Foreign Agricultural Service, United States Department of Agriculture

Cambodia McGovern-Dole Food for Education Project Phase II

Final Evaluation

April 2017

This publication was produced at the request of the United States Department of Agriculture. It was prepared independently by DC Research.

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT FOOD FOR EDUCATION PROJECT PHASE II

With funding support from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), International Relief & Development (IRD) implemented the McGovern Dole Education Project - Phase 2 in Cambodia from 2012 to 2017. The aim of the program is to improve the literacy, health, and dietary practices of primary-school-aged children.

Agreement Number: FFE-442-2012/028-00
Project Duration: 2012-2017
Implemented by: International Relief & Development

Evaluation Authored by: DC Research

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

FOOD FOR EDUCATION PROJECT PHASE II

APRIL, 2017

Phnom Penh
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge the staff of International Relief and Development (IRD), Kampong Chhnang Provincial Office of Education, Youth and Sport (POE), District Office of Education (DOE) in Kampong Chhnang, and targeted schools for their contribution and support for this final evaluation. We especially thank the IRD Office staff, Mr. Son Siveth, *Country Representative*, Mr. Veurn Vouth, *Deputy Program Manager* and Mr. Thovy Hsandy, *M&E Specialist,* for providing us the opportunity to work together and for their invaluable input and support in the design and implementation of the study. We also extend sincere and warm regards to IRD field monitors (FMs) for their invaluable input and timeless support from the pre-test to the end of fieldwork, and to all participating respondents.

Finally, we express thanks to our Research Advisor, Mr. Abelardo Cruz; Dr. Sieng Sokha, for his contribution and comments; the two Field Supervisors, for their well-prepared, wonderful field supervision and arrangement with support from their enumerators; the two groups that handled focus group discussions (FGDs); and, our Data Team for their invaluable insight, keen analysis and patient editing of the document. We also thank Mr. Chhim Chhun for his contribution and providing support of statistical analysis.

DC Research

April 2017

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CC	Commune Council
CDC	Council for Development of Cambodia
CFS	Child-Friendly School
CSB	Corn-Soy Blend
DOE	District Office of Education, Youth and Sport
D&D	Decentralization and Deconcentration
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FFE	Food for Education
FFW	Food For Work
FMs	Field Monitors
HQ	Headquarters
KIIs	Key Informant Interview
IRD	International Relief and Development
LSS	Lower Secondary School
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations
MoH	Ministry of Health
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NEP	NGOs Education Partnership
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
POE	Provincial Office of Education, Youth and Sport
PTTC	Provincial Teacher Training College
RTTC	Regional Teacher Training Centre
RWHS	Rain Water Harvesting Systems
SPSS	Statistic Package for Social Sciences
SSC	School Support Committee
THR	Take-Home Ration
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WFP	World Food Programme
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With funding support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), IRD implemented this **Food for Education Project, Phase 2** from September 2012 to April 2017 in seven districts of the rural province of Kampong Chhnang in Cambodia. The program was designed to improve both educational and quality of life outcomes for school-aged children at 132 targeted schools in Kampong Chhnang, mainly through incentive based school-meals, improved health awareness through training and medications, as well as sanitary conditions through infrastructure development. These efforts reached a total of 155,526 community members comprised of students, teachers, volunteer cooks, School Support Committee (SSC) members, boat operators, and government officers. The project's achievements were measured against four objectives:

- Improved quality of literacy instruction through incentivized teacher attendance, better access to school supplies and materials, and increased skills and knowledge of school administrators;
- Improved student attentiveness, primarily through on-site school feeding to decrease short-term hunger, along with other measures to improve student health and nutrition;
- Improved student attendance through community awareness by mobilization activities, student enrollment campaigns, economic and cultural incentives, reduced health-related absences, infrastructural improvements, and an increased capacity of government institution; and
- Improved knowledge of health and hygiene practices by conducting training on nutrition, and safe food preparation and storage practices; providing hygiene and sanitation practices to students, SSCs, cooks, and parents, and providing student access to deworming.

This final evaluation was conducted through interviews and site observations at one-quarter of the total schools, with the participation of 39 school directors, 173 teachers, 1,350 students, and 115 representatives from the communities, as well as with DOEs and POEs. A summary of the evaluation findings follows:

Assistance from the Project responded to school issues and needs, especially on improving teaching quality and learning outcomes. This was shown through improved quality of literacy instruction, improved student attentiveness and attendance, and improved knowledge and implementation of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices. Second, the Project is aligned with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports' (MoEYS's) policies and education reforms programs under the Education Strategic Plan (ESP); it had appropriate approaches in school selection and it was appropriate to local context both as a response to the identified needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders and in the content and method of services delivery.

The project's implementation was characterized by a strong relationship between project field staff and project beneficiaries, including school directors, POE, DOE, SSC and community, volunteers, and parents. This inclusiveness enabled local partners to share roles and resources, thereby helping to fulfill the stated objectives. The value of the Project's interventions was assessed at a high rating.

IRD mobilized local participation and resources which made the Project cost-efficient. Strict monitoring of the quality of goods and services delivered ensured an efficient use of project resources, and quality was maintained through the promotion of food safety standards in the school-feeding component and through construction standards of facilities built by the Project. The project also established a project management system, with information gathered from DOE structures, school directors and implementing actors (e.g. SSC, cooks, teachers), and IRD field staff (on matters related to food storage and cooking). Additionally, capacity-building activities were integral to optimizing the skills of key persons for managing the different project initiatives. Furthermore, all reportable project information was compiled by IRD's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.

The main observed changes resulting from the Project, as based on the evaluation's field visits, were found to be, in descending order: improved health of students, reduced school absences, better attention to study, and increased rate of promotion to the next grade. As for teachers, their attendance rates and the quality of their teaching also improved. Changes were also found outside the schools with improved community participation, greater concern about nutrition and food safety, and increased general concern about children's welfare. A comparative assessment of baseline and endline outcome indicators showed overwhelmingly positive change, which suggests that the Project has had real results.

