped out of school, some children labeled themselves as “slow learners.” While it’s certainly the case that different students learn at different rates, the researchers of this study strongly believe that the “slow learner” phenomenon (students and their parents labeling children as “slow learners”) has little if anything to do with ability, and much more to do with students missing school, compounded by lack of funds for remediation.

The students themselves told us that they became “slow learners” after missing school; when asked to explain further, students who had labeled themselves “slow learners” said that they were frequently absent and fell behind. Other data shows that the trend of low attendance is pervasive: 30% of parents of out-of-school children said their children did not attend school regularly when they were still in school; 50% said their children attended “almost everyday” and only 20% attended everyday. And, as discussed in study 1, statistical analysis shows that students who don't attend school regularly are more likely to be at risk for dropout after primary school³⁶ (χ^2 (2, N=50) = 15.45, $p < .05$).

Why don't student attend school regularly? Again, study one discusses this in detail; to summarize, students' and parents' cited a few main reasons for absence, namely: work at home (especially helping in the fields), teacher absence, and poverty, which forces students to go out and earn money instead of going to school³⁷. Whatever the reason, the belief that one is a “slow learner” is a self-fulfilling truth. Students who think they are “slow” may attend school less from embarrassment or hopelessness. When they attend school less, they fall even further behind. Unfortunately, in some cases, teachers (intentionally or unintentionally) exacerbate the problem by punishing students for not knowing the lesson. Some students may repeat a grade, but those who repeat are also

³⁶ “Risk of dropout” is determined by whether a student indicates that he/she only expects to complete primary school.

³⁷ In focus groups and interviews, a few other issues were mentioned (with less frequency), including domestic violence, punishment at school, and personal “lack of will” (e.g. student blames him/herself for being too lazy).

more likely to dropout than those who do not ($\chi^2 (1, N=72) = 4.46, p<.05$).

The cycle of low attendance and decreasing self-confidence could perhaps be reversed if students could afford remediation; however those that most need the remediation are the least likely (and perhaps, least able) to pay. According to their parents, out-of-school children are less likely to have attended remediation for weak subjects than children in school and are less likely to get help at home from parents or older siblings, though they are slightly more likely to study with friends (See Chart 6.5).

When asked whether they had ever heard of a student being punished at school, only 10% of parents of children who had dropped out said yes; however 30% of their children said that they themselves had been punished. According to students, punishment takes a number of forms, the mildest include scolding and sending the student out from the classroom, and the more severe include shouting, swearing, and “hitting with a stick.”

As mentioned in the first study, correlational analysis showed that students who had seen someone punished or been punished themselves were more likely to dropout ($\chi^2 (1, N=73) = 4.84, p<.05$). As all the other issues discussed here, punishment in school could be linked to dropout for a variety of reasons: it could be that students who dropout are disruptive and tend to get punished more; it could be that students who see others' punished no longer want to come to school; it could be that teachers who tend to punish students also tend to have classes with more dropout.

It is not within the scope to prove a causal relationship, however per conversations with students, punishment is certainly connected to other problems like the “slow learner” phenomenon discussed above. When asked, some students explained that they became embarrassed after the teacher scolded them for not knowing the lesson, and decided that they wouldn't come to school anymore.

6.3.5 Peer, Family Culture, and Other Reasons for Dropout

It was unsurprising for staff to hear that the majority of out-of-school children (92%) mentioned “friends” as one of the things they can remember liking about school. However, during interviews, two students pointed out that they dropped out because many of their friends were already out of school. Though only two students discussed this in the interviews, it's very likely that lack of social support networks, coupled with pressure from seeing their peers earning money, contributes to dropout. Future studies should consider “tipping point” analysis to determine whether dropout increases after a critical mass of students have left a cohort in a given year.

Many students mentioned responsibility to their family when explaining why they needed to drop out of school. At least two students mentioned having to stay home to take care of an elderly parent. Besides the general cultural importance of family and a child's duty to care for his or her parents, there may be other specific family dynamics in play in the case of certain children. For example, though 83% of children said that they made the decision to stay home on their own initiative, 13% of students said that their parents decided unilaterally that they should quit school. In Charthmei school, students in the focus group mentioned “parents forcing children to stop study” as one very important reason strong motivation for not coming to school. Because of the cultural importance placed on honoring one's parents it may be very difficult for students to oppose their parents once a decision is made.

Besides these, there are a few other reasons for dropout that have come up in the experience of KAPE staff, and in the research at hand. For example, KAPE's tracking of its Girls' Scholarship Program mentions students leaving school because of marriage, family migration, and illness. The parent of one out-of-school student in Dambae mentioned that his child had a disability that prevented him from attending school. Transportation to and from school can be difficult, though it has improved in recent years. Our research shows that 68% of students out-of-school used to go to school by foot; distance from school varies from child to child, but Samboo Meas especially is a little over a kilometer off the main road, but can be incredibly difficult to reach, especially in the rainy sea-

son³⁸.

6.3.6 Gender Factoring in

So far, the discussion has been relatively gender-neutral. Though both boys and girls are indeed affected by the problems cited above, the truth is that dropout rates among girls remain higher than for boys in Dambae and many of the problems cited above tend to affect girls' disproportionately.

70% of teachers in the three schools surveyed said that girls were more likely to drop out than boys. When the student focus groups identified the most important issues hindering student attendance, they also identified their relative effect by gender. In the majority of cases, students said issues affected girls more than boys (see Table 5.8 in the previous section). As explained in survey one, the majority of both boys and girls agree that girls should do more housework than boys. Given that housework is a primary reason for dropout, this puts an unfair share of the burden and risk on the shoulders of female students.

6.3.7 Student Happiness & Comfort Factors

Given the picture above, it's unsurprising that the parents of students who had dropped out perceived their children as less happy when they went to school than did parents of students who were still attending³⁹. Also, 60% of the same parents said they had to force their children to go to school, whereas only 34% of parents of students still going to school said they ever had to force their children.

When asked whether their school could have done anything to keep them from dropping out, 37% of students said yes, while 63% said there was nothing the school could have done. Similarly, 85% of the teachers interviewed said the factors contributing to dropout were external to the school, and only 10% said that they might be both internal and external (the rest were not sure). When asked about what factors might have kept them in school, students overwhelmingly said that the school could have made sure that teachers came to teach. Some also mentioned the lack of a school garden and the general disrepair of school grounds.