PROJECT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Table 1. Eight Outcome Indicators

The data presented in the table below was collected by IRD staff on an annual basis throughout the Project's implementation. Data was drawn from responses provided by project informants—most of whom were teachers, school directors, students, and members of SSCs—to a questionnaire that the Project had designed for tracking key performance indicators.

No	PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	Baseline	FY14	FY15	FY16	*Final Target*	Final Result
1	% of students in target schools indicated by teachers to be "attentive" or "very attentive" during class	77.00%	87.82%	90.83%	94.25%	*90.00%*	91.81%
2	Number of students in target schools who indicate that they are "hungry" or "very hungry" during the school day	8,732 (28%)	2,199 (7%)	0	0	*0*	0
3	% of students in target schools who miss less than 10 school days a year due to illness	95.00%	97.00%	99.00%	100.00%	*95.00%**	98.71%
4	% adults in target communities who agree that education is important to their children's future	88.00%	97.00%	100.00%	98.00%	*90.00%**	98.33%
5	% of target beneficiaries (students, teachers, SSCs) who use appropriate hand washing practices	67.00%	75.03%	99.70%	100.00%	*80.00%**	92.25%
6	% of students in target schools who achieved a passing score on a test of good health and hygiene practices	50.70%	68.00%	99.00%	99.67%	*65.00%*	89.49%
7	% of cooks and SSC members at target schools who achieve a passing score on a test of safe food preparation and storage	79.30%	98.55%	100.00%	100.00%	*90.00%*	99.07%
8	% of students, teachers and SSC members in target schools who achieve a passing score on a test of good nutrition and dietary practices	53.70%	83.37%	99.00%	99.69%	*65.00%*	93.87%

*Note: * The baseline survey was reassessed part-way through the Project and resulted in some of the final targets being very close in value to their original baseline number. This should be noted and accounted for as appropriate in the quantitative analysis portion of the evaluation which addresses the achievement of project indicators and targets.*

Project components included the following interventions: improving the quality of teaching for better education outcomes, promoting the enrollment of schoolchildren, improving practices on nutrition and WASH, and providing support for the transport of school-related items to floating villages. IRD's school feeding project is likely non-sustainable because it demands donor support to make it financially manageable. This project cannot be turned over to MoEYS due to the current lack of ESP policies and budget allocations for assuming the Project's activities. Meanwhile, the constraints of poor households make it unsustainable among community residents as a locally supported initiative. IRD attempted to identify sustainable strategies through an "exit workshop" which endorsed continuation, but local fiscal constraints and institutional limitations of MoEYS remain unaddressed.

These recommendations are propounded on the assumption that IRD and USDA will turn the Project over to the government, the school, and communities, which has already been discussed with these stakeholders. Therefore, strategies suggested here address mainly the before mentioned actors, although alternate strategies may exist.

For MoEYS and DOE

The MoEYS has structured Child Friendly Schools as a program within its current education reforms for District Technical Management Teams (DTMTs) and school clusters. MoEYS should enhance the implementation of school reforms that include school facility construction and maintenance as well as sustained quality teaching for improved education outcomes (higher rates of school enrollment, better rates of school year completion and grade promotion, and reduced rates of school drop-out). It is recommended that:

- DOE's M&E unit be supported in monitoring the clustering of Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) through better guidelines and reporting procedures; furthermore, there should be a focus on inclusiveness (e.g., children with physical and intellectual disabilities) and incentivized student attendance, with state subsidies offered to poor families and extra teaching support provided to children who are lagging behind their peers;
- Effective Teaching and Learning (ETL) techniques on child-friendly pedagogy be sustained through periodic teacher training, distribution of classroom learning support materials, and classroom monitoring; and
- CFS programming be supported by UNICEF through its technical and financial support, inclusive of performance monitoring and program re-assessment, with expanded support for WASH-related initiatives.

Prospective New NGO/INGO Development Partners

If IRD with USDA could tap new partnering agencies with which to continue the Project's initiatives, and make use of good practices and lessons learned from Phase 2 project implementation, then future programming would be even more effective, especially if:

- Project design considers not only implementation strategies but also program sustainability strategies, given the absence of a clear funding commitment from MoEYS to carry out the Project independently;

- Collaboration is aligned more closely with the major relevant parties (government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)/international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), school administrators, and local communities) for a common understanding on project strategies and on various approaches for enhancing the potential of the Project;
- A more comprehensive assessment is conducted of the Project beneficiaries and partner stakeholders (schools, communities, CBOs and support institutions) to ensure that the Project is designed to be more responsive to their needs while also more successful in strengthening their capacities to sustain the Project on their own;
- Innovative approaches are piloted to more broadly seek out solutions to programmatic challenges and to better manage potential risks; and
- Collaborative, integrated approaches are introduced to communities and/or households in order to better prepare them to assume the costs of certain project components, such as community-feeding. Approaches include: promotion of new activities to generate supplemental income and/or food for supporting school-feeding projects, better management of resources to sustain nutritional needs, transference of the school-based feeding component to a community-based one (Positive Deviance/Hearth approach).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Cambodia currently ranks 143rd out of 188 countries in the 2016 Human Development Index with an estimated 13.5% of the population living below the poverty line according to the latest World Bank figures collected in 2014 (World Bank, 2014). The Khmer Rouge period left Cambodia's social institutions and infrastructure in ruins. While the Government of Cambodia has made significant progress in rebuilding its educational system, over 40% of persons aged 15-19 fail to complete primary school. Primary school enrollment rates are high, but 72% of children are over the age of six when they first enter school. Although there is a declining gender gap, the opportunity cost of keeping a child out of school still strongly affects girls. Many children repeat grades, resulting in an average of more than 10 years for students to complete primary school. Rates of child malnutrition are among the highest in East Asia, with 45% of Cambodian children demonstrating moderate or severe stunting as a result.

IRD is a non-profit organization specializing in international development and humanitarian assistance in over 40 countries. IRD's mission is to reduce the suffering of the world's most vulnerable groups and the provide tools and resources needed to increase their self-sufficiency. IRD receives funding from US bilateral assistance, multinational donors, as well as private foundations and individuals, to implement its projects.

IRD implemented a three-year grant from the USDA to leverage food aid resources and $4,125,360.82 in cash funding to improve literacy of school-aged children in Cambodia in the rural province of Kampong Chhnang.

The Project commenced in September 2012 and concluded in April 2017. It follows a prior grant from October 2008 to September 2012 in the same province, targeting 110 of the same schools and 22 new schools. The project served 47,392 students, 1,246 teachers, 328 volunteer cooks, 1,029 SSC members, 223 boat operators, and 30 government officers in 132 rural schools in seven districts of Kampong Chhnang province.

1.2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Project sought to improve the literacy of school-age children and increase the use of health and dietary practices by achieving:

- Improved quality of literacy instruction through incentivized teacher attendance, better access to school supplies and materials, and increased skills and knowledge of school administrators;
- Improved student attentiveness, primarily through on-site school feeding to decrease short-term hunger, along with other measures to improve student health and nutrition;
- Improved student attendance, through community awareness by mobilization activities, student enrollment campaigns, economic and cultural incentives, reduced health-related absences, infrastructural improvements, and an

increased capacity of government institution; and
- Improved knowledge of health and hygiene practice by conducting training on nutrition and safe food preparation and storage practices; providing hygiene and sanitation practices to students, SSCs, cooks, and parents, and providing student access to deworming.

Additionally, the Project is improving school facilities by building wells, water stations, and latrines, which provide both an incentive to enrollment/attendance and help to reduce health-related absences caused by water/hygiene-related diseases. The improved water and sanitation amenities also support the health education message.

The Project was implemented in close partnership with local School Support Committees, (Parent Teacher Associations), and the strengthening of their capacity was an important feature. In addition, the Project sought to render these gains sustainable by strengthening the capacity of education officials to implement and manage school feeding activities through training and advocacy. Specifically, the Project activities were coordinated as appropriate with the main stakeholders in Cambodia: the Ministry of Education, MoEYS, the Ministry of Health (MoH), and the World Food Programme (WFP).

1.3. Purpose and Scope of the Final Evaluation

The purpose of the final evaluation is to assess whether the **Food for Education Project, Phase 2** project, implemented between September 2012 and April 2017, has achieved the expected results, as outlined in the results framework and in consultation with the USDA M&E Policy Manual.

The final evaluation will serve the USDA, the Government of Cambodia, and IRD and its partners, through an independent party assessment of the following aspects:

- Achievements of project objectives;
- Soundness of the Project approach and component strategies, through analysis of success in meeting targeted objectives, creating a sense of project ownership among the beneficiaries and partners, and establishing local means for sustaining project results; and
- Analysis of the constraints, lessons learned, and evidence-based best practices for evaluating strategic opportunities upon which to re-design project activities for even greater impact on education in Cambodia.

1.4. Evaluation Methodology

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches in its methodology. Supplementing the quantitative data, the qualitative approach used key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs from schools, communities, SSCs, DOEs, POE, and IRD. Information was also gathered from relevant stakeholders who had been involved with the Project.

The consultancy team led in the design of the data collection tools (questionnaires and forms for individual interviews and information gathering, question guides for KIIs, and FGDs). The tools and forms were developed based on the Project logframe and finalized following input and comments from IRD. After approval, the consultancy team conducted a one-day training for all enumerators and supervisors to ensure their full understanding of the questions in the individual questionnaires and forms; questionnaires and forms were updated based on their feedback and recommendations. The revised tools and forms were then piloted in one school note served by the Project but similar in other characteristics of size, location, and student population.

The team conducted a pre-test where they carried out all procedures that would be done during actual field work in order to familiarize the enumerators and field supervisors with the questionnaires and forms and the protocols of their use. A feedback session was then held to discuss and make necessary corrections and adjustments to the documents.

The qualitative tools also provided short but clear instruction to guide and enable the moderators to fully capture and ably collect data from the field without close supervision. The qualitative approach used semi-structured questions that were posed by enumerators who had been assessed to have stronger qualifications.

1.5. Sampling and Sample Size

Individual interviews used a combination of stratified and systematic sampling techniques; a selected school was considered a sampling unit, with at least 36 interviews conducted at each.

The population was based on a list provided by IRD. The first step was to determine the sampling interval (N), choose a random starting point, and select every N^{th} member thereafter. This technique was used consistently to guarantee uniformity between the two field survey teams and to ensure overall validity and reliability. The number used for the random starting point of each sample was generated by an online source (www.random.com).

Teachers from each selected school were interviewed in groups of three; the same methods and techniques were applied to students—a set of three was also required to be gathered to respond to questions posed by an enumerator.

The qualitative methods used sixteen FGDs, exactly two FGDs per selected district, with five to seven participants at each FGD, and a mix of men and women who had actively participated in the Project. KIIs were conducted with the school directors, DOEs, POE, and IRD.

Table 2. Samples Used for the Final Evaluation

No.	Sample Size Break Down	Projection	Sample (Female)
1	Student Survey in Group	1,320	1,350 (762)
2	Teacher Survey in Group	152	173 (82)
3	School Director	39	39 (3)
4	School Observation	39	39 (0)
5	School Support Committee (FGD)	40	31 (10)
6	Volunteer Cooks	39	40 (36)
7	Community Members (FGD)	40	44 (36)
8	Boat Operators	12	12 (10)
9	DOE/POE	8	16 (4)
10	IRD	--	10 (3)
	Total Respondents	**1,689**	**1,754 (946)**

The sample of respondents was chosen mainly from students who were considered primary beneficiaries of the Project, thus, sampling selection was applied to the student population. The other respondents were considered support groups and proportion was functionally supported. The random sampling technique was applied strictly—but purposive sampling was additionally applied to specific samples in order to support the finding of the study.