Though not mentioned directly by students, the research team does note that while students, teachers, and parents say that education is valuable, actions (or lack thereof) may speak louder than words to children. Despite being taught the importance of school, students who see rubbish on the school grounds, who lack a toilet, who come to school only to realize their teachers are absent, may take these as unwritten but powerful signs that the adults around them don't necessarily value education as is preached. Post-interview, one child volunteered that in the middle of class, between assigning lessons, his teacher would step out to watch the cock-fights nearby. One must assume that this "real-life" lesson about the relative *un*importance of education speaks louder than anything his teacher could say in the classroom.

6.3.8 Dropout in Dambae: Hopes for the future

This final section of our research findings focuses on the attitudes of students post-drop-out, particularly, their desire to return to school, and their hopes and beliefs for the future.

The majority of children (83%) told researchers that what they learned at school was already useful in their daily lives. Most also regretted leaving school⁴⁰, and they said they would go back, given the chance⁴¹. When the team

³⁸ KAPE staff mentioned that the road was often completely impassable by car during rainy season. It was possible by motorcycle, bicycle, or by foot, but one could imagine the difficulty and possible danger for children.

³⁹ 30% of parents of children out-of-school said that their children were not happy at school, compared to only 10% of parents of students in school.

⁴⁰ 65% say that they regret leaving school "a lot," 30% sometimes regret leaving school, while only 4% say that they do not regret it at all.

⁴¹ 57% would go back to school if given the chance; 22% wouldn't go back and 21% were not sure.

followed up on each of these questions, students said that school had been useful because they could now read and could more easily find a job. Students who said they would like to return to school also mentioned wanting to find a job more easily while some hoped to study *like everyone else*. Students who did not want to return told researchers that they did not have enough money to go back; some specifically said that they were overage and so, needed to go out and earn money for the family.

The out-of-school children who were interviewed saw themselves as worse-off in comparison to children who stayed in school. In the interview, researchers introduced two short stories – one about a child who had experienced great hardship but continued to study to a high level, and one who had experienced the same sort of hardship, but had dropped out to support the family. When asked which child they admired more, 96% of children chose the story about the child who had continued education. In another question on the same topic, 83% of students said that they were worse off in comparison with friends who had remained in school.

Finally, our research shows that students out of school tend to think less about the future than their counterparts in school and are more likely to think the future will be worse than the present. Of the children surveyed, 36% were afraid of what the future would bring. 27% said they were unhappy when they thought about the future. Only 14% were happy, and *none* said they felt confident. When asked what they would be doing in 5 years, the majority of students (58%) said they would be working in rubber. 19% of students said they never thought about it. 27% said they hoped to be back in school, studying. Parents were also asked how often their children talked about what they hoped to do in the future. Of parents of children out-of-school, 60% said that their children *never* talk about what they want to do in the future, compared with only 24% of parents of students in school.

Despite all this, students certainly believe that they still have a hand in their own destiny. When asked what they'd most like to change about their lives, rather than mention “getting rich,” 71% said they wanted to change their own behavior: be more patient, learn to be a “good child”, find money to support the family, study more, or learn more.

One might be tempted to argue that we shouldn't worry about dropout if students are of legal age to work (being overage in school to begin with), and can earn money in a livelihood (e.g. rubber plantations & factory work) without additional education. In the end, it is certainly important to address this view and ask why we should care about education – to what end? The final data presents some clear answers to this question. First of all, many students who dropped out want to be back in school but aren't sure how to do it. Besides this, students who have dropped out are not only more hopeless about the future than their counterparts in school, but they are much more limited in what they believe they can accomplish. In the end, the chance to stay in school gives these children choice and hope for the future and may also help to preserve their sense of agency rather than helplessness and fear.

6.4 SUMMARY

Table 6.3: Study 2 Summary

	General Findings
Trends in Dropout, Poverty, and Migration (A2, D2, E2, F2)	
Economic Factors on Dropout in Dambae (A2, D2, E2, F2)	
Other Factors (B2, C2)	
Hopes for the Future (B2, C2)	

7. STUDY 3: MOST RELEVANT AREAS FOR LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION FOR GIRLS AND

BOYS

Study 3 looks at how the degree to which education in Dambae is relevant to students' aspirations, goals, and needs. This report draws from much of the same data as study 1, but whereas study 1 analyzed the data with an eye on the way that student attitudes and educational quality affected student motivation, this discussion focuses on how student needs match with the reality of what's currently being provided. To that end, we look both at what children themselves say about their aspirations and expectations from school as well as our own perspective on the current degree to which children's needs are being met in school, based on experience, third party data, and reflection on the research.

This section will begin by discussing children's own perceptions of success, their occupational goals and their expectations for the future. Next, it will discuss students' perspectives on how education relates to their life, the quality of their education, and their identified needs. It will conclude with a discussion of the researchers' analysis of the degree of educational relevance based on our own reflections on third-party data and the data from this study.

7.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main question for study three is simple:

Primary Research Question: How relevant is education to the aspirations of children?

Again, this question will be answered both by trying to understand how children feel about the quality of their education as well as through external evaluation of educational relevance.

Research Question 2: How do children define their educational needs and aspirations?

Research Question 3: How aware do children seem to be of the real needs in their context (including remediation to enhance academic learning) ?

Some research questions are very similar to those asked in study 1, and the discussion that follows will call heavily on conclusions drawn in that previous section.

Research Question 4: What are children's general expectations of life in general and school in particular and do these differ among boys and girls?

Research Question 5: To what extent do children have occupational goals and what factors (e.g., role models) affect the formation of these goals? Do boys and girls differ in their expectations and occupational goals?

7.2 RESEARCH VARIABLES AND SAMPLING

The table below describes the variables considered in the study and the sources for each. The external (e.g. researcher-defined) measure of educational quality and relevance relies on school self-assessments undertaken by the CFSRA project in twelve schools in Dambae. The rest of the data comes from the primary research with students both in-school and out-of-school.

Table 7.1: Study 3, Research Variables and Sources of Data

Variable	Scope	Source
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A3. Relevance of Educational Service Provision (as assessed by children)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Surveys of students in-school; Interviews with students-out-ofschool
B3. Relevance of Educational Service Provision (as assessed by an external standard defined by project personnel)	Dambae District – 12 CFSRA schools	Secondary: Child Friendly Schools in Remote Areas (CFSRA) survey of teaching and learning in 12 Dambae schools 2007/08
C3. Elements of Educational Relevance (as defined by children)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Surveys of students in-school; Interviews with students-out-ofschool
D3. Children’s Level of Awareness of Their Needs and Aspirations (e.g., HIV/AIDS, nutrition, domestic violence, remediation etc.)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Surveys of students in-school; Focus groups with students-in-school; Interviews with students-out-ofschool
E3. Children’s assessment of their future (and perceived differences between boys and girls)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Surveys of students in-school; Interviews with students-out-ofschool
F3/H1. Children’s expectations of school (and perceived differences between boys and girls)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Surveys of students in-school; Interviews with students-out-ofschool
G3/I1. Children’s occupational goals (and perceived differences between boys and girls)	Dambae District – 3 pilot schools	Primary: Surveys of students in-school; Focus groups with students-in-school; Interviews with students-out-ofschool

7.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.3.1 Perceptions of Success, Occupational Goals and Expectations for the Future

In general, the students in the survey thought of success in broad terms rather than achieving a specific career or fulfilling a specific goal. Children were asked to complete the sentence: “In order to succeed in life, I need to...” A majority (56%) said that they needed to continue to study. 15% said they needed to stay healthy and 8% mentioned perseverance (“try to do things until I achieve them”). Researchers wanted to understand why students thought studying was a prerequisite to success. So, in both the focus groups and in the surveys, students in school were asked how studying would help them in the future. By far, the most common answers were the most general ones: students said that schools would help them “get knowledge” and “a good future.” Around half as many mentioned getting a good job or earning a lot of money, and even fewer said that school would help them learn a specific skill.

The fact that students generally tend to think of educational success in such broad terms might suggest that not all children have a well-developed understanding of *how* school can help them, though they believe that it *will somehow*. This insight will inform the way we look at student data on the relevance of school. By the same token, students appear to agree that school is *important* and *relevant* but aren't always sure how or why.

Though they described success in broad terms, when asked, all children in school and all but a few children out of school were able to talk about their ideal career. Table 7.1 shows the breakdown of what children said they hoped to be in the future. 59% listed professions that generally require a certain level of education beyond primary school to enter (doctor, teacher, business, manager, NGO staff, police, engineer). The most popular occupations were doctor and teacher, which together accounted for almost half of students. Some of the choice of occupation had to do with gender; for example, only girls' indicated they'd like to do sewing and only boys selected jobs in business or management.

What factors influence students' career aspirations? First and most obviously, students are picking an ideal job from the range of jobs they themselves are familiar with. Second, gender appears to limit the number of careers

that are “suitable” for a boy or for a girl, though there appear to be more limitations for girls than for boys. Finally, students' choice might be related to students' role models, as well as students' perceptions of the prestige and salary associated with each job.

Table 7.2: Students' Ideal Careers – Students-in-school and students out-of-school

	Boys	Girls	Total:	%
Doctor	7	10	17	24%
Teacher	6	8	14	20%
Dressmaker/Sewing		6	6	9%
Farmer	3	3	6	9%
Business/Manager	5		5	7%
Singer		4	4	6%
Phone Repair	3		3	4%
Factory Work	1	1	2	3%
Moto Repair	2		2	3%
NGO staff		2	2	3%
Police	2		2	3%
Costumier		1	1	1%
Decorator		1	1	1%
Driver	1		1	1%
Engineer	1		1	1%
Hair Dresser		1	1	1%
Never think about it		1	1	1%
Seller		1	1	1%

On average, students-in-school were able to name about 3.5 different professions; there was no significant difference between the number that girls could come up with versus boys. Together, in the focus groups, students were able to name more jobs, 46 in total⁴². Different professions appeared to be biased towards one gender or another to different degrees; while some jobs were identified as “equal opportunity,” (e.g. teacher, farmer) some jobs had a very strong gender bias (e.g. costumier for women and soldier for men). In general, students seemed to think there were fewer limitations on jobs for males than on jobs for females.

For example, when asked in survey if there were any jobs women can't do, 50% of students-in-school said yes; when asked if there were any a man couldn't do, only 32% said yes. Their parents were less likely to think certain professions were gender-specific (or perhaps were more likely to give the “politically correct” answer), but still put more limitations on women than men⁴³. Of the 46 jobs that students mentioned in the three focus groups, there were 11

that all focus groups agreed were for men only (commune or district chief; carpenter; driver; electrician; engineer; fisherman; forest worker; minister; painter; soldier; telephone repair). On the other hand, the groups only identified 3 jobs as exclusive to women (midwife, costumier, beautician). Interestingly, despite the evidence that students perceive a greater range of opportunities available for boys than for girls, when asked whether there were any differences between men and women when looking for a job, all three focus groups separately agreed that *girls have more chances than boys* in the job market – specifically, employers are more likely to hire and promote them.

When students were asked to name someone they admired, 20% of students still in school named a farmer (many, their own parents); 18% talked about a teacher; 14%, a masseuse, 14% a musician; 10% a doctor; and 10% a car repairman. Students' role models didn't always correspond to their chosen career, but it is certainly the case that the people students admire have a similar range of professions to students ideal jobs. When asked why they admired these people, students talked about both social characteristics (e.g. “are famous,” “have no violence in the family,” “are rich,”) and characteristics having to do with their job or skills (“good at what they do,” “can cure broken legs,” “are clever”). Researchers conversations with students also indicated that children equate certain jobs, like doctor, with a high salary and with respect, and are interested less because of the actual content (“cure broken legs”) and more because of the social standing the position implies (“are rich”).

Given their goals, how do children in Dambae think about their future? About 10% of students in school didn't think about the future at all; whereas 56% said that they think about it a lot. Most, but not all, are very hopeful for

⁴² It must be noted that boys tended to dominate the focus group discussions despite facilitators' attempts to include all students.

⁴³ 26% said there were jobs a woman couldn't do; 6% said there were jobs a man couldn't do

what the future will bring⁴⁴. Students at Charthmei were distinctly more hopeful than students at Veal Touch and at Samboo Meas (61% were very hopeful), which seems to make sense given the better school environment and the relative economic health of the local community. When students explained how they felt, the majority gave reasons related to school; they felt hopeful or less hopeful based on the fact that they were clever, or not clever. Students also mentioned that their hopefulness for the future was based on whether they had skills related to their job of choice and whether their parents supported them. There were no significant differences between girls' and boys' levels of hopefulness or how much they thought about the future.

7.3.2 Educational quality and relevance from the perspective of children

The majority of children in school agree that their education will be very relevant (88%) and very useful (96%) to their future. The overwhelming majority (98%) also agree that there is a specific subject in school that is important to their future career. Interestingly, students seem less optimistic that going to school will improve their life (48% are very hopeful that school will improve their life; 50% are somewhat hopeful; 2% are not at all hopeful). There is no significant difference between how relevant or useful boys and girls think that education is, but students who dropped out of school are less likely to think that school will improve their life, perhaps because they've already left school and are not sure if they will return.