The estimation formula for the sample size is: $n=(z^2)(r)(1-r)(f)(k)/(p)(n)(e^2)$

The z-statistic to use was 1.96 for the 95% confident interval. The standard deviation value of r was set at 1.0 in order to allow for a small estimate of variance, calculated as (r)(1-r). The default value of *f,* the sample design effect, was set at 1.2. The main survey indicator to measure was about 10%. The non-response multiplier, *k*, was chosen to reflect the country's own experience with non-response, typically under 10% in developing countries; a value of 1.1 for *k*, therefore, would be a conservative choice. The parameter, p, can generally be taken from the most recent census, although a reasonable rule of thumb is to use 0.03 for each year of age that the target population represents; for example, if the target population is 1 to 6 grade schoolchildren, aged about 11.5 years old, p would be equal to 0.345 (0.03*11.5). The parameter, n, is often about 6.0 in most developing countries (Gay; Mill & Airasian, 2009)[1]. For the margin of error, e, it was recommended to set the level of precision at 10% of r, therefore e = 0.1r.

n=(3.84)(1-0.1)(1.2)(1.1)/(0.1)(0.345)(6)(0.01) **[n=2203]**

[1] Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. (2009). *Educational research: Competencies for anaysis and application.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

According to the above, one-quarter of the total target schools should be sufficient in producing a statistically valid sample size for the purposes of this evaluation; therefore, a total of 39 schools were selected, comprising one-quarter of the total schools targeted under the Project.

1.6. Data Collection

Data collection was carried out February 13–24, 2017. The first day consisted solely of study team training on the questionnaire translated into the Khmer language. During the second day a pre-test was administered in Kralanh primary school, Kampong Tralach District, Kampong Chnnang Province; after completion, a reflection and feedback session was held with the school at the provincial level to involve all related DC Team for further comments, revisions, and suggestions. After their inputs, comments, and suggestion, a final version of the questionnaire was developed to be used in field work.

The sampling techniques and sample selection as well as other protocols were applied exactly as planned in practical field work so as to ensure that enumerators become familiar with real circumstances and well-prepared in handling the field work.

Table 3. Selected Respondents by District

District	# of Selected Schools	# of Selected Students	# of Selected Teacher/ Director/ DOE/POE/IRD	# of Selected Cook/SSC/ Community
Kampong Tralach	3	133	18	3
Samaki Meanchey	3	132	21	4
Toeuk Phos	7	202	53	39
Boribo	3	113	20	13
Rolea Phear	8	271	50	41
Kampong Leng	6	199	43	6
Chilkiri	9	312	22	9
POE/IRD	-	-	11	-
Total	**39**	**1,362**	**238**	**115**

1.7. Data Quality Assurance

In order to achieve the day-by-day planned targets, Supervisors guaranteed the quality of work by the team by applying four different layers of quality control, as cited below:

1. Quality checks and supervision were carried out through on-the-ground observations of enumerators, many of whom had previous experience with interviews and survey work led by DC Research;

2. Cross-checking between enumerators as pairs to help each other and assure that the completed entries were done in the correct manner, as had been specified;
3. Daily checking of all completed questionnaires; meetings were organized with enumerators every evening to revise, update, and correct detected data errors; Supervisors also advised enumerators of the work to be done over the next few days and, each morning, a short review of research and quality control protocols was provided to refresh their understanding; and
4. Some of the individuals interviewed were seen a second time by a different member of the survey team in order to reinforce the confidence of the data gathered from them.

For the qualitative information, data specialists grouped the responses from FGDs, and KIIs into themes, which were then encoded into a matrix table. Analysis and synthesis of responses from group discussions provided findings for this report, some of which substantiated the survey data, and some provided insight into themes that emerged independent of survey data responses.

1.8. STRENGTHS

The total sample size for this final evaluation (Table 2 and 3, above) of 1,754 would, theoretically, be of sufficient magnitude for a national study; accordingly, the selected survey subjects are considered to be representative of all project beneficiaries and their responses are believed to be statistically significant.

IRD and all actors (POE, DOE, SSC, schools, and communities) were actively involved with, and supportive of, DC Research at every step of the field work. All related documents and necessary needs were supplied promptly. Although there was a short period in finalizing the related tools and forms, field work schedule, and sampling, work was carried out smoothly and was completed on time. Without IRD's positive support and involvement, the field work and the entire final evaluation process would have encountered huge difficulties and challenges.

All field teams strictly followed the field work instructions, based on the information given to them by the DC Research Team. They were consistent in using the same sampling techniques for all chosen samples and selected schools in order to avoid bias and to ensure high quality and consistency in data collection.

Another strength was the advance planning and training of enumerators, which allowed for sufficient time to have detailed explanations provided on each question plus tips and guides on interviewing. Part of the training was the pre-test to try out the questionnaire and to enable enumerators to practice in the field. The feedback sessions also provided a chance to fine tune the questionnaires and address issues that could arise in the field. The field team's excellent teamwork and commitment helped them achieve the given plan. The team was composed of a total of 17 members, seven of whom are women. The enumerators were carefully selected and trained before going into the field; they all have good knowledge and skills in data collection for such a study and many have at least five years of related experience.

IRD's FMs and their school partners made good advance preparations, including providing listings of all selected students, teachers, community members, and SSCs ahead of time to the Project team. Additionally, the scheduling of interviews with respondents was early enough to ensure their availability, which enabled the team to gather the data without much difficulty or delay.

1.9. Limitations to the Final Evaluation

There were no major limitations found with the data collection since IRD was well-prepared and had well-informed survey respondents. The small challenges and issues in the field work related to previous teachers not being interviewed because they moved to other schools; teachers and students being absent during interview days; and, selected schools requesting a change in the date for interviews due to schedule conflicts. IRD and DC Research Field Teams promptly resolved such matters, either replacing missing respondents or using additional time to return to locations to conduct interviews with the originally-selected respondents.