Despite the fact that students say that their education is relevant, the analysis in study 1 demonstrated no relationship between how relevant students thought school is and their attendance or motivation to stay in school and showed how students generally thought about the benefits of school in general terms. As noted in study 1 and in the previous section of this report, students may indeed believe that education is useful, but this may not affect attendance because they don't understand how education can address their immediate problems and needs. Parents do have some ideas about the immediate benefits of sending their children to school. When asked if there was anything their children learned in school that was already useful, parents of children both in school and out of school said children:

- Can think quickly
- Can read, write and calculate
- Can calculate instead of parents
- Will get well-paid job to support family
- Very polite

Schools and communities in Dambae may have an opportunity to strengthen the connection between school and a students' daily life (and not just their future career or future happiness). What, then, do students actually want to know to help them day-to-day? When asked the most important things they need to know, without a prompt, 8% mentioned study skills. 33% said health and hygiene; 10% vegetable growing; 8% sewing; 5% small business skills; and the remaining students mentioned other various pre-vocational skills. By far, parents wanted their children to learn about vegetable growing (58%) and English (42%), so it seems that children's desires and beliefs about what they need for day-to-day life are somewhat different from their parents.

When given a list of subject to choose from, students chose the top three subjects listed in Table 7.3. In general, students did not feel confident about their knowledge of many community, health and social issues. Table 7.3 lists subjects that 30% or more of students in a given school said they knew very well as well as those subjects that 30% or more didn't know well at all. For example, in Charthmei, some students said they had very strong knowledge of HIV/AIDS and bird flu and some had very weak knowledge.

7.3.3 Educational quality and relevance from the perspective of researchers

⁴⁴ 36% said they are generally very hopeful and 40% said they were somewhat hopeful. Only 2% were not at all hopeful for the future and the rest didn't answer or said they weren't sure.

The Child Friendly Schools in Remote Areas (CFSRA) project is another project administered by KAPE and funded by Plan Cambodia already operating in Dambae district. It makes perfect sense for the REACH project to collaborate with and learn from the CFSRA team given their experience in the region. CFSRA focuses on helping schools adopt “child-friendly” measures along six different dimensions⁴⁵. To this end, the team works with schools to develop a plan and request school grants for selected activities supporting each dimension. Recently, the project worked with schools to evaluate their progress across all six dimensions. Dimension II has to do with effective schooling and specifically pertains to this project⁴⁶.

Table 7.4 shows the average score for 12 schools in Dambae District who participated in evaluations in the 2007/08 school year. Of particular interest for our research are sections 2.4) School curriculum and guidebook, 2.5) Life Skills Education Program, 2.6) Resources in the classroom and 2.8) Teaching and Learning Activities. For section 2.4, schools scored an average of 75%, or, in other words, completed an average of 4.5 out of 6 activities. For section 2.5, schools scored an average of 16.67%; section 2.6, 0% and section 2.8, 71.67%. It's clear from the evaluations that in general, schools in Dambae have a way to go in terms of addressing educational relevance and quality, though special focus needs to be made on life skills and classroom resources.

Our own primary research, though not focused specifically on evaluating educational relevance, supports the conclusions from the CFSRA data. Observations of teachers in the classroom showed that the level of engagement in the classroom was low in all three schools, and especially in Veal Touch (see Table 5.2). Only four of the nineteen teachers observed used child-friendly teaching methodology (e.g. soliciting participation, using groupwork, using projects and games) while two-thirds used out-dated rote methods with no lesson plan. Charthmei is the only school that currently offers life skills classes, despite the national requirement to provide life skills to children on a weekly basis. Though 56% of students said that they would need math in order to succeed in their future occupation, a majority (54%) of students said that math is their weakest subjects.

As discussed in the previous section, though children themselves may say that education is relevant to their lives, it seems that students may think of relevance in very general terms (e.g. relevant to “getting a good future”), but may not see how education is immediately relevant and applicable to solving pressing issues in the here and now. Given the reality that schools lack programs to link school to students' everyday lives, this attitude is not so surprising.

⁴⁵ 1) Inclusive Education; 2) Psychosocial Learning Environments; 3) Health, Nutrition, and Security; 4) Gender-Sensitive Learning Environments; 5) Community and Parental Engagement; 6) School Governance

⁴⁶ It makes sense to look at CFS scores because they are quickly becoming the national standard across Cambodia by which to judge educational quality. The six CFS dimensions and the relevant modules that come with each dimension were originally developed by KAPE with support from UNICEF as a pilot project in 2001. Since then, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports has adopted the approach and begun to apply CFS as an operating framework to improve educational quality across all of Cambodia.

Table 7.4: Average School Self Assessment Scores for CFS Dimension II, Effective schooling		
Key Component	Activities	Avg. Score
2.1 Environment resources	<i>School conserves natural environment (names of each category of plants, slogans, gardens...) for external studying or studying outside classroom.</i>	1.6/5 33%
	<i>School creates biodiversity gardens (land, water plants) linking to learning</i>	
	<i>School creates reading places for students.</i>	
	<i>School creates cultural places for students.</i>	
	<i>School assigns students to maintain and take care of environment resources.</i>	
2.2 Library	<i>School has library or mobile library for concerned students to search for and read materials</i>	1.3/5 25%
	<i>Library is nicely decorated, used and taken care of</i>	
	<i>Library has sufficient reading materials/books for students to read and look for what they need.</i>	
	<i>Library is functional and students and teachers use it for reading materials and looking for what they need.</i>	
	<i>Library has a record on number of users or borrowers of books/reading materials.</i>	
2.3 Resources room/workshop	<i>School has a resource room or workshop</i>	0/5 0%
	<i>Resource room or workshop is equipped with many kinds of items to be needed by both teachers and students</i>	
	<i>Staff responsible for the resource room or workshop plans well for maintenance and production of materials</i>	
	<i>Staff responsible for the resource room or workshop keeps well equipment and materials belong to it</i>	
	<i>Staff responsible for the resource room/workshop records all equipment and materials and those borrowed by users.</i>	
2.4 School curriculum and guidebook	<i>School implements the MoEYS curriculum by trying to fit it with local situation and needs (locality-based lessons).</i>	4.5/6 75%
	<i>School works out on school calendar to fit local situation and needs.</i>	
	<i>School has sufficient copies of studying guidebook as needed by teachers and students.</i>	
	<i>School distributes on time guidebooks to students.</i>	
	<i>School effectively manages and explains the use, the taking care and collection of guidebooks.</i>	
2.5 Life skills education program	<i>School creates vegetable growing and animal raising activities.</i>	0.83/5 16.7%
	<i>School creates invented market* and business activities for students (to practice).</i>	
	<i>School has housework activities for students to practice, such as cooking, sewing, curving in fruits.</i>	
	<i>School has arts activities such as singing, dancing and musical instrument players.</i>	
	<i>School creates vocational skill programs such as barber, motorbike repairer, sewing (tailoring).</i>	
	<i>School has room equipped with computer sets for learning and teaching the concerned skills.</i>	
	<i>Resource room person-in charge has clear plan and programs for accepting students to learn skills.</i>	
	<i>Resource room person in-charge has plan to produce and repair materials for meeting needs of students.</i>	
2.6 Resources available in classroom	<i>Resource person in-charge keeps, cleans and maintains always equipment and materials.</i>	0/5 0%
	<i>In general, in each classroom, there are decorated things, such as pictures, formulas, slogans..., corresponding to or reflecting class activities and students level or height.</i>	
	<i>In each classroom, materials and equipment are well kept, maintained and easily accessible when needed.</i>	
	<i>In each classroom, there are papers, posters and etc, on students and groups accomplishments.</i>	
	<i>In classroom there are large posters on key points of lessons already learnt (for each topic) serving as assistance to slow-learning students..</i>	
2.7 Classroom's in good order and well maintained	<i>Broken equipment/materials in classroom are fixed and repaired, and new or more in number is produced and well kept/maintained.</i>	2.7/5 53.3%
	<i>Classroom's always kept clean, such as walls, ceilings, floor.</i>	
	<i>Furniture and equipment are well kept in their good order and well maintained (no broken ones left in the backspace of the classroom).</i>	
	<i>Teacher's desk and students tables and chairs are well arranged and placed in good order fitting to daily class activities.</i>	
	<i>There are small and large boards which fit class activities of both teaching and learning.</i>	
2.8 Teaching and learning activities in general	<i>Doors, windows and furniture are well maintained, while the broken ones are fixed and repaired.</i>	3.4/5 71.6%
	<i>School assigns all forms of teaching and learning activities, such as in and out of classroom and in community.</i>	
	<i>School arranges studying activities at locations for both teaching and learning (marketplace, pagoda, resort and library).</i>	
	<i>School assigns students to interviews people for collecting data/information for compiling it into documents or completing the studying needs as required by each topic/subject.</i>	
	<i>School assigns various activities by inviting experienced persons from community to teach.</i>	
	<i>School creates competition program for becoming three good "good student and good child".</i>	

7.4 SUMMARY

Table 7.5: Study 3 Summary

	General Findings
Perceptions of Success, Occupational Goals and Expectations for the Future (E3, G3)	
Educational quality and relevance from the perspective of children (A3, C3, D3, F3)	
Educational quality and relevance from the perspective of researchers (B3)	

8. STUDY 4: CULTURALLY MEDIATED IMPEDIMENTS TO EDUCATIONAL ACCESS FOR GIRLS

Study 4 examines the extent to which ethnicity plays a role in educational access and quality for Cham students in the Dambae district of Kampong Cham province. As in the other three studies within the broader report, the primary aim of this research is to collect data to inform the design and implementation of REACH project interventions in Dambae.

Until relatively recently, most education development programs both in Kampong Cham and elsewhere have lumped ethnic Khmer and Cham children into one group with little differentiation in the interventions provided.⁴⁷ However, recent studies by local NGOs have demonstrated that Cham students in fact face culturally-specific challenges with regards to the state school system.⁴⁸ One major concern is the language barrier for Cham students whose first exposure to the Khmer language can occur in school. Another is a lack of sensitivity to cultural preferences such as the desire for religious instruction, donning of the traditional head-scarf for girls, or separate seating for boys and girls in the classroom (KAPE, 2007).

The primary data on dropout and repetition in this study comes from Veal Touch school, which is one of the REACH projects three initial pilot schools, and the only one of the three located in a Muslim community. The study also looks at primary data on Khmer language fluency among Cham children collected at five additional schools in the Dambae district⁴⁹ as well as various secondary sources including government statistics and relevant donor reports. In particular, this research draws heavily from an educational needs assessment conducted by KAPE in 2007 with funding from Save the Children Sweden, which focused on Cham and migrant children in Kampong Cham province.

8.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study sets out to explore the educational situation of Cham children in the Dambae district in Kampong

⁴⁷ An important exception in this regard refers to the Educational Support to Children in Underserved Populations Program (ES-CUP), which is a relatively new program that has begun to differentiate its programming between ethnic Khmer and Cham children. This program has been in operation for about two years and will be ending in 2008.

⁴⁸ One such study was the Educational Needs Assessment Relating to Cham and Migrant Children in Kampong Cham Province, completed by KAPE in 2007 with funding from Save the Children Sweden.

⁴⁹ This data was collected in collaboration with the CFSRA (Child Friendly Schools in Remote Areas) project, also administered by KAPE and funded by Plan International Cambodia.

Cham province, particularly the issues that affect educational inclusiveness for Chams as an ethnic minority. Therefore, the primary research question for the study is as follows:

Primary Research Question: To what degree do Cham populations in Dambae receive educational services from the state school system and what factors affect the provision of such services?

There is a widely held belief that Chams are not ethnically different from Khmers. However, previous research has found key indicators of difference (KAPE 2007). Cultural differences -- like the desire for religious instruction, or a strong preference against boys and girls sitting together – could affect parents' attitudes towards education; the fact that most Cham students do not speak Khmer as a primary language⁵⁰ and a dearth of teachers of Cham ethnicity, means that many students may struggle when they attend state schools and may be more at risk of dropout⁵¹. Hence the questions:

Research Question 2: To what degree are Islamic schools satisfying the desire of Cham families to provide educational opportunities for their children in comparison to state schools?

Research Question 3: What in general is the Khmer language proficiency among Cham children when they enroll in a state school?

Research Question 4: Are there any differences in repetition and dropout between Cham and Khmer children in state schools?

8.2 RESEARCH VARIABLES AND SAMPLING

This study includes primary data from six schools in Dambae district and secondary data to fill in the context of the Cham community and minority-education in Kampong Cham. The primary data related to dropout and parent attitudes came from one school, Veal Touch, which is one of the three pilot schools in the initial phase of the REACH project.

This study investigates five main variables in response to the research questions posed above. These variables are shown in Table 3.1 below. Due to limited time and resources, this study relies on secondary sources to understand some variables. As previously noted, the main secondary data source is a study conducted by KAPE just last year, focusing specifically on education for Cham populations in districts in Kampong Cham.