The total number of respondents interviewed was just below the projected number, as based on sampling calculations; this was due to revisions made to the design and sampling procedures after discussion with IRD, given its understanding of the reality of working with the specific groups of respondents. However, the quality of collected data was maintained. The number of teachers, communities, and SSCs decreased from one-half to one-quarter of the overall totals expected to be studied. The target number of primary beneficiaries (students) to be interviewed was achieved, as was the original number of selected schools (39) for this final evaluation. Overall, sample sizes were relatively high for a study covering one province.

Furthermore, from the point of view of the intent of this study and its very design, given the cost and time constraints, the findings from this final evaluation were not intended to attribute a level of project effect on beneficiaries; instead, it was conducted to show a correlation between project interventions (distribution of food/other items, improvements in sanitary health practices and conditions) and research subject performance (student and teacher attendance rates, display of student attentiveness in the classroom and teacher work commitment, student promotion to next grade). Indeed, it was conceived as a way to appraise the strategies of the project and the effectiveness of its array of interventions, and in this regard, the project can be regarded as highly successful.

2. Evaluation Findings

2.1. Demographic Information

The overall number of respondents was 1,715 people, and included students, teachers, school directors, SSC, community members, DOE, POE, and IRD. Girls/women represented a majority of the participants in the study, about 55.2% of all those interviewed. Students constituted more than three-quarters (78.1%) of all respondents. Proportionality of respondents by government district, with regard to students selected,

were not far different from what would have been obtained from sampling that had been weighted by overall district population, since the number of schools per district roughly corresponds to population density.

Students from primary school (grades 5 and 6) were dominant, representing the largest proportion of all students participating in the survey (76.2%) with a near equal split between the two grades (39.0% and 37.2%, respectively). This was also the case for schoolchildren from grade 8 and grade 9, who nearly composed the remaining balance of all students surveyed (11.5% and 10.2%, respectively). Representation of students in grade 7 was nearly negligible, since many who had gone to primary school within the Project coverage area subsequently enrolled in junior high schools outside the Project's scope; matriculation of students from primary to junior high schools in Cambodia does not require remaining within the same district.

There are a number of factors which account for the above distribution of respondents. First and foremost, the majority of students under the Project were enrolled in primary schools (through grade 6). As such, most schools selected for conducting this evaluation were likewise primary schools. That said, students in grades 5 and 6 were identified as the most suitable primary school candidates for survey, due to their longer exposure to the project's interventions, as compared to their peers in lower grade levels. The proportion of students from grades 8 and 9 included in the evaluation survey is representative of their proportionate share of all students who have benefitted from the project. Another factor influencing the sub-sample sizes of students defined by school grade can be attributed to the complete absence of students of a certain grade at the time of the survey, as was the case for those in grade 7.

School directors and teachers were also survey respondents of the evaluation. Directors from all selected schools replied to the survey questions specifically designed for them. Teachers were asked to both complete individual forms and take part in a focus group. There were only three women among the 39 school directors, however there were almost as many women (47.4%) as men (52.6%) among the total 173 teachers. The level of education among teachers generally (90%) met the national standards of having completed at least high school; more specifically, 62.4% had only a high school diploma, while 25.4% had an advanced degree (whether an associate, bachelor's or master's degree).

All interviewed teachers attended pre-service training at either the Provincial Teacher Training College (PTTC), the Regional Teacher Training Centre (RTTC), or both (see table below). Pre-service is universally required of new teachers as a means to better ensure quality of instruction and responsiveness to the educational needs of their students.

The survey team was impressed to learn that nearly one-half (47.4%) of the teachers had more than ten years of professional experience, while about one-third had four to nine years of experience and one-fifth one to three years of experience at the time of the evaluation. This should be seen as a good sign in terms of students having experienced

teachers; on the other hand, it is also an indication of slow movement within the system, as old teachers are not being replaced by the more academically trained young teachers. The majority of teachers were found to reside in communities/villages surrounding the schools (67%).

The 39 school directors surveyed were almost evenly divided among the three categories of length of school leadership experience: less than six years, seven to ten years, and more than ten years. As per MoEYS's protocols, all of these officials need to have attended pre-service training, although it is not compulsory for them to have completed post-graduate studies. As such, only one-third went to college. Of particular importance, however, is their understanding of the administrative functions, such as providing guidance and leadership for their schools to improve their performance and to gain community support.

SSC membership was also explored by this study. The overwhelming majority of its members were found to be working farmers, with only one individual working in public sector service. The function of the SSC is to support and assist the school with undertaking functional improvements, fund raising, expense monitoring, preparing reports for the POEs and DOEs, and serving as a bridge between the school community and local authorities. The potential of members to adequately fulfill their roles cannot be assessed on the basis of occupation and educational background. Similarly, for volunteer cooks and participating community members, most of whom were women, their level of schooling hardly matters to their functional performance.

Table 4. Respondents Profile

Students							Teachers		
Education	**N**	**%**		**Grade**	**N**	**%**	**Specialization[2]**	**N**	**%**
Primary	1,029	76.22		5	524	38.81	Khmer	129	24.25
Secondary	321	23.78		6	505	37.41	Math	121	22.74
Total	***1,350***	***100***		7	28	2.07	Physic	12	2.26
Gender	**N**	**%**		8	155	11.48	Chemistry	12	2.26
Male	588	43.56		9	138	10.22	Biology	15	2.82
Female	762	56.44		***Total***	***1,350***	***100.00***	Social Study	130	24.44
Total	***1,350***	***100***					Scientific Study	113	21.24

[2] Due to teacher shortage, especially at Lower Secondary Schools, a teacher is normally asked to teach more than one subjects. At pedagogical school, teacher trainees are normally asked to choose a major subject and an minor. For data collection purposes, teachers were asked to designate all subjects that they teach, not only their main subject. This is why the number of teachers presented here add up to more than the 173 teachers surveyed for this final evaluation.