Table 8.1: Research Variables and Sources for Data

Variable	Scope	Source
A4. Comparative Enrollment Levels among Cham and Khmer Children	Dambae District	Primary: Survey of 20 teachers from 6 schools in Dambae
	Kampong Cham Province	Secondary: Information from KAPE 2007 study
B4. Status of Islamic Schools in the	Kampong Cham	Secondary: Information from KAPE 2007 study and Kampong

⁵⁰ In KAPE's 2007 study, a full 89% of Cham informants in Kampong Cham preferred to speak Cham exclusively in the household.

⁵¹ While prior research has established some definite concerns with regards to potential barriers to Cham children attending state schools (e.g. Khmer fluency, parents' cultural preference for Islamic Schools), this research did not look at student outcomes to understand effect of these barriers on Cham children's educational access. This study will use primary data collected from the school director at Veal Touch primary school to look for correlations between minority status and drop-out/repetition rates.

Local Community	Province	Cham Department of Religion and Cults
C4. Satisfaction Levels among Cham and Khmer Parents with respect to the State Schools	Veal Touch School	Primary: Interviews with parents of children from Veal Touch (both in school, and drop-outs)
	Kampong Cham Province	Secondary: Information from KAPE 2007 study
D4. Language Proficiency	Dambae District	Primary: Survey of 20 teachers from 6 schools in Dambae
	Kampong Cham Province	Secondary: Information from ESCUP 2006 survey
E4. Comparative Repetition/Dropout Levels among Cham and Khmer Children	Veal Touch School	Primary: Enrollment and Dropout/Repetition Data by ethnicity

8.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

8.3.1 Policy Context and Overview of Educational Indicators for Cham Minority Groups

The state religion and language of Cambodia are Buddhism and Khmer. As a result, there is a prohibition against teaching other religions and languages in state schools. Recently, some flexibility has been extended to bilingual education programs working in the formal education sector, which cater mainly to hill tribe groups in the northern provinces (e.g., Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri)⁵²; however, the limited flexibility in the provision of bilingual education models described above has only been allowed in the context of groups that are defined as ethnic minorities, which Chams are not considered to be. Thus, state schools like Veal Touch in Dambae that serve Cham communities are allowed to teach neither the language nor religion of the local community.

This inability to meet the Cham community's expectations is exacerbated by the lack of Cham representation in the local teaching force. A study by ESCUP in 2006 found that only 2 Cham students enrolled in the Provincial Teacher Training College from 2001-04 (0 or 1 every year). Due to ESCUP-sponsored interventions, 10 Cham students enrolled in 2005; however, intake still fell short of targets (ESCUP, 2006b). The same study looked at the actual local teaching force to confirm that Chams are indeed under-represented among state teachers in Kampong Cham, given their overall numbers in the general population (ESCUP, 2006b). The primary data from the research at hand affirms that Dambae also suffers a dearth of teachers of Cham ethnicity. Though the 6 schools surveyed had an average of 40% Cham students, *there were no Cham teachers* at any of the schools.

Interestingly, the same ESCUP surveyed showed that when local communities are left to their own devices to recruit community teachers for local schools, minority representation appears to increase dramatically (ESCUP 2006). This suggests that Cham communities may be interested in education but may not have available channels to realize such interests⁵³.

⁵² Advocacy among NGO groups have achieved an unofficial agreement for a three-year language bridge for ethnic minority groups in which children may receive instruction in their native language (in diminishing doses) up to Grade 3. This kind of instruction has been occurring in Community Schools supported by NGOs but in recent years there has been extension of bilingual education to the state system with assignments of state teachers to Community Schools and the limited introduction of bilingual education in state schools with support from UNICEF-CARE. CARE has been a leading proponent of bilingual education in the formal education system for many years, mainly with hill tribe groups. Its Highland Children Education Support Program (HCEP) has been operating in Ratanakiri since 2003 and has had considerable success with the development of Community Schools and bilingual education curricula. Recently, CARE and UNICEF have entered into a four-year partnership to extend HCEP models to the state education system in five provinces (Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri, Kratie, Stung Treng, and Preah Vihear).

⁵³ This speaks particularly to rigidities in the manner in which new teachers are recruited into the teaching force. As noted earlier, entry requirements to PTTCs exclude many from areas where there is a lack of secondary schools. In addition, past

Though it has been established that Cham students in Kampong Cham face some unique issues in school (particularly with regards to language), it has not been shown whether there are any differences between Cham and Khmer students along academic indicators like dropout rates or net enrollment rates.

The school director at Veal Touch primary school in Dambae district provided researchers with data on 298 students in his school, grades 1 through 6. This data provided the basis for correlational analysis on the relationship between ethnicity and dropout or repetition. Interestingly, no significant correlation was found in Veal Touch school between ethnicity and two indicators of academic success: whether or not a student passed a grade and whether or not a student was in the top ten of his or her class (see Table 8.2). This held true even when researchers separated out girl students or students in first grade.

There are a number of possible explanations for this finding. Researchers hypothesize that the overall dropout rates are so high for both Khmer and Cham students that they are past the point where there would be any differentiation between ethnicities.

Table 8.2: Correlation of ethnicity to measures of academic success

	In the top ten of class		Passed grade (e.g. didn't fail or dropout)	
	correlation	significant (p<.05)	correlation	significant (p<.05)
Khmer ethnicity (v. Cham ethnicity)	-0.05	no	0.07	no
Khmer girls (v. Cham girls)	-0.13	no	0.03	no
Khmer grade 1 (v. Cham grade 1)	-0.03	no	0.03	no

Unfortunately, government education and census statistics on children-out-of-school do not differentiate by ethnicity. Therefore, it is difficult to approximate net enrollment rates for Cham students and therefore impossible to compare rates of enrollment with Khmer students. For the purposes of this study, though, it's only important to note that Cham students do indeed represent a large proportion of students in Dambae (40% of all students in the 6 schools surveyed and 45% of girls), and are actually the majority in some schools. Given their unique linguistic needs and unique culture (as discussed below) it's difficult to justify *not* at least considering how interventions in schools can be designed to better accommodate Cham students.

8.3.2 Language proficiency and teaching trends

As explained previously, the Educational Support to Children in Underserved Populations Program (ESCUP) was the first program in Kampong Cham to consider the specialized education needs of the Cham community. In 2006, ESCUP undertook an investigation to empirically assess the degree to which language barriers impeded learning among Cham children in selected sites⁵⁴.

Survey results suggested that Cham children had significant difficulties understanding the language of instruction

corruption scams in the province have resulted in a virtual lock down of activities to accredit teachers through other means (see, for example, Geeves and Bredenberg, 2005). Currently, ESCUP and other projects are lobbying for special measures to accredit Community Teachers. While many MoEYS officials have expressed sympathy for such measures, they have also been quite frank about the difficulties of actually getting them approved, given the unfortunate history of earlier teacher accreditation efforts.

⁵⁴ ESCUP surveyed 56 primary school teachers at Grades 1 and 2 mostly in Tbong Khmum District. They used teachers' responses rather than direct assessments of children in order to quickly get a general assessment the situation across a large number of state schools (ESCUP, 2006a).

in comparison to ethnic Khmer children. The results were surprising and even more so given the fact that state teachers have generally *underestimated* language barriers in similar surveys⁵⁵ and so may be underreporting the extent of the problem.

Table 8.3: Proficiency levels Indicated by State Teachers with respect to Cham Children (N=56 Teachers)

Description of Language Proficiency by Individual Teachers	Percentage of Teachers Responding	
	Grade 1	Grade 2
9. Nearly all understand Khmer instruction very well	36%	54%
10. Some understand Khmer language instructions very well	32%	25%
11. Most can understand Khmer language instruction a little bit but not very well	32%	21%
12. Most cannot understand Khmer instruction well at all	0%	0%

Source: ESCUP, 2006a

First, teachers reported that 98% of Cham children at Grade 1 spoke Cham and not Khmer as their primary language. Second, about a third of the teachers surveyed reported that ‘most Cham children in their classrooms could understand a little Khmer but not very well’ (see Table 8.3). These patterns were found to improve somewhat at Grade 2; nevertheless, 21% of teachers still reported that the majority of such children still understood only a little bit of Khmer.

According to the same ESCUP survey cited above, 69% of Cham community members indicated that very few or no teachers in their local schools could speak Cham. The fact that a third or more Cham children may enroll in state schools in Kampong Cham with little understanding of the language of instruction, coupled with the fact that a majority of teachers speak little or no Cham, makes for a potentially serious problem.

The primary data from the present research in Dambae supports the findings of the ESCUP survey with a few important points to note. While about 71% of students represented in the 6 schools surveyed spoke only Cham at home, *none* of the teachers spoke Cham as their first language. Similarly to the ESCUP report, when Dambae teachers were surveyed, 45% responded that only some students understand well. This of course suggests that some students *don't* understand so well and is made more alarming when we consider again that teachers tend to underestimate learning difficulties. When asked if minority children studied as fast as Khmer children, 55% responded that they were 'not sure' and when asked if Cham children participated well in class activities, 30% again were unsure. Both are points of concern especially as they highlight the lack of attention paid to minority students' needs.

One qualitative observation from the research team serves to highlight the extent of the linguistic problem in Dambae, and the extent to which teachers may be underestimating the problem. When one Khmer team-member went out to complete the interviews with out-of-school students, one of the Cham girls she was interviewing did not respond to her questions. Eventually she realized that the girl did not understand the questions in Khmer, and she had to simplify the language so she could follow.

By far the most ominous result, and perhaps the most relevant for determining REACH interventions in Dambae, was teachers' attitudes towards potential programming specifically for Cham children. When asked if teachers might be interested in participating in a special project for students who don't speak Khmer well, 10% said they were not sure and 40% said no flat out. When ESCUP asked a similar question in another district, responses were nearly 100% positive. This speaks to the potential lack of community support for any interventions which specifically target the Cham population.

12.1.1 Attitudes in the Cham community and the growing importance of Islamic Schools

Interviews with parents in Dambae district did not include any specific questions about culture or ethnicity. In

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See, for example, surveys conducted by CARE in Ratanakiri Province for the Highland Children's Education Program (HCEP).

fact, only 8 parents out of a total of 71 parents were Cham. Though difficult to draw any statistically significant conclusions, a look at the responses of these 8 parents does bring out some interesting conclusions. For most questions, Cham parents' response patterns matched that of the overall response patterns. This was also true of questions about gender-fixed behaviors and gender equity, one particular area of concern of this study. However, there were some differences to note:

- Interestingly, when asked whether there were any jobs a man could not do or any jobs a woman could not do, all eight Cham parents said “no,” whereas some Khmer parents said yes.
- When looking at questions related to barriers to going to school, and at school satisfaction, all eight Cham parents mentioned teacher absence again and again. The second most important barrier appeared to be poverty.
- *All* Cham parents said that their children had goals in life and knew what their goals were; 5 out of 8 said that they talk to their children often about the importance of education (compared to 35% overall); the same number said they talk to their children often about their future (compared to 20% overall)

These findings suggest unsurprisingly that Cham parents have similar attitudes towards education their children as Khmer parents and are perhaps *more* likely to be concerned about education quality (and teacher absence) and *more* likely to talk to their children about their futures.

Islamic Schools in Dambae and Kampong Cham

Total Schools*:	3
Total Students*:	2,673
Average Enrollment*:	891
Average No of Teachers*:	13
Average Teacher/pupil ratio*:	1:68
Most taught subject**:	Koran
Least taught subject**:	Mathematics
Percentage Using Cham as medium of instruction**:	90%
Percentage where boys & girls sit apart**:	100%
Percentage paying teachers**:	10%
Average years of education of most educated <i>tuan</i> **:	7.6 yrs
Average years of education of least educated <i>tuan</i> **:	3.8 yrs

*For Dambae District, Source: Kampong Cham Department of Religion and Cults

**For Kampong Cham, Source: KAPE, 2007

Though our own survey did not ask any questions about culturally specific needs, survey findings from a study conducted by KAPE and Save the Children Sweden indicate that the Cham community in Kampong Cham places a very high degree of importance on the instruction of both religion and language for their children while at school. Indeed, all 80 community members interviewed in the KAPE/SCS study indicated that these subjects were either ‘important’ or ‘very important’ with a majority tending towards ‘very important’. The inability of the state education system to meet these expectations may impact participation rates among children of Cham ethnicity.

Indeed, KAPE's previous research shows that the Cham community in Kampong Cham has a strong sense of its own identity, but is highly deferential to the majority ethnic group and does not wish to cause friction through advocacy activities that may be perceived as self-serving. Rather than risking rocking the status quo, the Chams may be turning to their own devices to meet their desires for their children’s education; in recent years, this has meant sending their children to independent Islamic Schools.