Teachers								
Gender	**N**	**%**	**Experience (year)**	**N**	**%**	**Pedagogy**	**N**	**%**
Male	91	52.6	1-3 yrs	37	21.39	PTTC	107	61.85
Female	82	47.4	4-6 yrs	21	12.14	RTTC	59	34.10
Total	***173***	***100***	7-9 yrs	33	19.08	Both	7	4.05
Education	**N**	**%**	10 yrs+	82	47.4	***Total***	***173***	***100.00***
Primary	3	1.73	***Total***	***173***	***100.01***	**Voluntary Cooks**		
Lower Secondary	18	10.40	**Housing**	**N**	**%**	**Gender**	**N**	**%**
High School	108	62.43	Nearby Villages	116	67.05	Male	4	10
Associate	8	4.62	Outside	57	32.95	Female	36	90
Bachelor & above	36	20.81	***Total***	***173***	***100***	***Total***	***40***	***100***
Total	***173***	***100.00***				**Education**	**N**	**%**
Community Members						None	2	5.00
Gender	N	%	**Education**	N	%	Primary	22	55.00
Male	8	18.18	None	5	11.36	LSS	10	25.00
Female	36	81.82	Primary	23	52.27	Above	6	15.00
Total	***44***	***100***	LSS	14	31.82	***Total***	***40***	***100.00***
Occupation	**N**	**%**	Above	2	4.55	**School Support Committee**		
Farmer	38	86.36	***Total***	***44***	***100.00***	**Occupation**	**N**	**%**
Garment Worker	1	2.27	**School Support Committee**			Farmer	30	96.77
Day Laborer	3	6.82	Male	21	67.74	Public Staff	1	3.23
Charcoal Seller	2	4.54	Female	10	32.26	***Total***	***31***	***100.00***
Total	***44***	***100***	***Total***	***31***	***100.00***	**School Directors**		
School Directors			**Experience (yrs)**	N	%	**Education**	**N**	**%**
Gender	N	%	≥6 yrs	13	33.33	LSS	4	10.26
Male	36	92.31	7-9 yrs	13	33.33	High School	23	58.97
Female	3	7.69	10 yrs+	13	33.33	Above	12	30.77
Total	***39***	***100.00***	***Total***	***39***	***100.00***	***Total***	***39***	***100.00***

2.2. Relevance

2.2.1. Assistance from the Project

Unanimously, all relevant stakeholders interviewed reported that they had received assistance from the project. According to them, the assistance provided to them included: food for breakfast/snack and take-home rations (corn-soy blend (CSB), vitamin A-fortified vegetable oil, canned fish, lentils), sport materials (volleyball and net, football and net, metal rod for football, shuttlecock, tennis rackets and balls, climbing and jumping ropes, stop watches, bowling pins and balls, sport uniforms for competition, and whistles), instruction books for teachers and textbooks for students (grade 1-3), and kits for sanitation (brushes, brooms, soaps for cleaning toilet, and soaps for hand washing).

All stakeholders and actors (IRD, POE, and DOE) ranked by order of relevance the following activities that were undertaken by the Project:

- School feeding, including take-home rations (THRs);
- School health, including de-worming, good health and nutrition, MCH and girl study tours, food safety and storage;
- School water constructions, such as latrines and tube wells with OM training and RWH in line with MoEYS's standards; and
- Local capacity building to provincial and district education officials and SSCs on local resource mobilization for supporting school development plans.

School feeding was designed as an incentive for students and teachers to reduce short-term hunger and to increase class attendance and attentiveness. As such, its provision was done in a number of ways:

- Daily school meals to students and teachers;
- THRs for parents of children with timely grade 1 enrollment;
- THRs for students who completed grade 6 and matriculated to grade 7;
- THRs for students with at least 80% class attendance;
- THRs for teachers with 100% teaching attendance;
- THRs for teachers with the highest number of students passing the national exam at grade 9;
- THRs for teachers living in remote areas;
- Food for Work (FFW) for boat drivers who transport students to schools; and
- FFW for school cooks.

School health services had numerous components:

- De-worming and the prevention and control of soil-transmitted helminthes (parasitic worms);
- Educational sessions on good health/hygiene and nutrition through youth-led drama/puppet shows;
- Training for students, teachers, and SSCs on safe food preparation and storage practices;
- Training for adolescent girl students on maternal and child health;
- Study tours for adolescent girl students on recommended practices for breast feeding and supplementary feeding of infants;
- Construction/rehabilitation of Rain Water Harvesting Systems (RWHS), tube wells and latrines, in accordance with MoEYS's school health policy; and
- Distribution of shoes, personal care kits, sport materials, and mebendazole (deworming medicine).

Literacy improvement was promoted in a number of ways:

- Awareness-raising campaigns with community members on the benefits of education;
- Community drives to encourage timely enrollment of children in grade 1;
- Distribution of textbooks, instruction books, and school kits;

- Capacity-building training for provincial and district education officials on management of school feeding programs; and
- Capacity-building training for SSCs on local resource mobilization for supporting school development plans.

Altogether, the deliverables of the Food for Education II project fall into two categories:

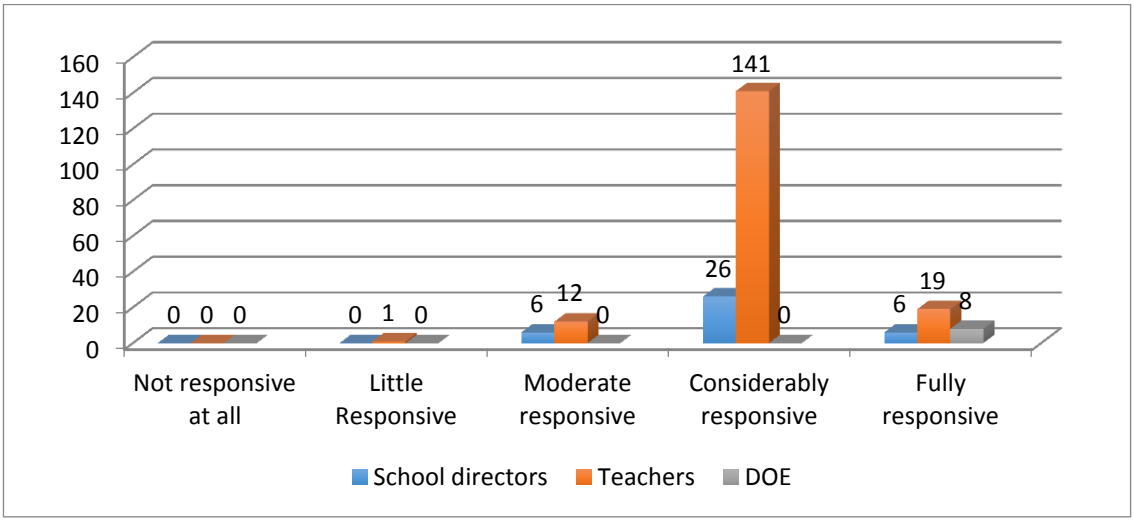
- Materials: school meals and THRs, school and library materials, WASH materials; and
- Trainings, on topics such a: WASH, good health and nutrition, de-worming, MCH, food safety and storage, latrine and tube well construction, RWHS, local resource mobilization for supporting school development plans.

2.2.2. Levels of Assistance Responding to School Needs

School directors, teachers, DOE, and POE highly appreciated the response of the Project toward their schools' needs/issues. As reported in the graph in Figure 1 on the following page, 68% of the school directors (26 of 39) reported that Food for Education (FFE) Project interventions were considerably responsive to the needs of their schools (particularly those of teachers and students). Among the remaining school directors, six (16%) viewed project interventions as having been either moderately or fully responsive to the needs/issues of the school.

A majority of the teachers (141 out of 173, 82%) felt that project assistance was considerably responsive to their schools' needs, while 19 (11%) thought that the assistance was fully responsive, and 12 (7%) moderately responsive to their needs. Surprisingly, the eight DOE and POE representatives were unanimous in assessing project interventions to have been fully responsive.

Figure 1. Perception of Stakeholders on FFE Project's Responsiveness to School Needs/Issues



Key informants from IRD, POE, and DOE mentioned that all activity targets of the FFE Project were met and overall objectives achieved. School directors, teachers,

students, and community beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with FFE Project interventions, as all activities responded to the needs of students. It appears that all actors—school administration, parents, and SSCs—appreciated IRD's interventions since they involved themselves in the Project's implementation.

Furthermore, school teachers claimed that hunger had been reduced among their students who were consequently enabled to fully concentrate on their learning; they said that this was especially true during the project implementation period (from May 2013 to July 2016), when meals were prepared at schools and take-home rations provided. This observation was consistently offered, and it aligns with data gathered by the Project, as shown by the results gathered annually for the second performance indicator, as displayed in Table 1, found above in this report, whereby children were noted to not have been especially hungry at school since Fiscal Year 2015. It should be noted that the food provided by the Project contained high nutrients and vitamins.

There were other, positive results in school conditions for students as a result of the Project. Shoes were distributed annually (for prevention of hookworm infection), and WASH facilities were constructed (with separate latrines for girls, boys, and children with disabilities; pump-wells; hand washing stations; and rain water containers). Children were encouraged to go to school regularly because of other, project-supported incentives, such as food package awards for outstanding attendance and on-time student enrollment. In addition, for children living in villages that were subject to seasonal flooding, boat transportation was provided to them to get to and from school. Overall, the Project was effective in working with schools at the primary as well as lower secondary level.

2.2.3. CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD TEACHING AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Regarding specific references to project results on teaching and learning outcomes, school directors, teachers, SSC, POE, and DOE who were interviewed collectively agreed that the Project did improve learning achievement of students. Table 5 below displays the perception of these stakeholders:

Table 5. Stakeholders Perception on Learning Outcomes as Result of Project Interventions

Stakeholders	Perceptions on contributions toward teaching and learning outcome
School Directors	• Students and teachers had textbooks and some school materials. • Teachers came to teach and students came to learn regularly. • Students paid attention to their studies and their learning outcomes improved. • Absence, repetition, and drop-out rates decreased. • Promotion rates increased.
Teachers	• Attendance rates increased. • Students paid more attention to their studies. • Student learning outcomes improved. • Students had enough textbooks. • It was easy to teach compared to before.
SSC	• Food aid incentive package for outstanding student attendance helped increase student attendance rates to match or exceed the qualifying school feeding target of 85%. • Student absenteeism reduced, students came to school with greater spirit to learn. • Student attention and interest in their studies increased. • Rates of students dropping out of school or repeating grades decreased; rate of school enrollment of children dramatically increased. • Teachers came to work regularly and showed more motivation to teach and monitor student performance.
POE/DOE	• Increase in learning outcomes of students. • Reduction in absenteeism throughout the academic year. • Reduction in dropout rates, increase in promotion rates.

Stakeholders	Contributions
IRD	• School feeding and THRs; school health programming, including instruction on good health, nutrition, MCH, girl study tours; training in food safety and storage; de-worming; construction in line with MoEYS's standards of school latrines, tube wells, hand washing stations, and rain water collection systems; capacity building of local, education officials at provincial and district levels; technical support to SSCs on local resource mobilization in the creation of school development plans. • Food as an incentive for both students and teachers in order to reduce short-term hunger and increase classroom attendance and attentiveness, including daily school meals for students and teachers; THRs for parents of children with timely grade 1 enrollment; THRs for students who completed grade 6 and matriculated to grade 7; THRs for students with a class attendance rate of at least 80%; THRs for teachers with a 100% attendance record; THRs for teachers with the highest number of grade 9 students who have passed the national exam; THRs for teachers living in remote areas; FFW for boat drivers who transport students to schools and for school cooks. • School health including de-worming and the prevention and control of soil-transmitted helminths (parasitic worms); educational sessions on good health/hygiene and nutrition through youth-led drama/puppet shows; training for students, teachers and SSCs on safe food preparation and storage practices; training for adolescent girl students on maternal and child health; study tours for adolescent girl students on recommended practices for breast feeding and supplementary feeding of infants; construction/ rehabilitation of rain water harvesting systems, tube wells, and latrines, in accordance with MoEYS's school health policy; distribution of shoes, personal care kits, sport materials, and mebendazole (deworming medicine). • Literacy improvement through awareness-raising campaigns with community members on the benefits of education; community drives to encourage timely enrollment of children in grade 1; distribution of textbooks, instruction books, and school kits; capacity-building training for provincial and district education officials on management of school feeding programs; capacity-building trainings for SSCs on local resource mobilization to support school development plans.