As explained earlier in this report, there are 5 mosques and three Islamic schools in Dambae province (Kampong Cham Dept of Religion and Cults 2008). These three schools together serve a student population that's approximately 1/7 of the total number of students in the state system in Dambae

and have a pupil to teacher ratio of 1 teacher to 68 students. Though official statistics do not report how many students in Islamic schools also attend state schools, a previous study by KAPE showed that 4 of ten schools reported that *all* their children also attended state school; 2 reported that *most* attended and the other 4 reported that *half or less than half* attended state schools (2007). Because there are no clear statistics on the number of Cham

children enrolled in state schools, it is not clear what percentage of total school age population current enrollment at Islamic Schools represents. At over 2,500 children in Dambae and over 20,000 in Kampong Cham it is significant, and growing.

In the KAPE survey, researchers asked Islamic schools why they thought Cham children preferred to attend Islamic Schools. The most frequently cited reason was that boys and girls are made to sit separately when in class. The next set of most frequently cited reasons included curricular issues (e.g., learning Malay and Arabic), more flexible school hours, and distance to the state school (See Table 4.3 for details). Quality issues such as teacher attendance and preparation did not figure prominently among reasons for preferred attendance.

Table 8.4: Most Important Reasons Cited for Students Attending Islamic School Rather than State School (N=10)

Question: What are the most important reasons that children attend your school rather than the State School?	Responses	No. citing reason	%
	The state school is not responsive to the needs of the Cham community in terms of curriculum (e.g., Cham Language, Islam, etc.).	5	50%
	Students want to study Arabic or Malay in order to work outside the country.	7	70%
	School hours of the Islamic School are more flexible.	7	70%
	The state school is too far away.	7	70%
	The quality of education at the Islamic School is better.	1	10%
	Teachers' attendance at the Islamic School is better.	2	20%
	The children are separated by sex when they study.	10	100%
	Other: (State teachers are lazy)	1	10%

Overall, it was surprising that more Islamic Schools did not cite the failure of state schools to teach about Islam as a leading cause. Nevertheless, it would appear that there are a number of important points of difference in the way that Islamic Schools are organized and in what they teach that gives them an important advantage over the state schools (KAPE 2007).

Although a sizable proportion of the Cham community may prefer the Islamic Schools to state schools, there are some points of concern with regards to the quality of education that Cham children may be receiving there. Mainly, these schools do not appear to be subject to any form of accreditation that would ensure minimum standards of educational practice. For example, only one of the schools in the KAPE study indicated that it taught Mathematics and only three indicated that they taught Khmer. Thus, if a Cham child attended Islamic schools exclusively, he or she might not learn maths nor Khmer, which are core subjects in the state schools. In addition, many of the *tuans* who teach at the Islamic Schools seem to have highly variable levels of education themselves with many indicating that they had only studied to the level of primary education. This is at odds with Cambodia's efforts to raise the basic education level of all primary school teachers to 12 years.

12.2 SUMMARY

Table 8.5: Study 4 Summary

	General Findings
Policy background and overview of educational indicators (A4, E4)	
Language proficiency and teaching trends (D4)	
Attitudes in the Cham community and the growing importance of Islamic Schools (B4, C4)	

13. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The four studies above begin to fill out a well-rounded picture of the educational situation in Dambae District. Of course, this is only the first step and the actual activities and interventions that are developed from this research will need to be flexible and have built in evaluation mechanisms so that they can shift with new information and changing situations.

Study one shows that there is a serious problem with low attendance in the three schools surveyed, with no significant difference between boys and girls. Despite low attendance, a majority of students say they want to continue school until the university level. This is true of both boys and girls as well and both groups generally tend to think that in reality, they will not be able to continue as long as they wish. When trying to understand more about the motivations for why girls and boys go to school, study one found that the positive motivations for attending were very broad (e.g. get knowledge, have a good future), while the barriers to attendance were very concrete and immediate. The four main barriers that were identified were poverty (especially student needs to earn money for the family, or student can't afford remediation), housework (especially working in the cassava field), and teacher absence coupled with distance from school. In general, students agreed that barriers to attending school were more likely to affect girls than boys, particularly housework, which almost all groups agreed was more of the girl's duty than the boy. Both boys and girls were moderately hopeful about the future.

Study two attempted to identify the factors surrounding dropout in Dambae. Students, parents, and teachers overwhelmingly cited economic factors as reasons for dropout. Particularly, the opportunity cost of going to school in an area where labor is in high demand and the real cost of attending school, particularly when it comes to remediation. Interestingly, despite the focus on economic factors, when looking at dropout across all of Kampong Cham, dropout had no significant relationship with the poverty level in the community; however, dropout had a *negative* correlation with rates of out-migration which seems to suggest that in places where there's enough work closeby, children and parents may be more tempted to forgo school for the immediate benefit of the value of the child's labor. Some other reasons for dropout, besides financial, included teacher absence, the "slow learner" phenomenon, teacher punishment, peer groups, and the cultural importance of family and honoring one's parents. Perhaps relevant to our own interventions, the majority of students who dropped out do want to return to school.

Though study one began to look at educational relevance as a possible motivation to attend school, study three took the inquiry a bit further to try to understand how relevant students believed school was to their lives, and how relevant school was from the perspective of the researchers. The main takeaway from this study was that students think school is important and useful in theory, but they think about the benefits in very broad and future-facing terms rather than understanding the immediate benefits. From the perspective of the researchers, school quality has a long way to improve, and the first priority should be to find ways to show students how school can be useful to address their very real day-to-day problems. Study three also showed specific topics that students were interested in studying.

Finally, study four took a slightly different approach from the other studies, focusing exclusive on education for Cham students. In general, the study found that students of Cham ethnicity make up a large percentage (sometimes even a majority) of the students in some Dambae schools. Though they may want to blend into the majority culture, survey data seems to indicate that some students may have specific needs when it comes to instruction in the Khmer language. Sadly, but perhaps most importantly, there is not much teacher support for Cham-specific interventions (possibly because there were no Cham teachers in these schools), so interventions may have to focus on recruiting community teachers of Cham ethnicity or working with Cham parents and students to strengthen their collective voice.

Based on these findings, the research team developed a preliminary menu of interventions. In a meeting with

school directors, and the Provincial and District offices of education, the team presented the research and solicited their ideas for possible interventions. Many of the ideas that came out of this meeting overlapped with the team's own first assessment. Next, the team consolidated all the recommendations into the menu of options presented in Table 9.1 below.

The table shows the original objectives of the REACH project, suggested by KAPE and approved by Plan Australia and Cambodia. The next column shows relevant research findings that inform the objective. The third column shows the modified objective, based on the needs identified in the research process, and the final column shows the list of activities that are recommended to address the given issue.