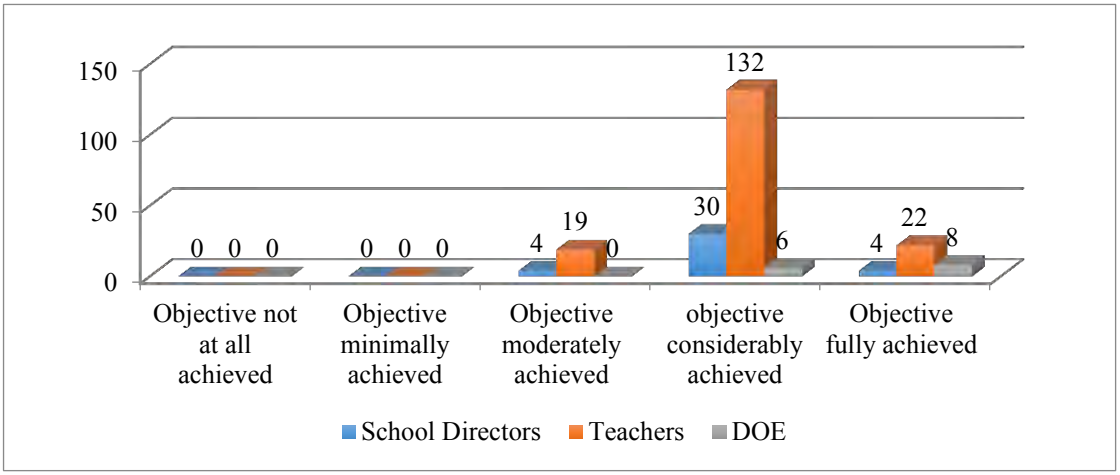
2.2.4. ACCOMPLISHMENT TOWARD PROJECT OBJECTIVES

a. Improved Quality of Literacy Instruction

Most of the stakeholders interviewed for this section strongly believed that the Project objective of "improved quality of literacy instruction" was achieved. Figure 2 shows that the majority of school directors (89%) reported that the Project had either considerably or fully achieved its objective. The rest, 10%, believed that the objective was moderately achieved.

Similarly, a majority of teachers surveyed agreed that the objective of "improved quality of literacy instruction" was fully achieved. Only 11% viewed a moderate achievement. The DOE highly appreciated the accomplishment of this project objective with all citing FFE's considerable or full achievement with regards to this particular objective.

Figure 2. Perception of School Director, Teacher, and DOE on FFE Project's Success in Achieving its Objective to Improve the Quality of Literacy Instruction

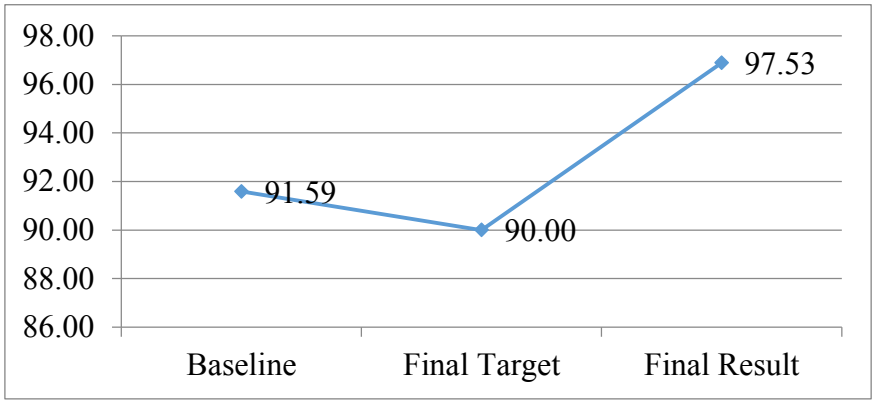


The POE and DOE reported as well that the Project contributed to improving the quality of the school's literacy program, with responses likewise varying between considerably and fully. They cited the value of FFE Project's school contributions of multi-functional calculating machines and library materials (dictionaries and textbooks), as well as updating and improving of the school libraries.

IRD cited the following FFE Project components as being especially effective in contributing to the improved quality of literacy instruction offered at the schools: the much improved attendance of teachers, spurred by the Project's offer of THRs; the distribution of school instruction books to teachers and text books to students; and improvements that made libraries more functional as reading centers. The impact was seen in the high number of students that passed their grade 9 exams, even from the remote schools. However, there remains insufficient support from MoEYS in educating the children of Cambodia, which falls short on a number of issues, including enhancing the instructional capacity of teachers, assigning teachers to unfilled school posts at remote locations, enforcing teachers to put in full hours in the classroom, and

distribution of teaching and other learning aids. Students cited that what helped increase class attendance and improve class attentiveness the most were daily school meals to reduce short-term hunger; and THRs to parents of children with timely grade 1 enrollment, students that completed grade 6 and matriculated to grade 7, and students with regular attendance. Students also noted that what helped promote reading and competition amongst students to excel the most were the distribution of textbooks to improve reading and mathematics skills, as well as the previously mentioned improvements made to school libraries.

Figure 3. % of Students Passing a Standardized National Grade 9 Exam



Sources: Mid-Term Review and annual school performance reports

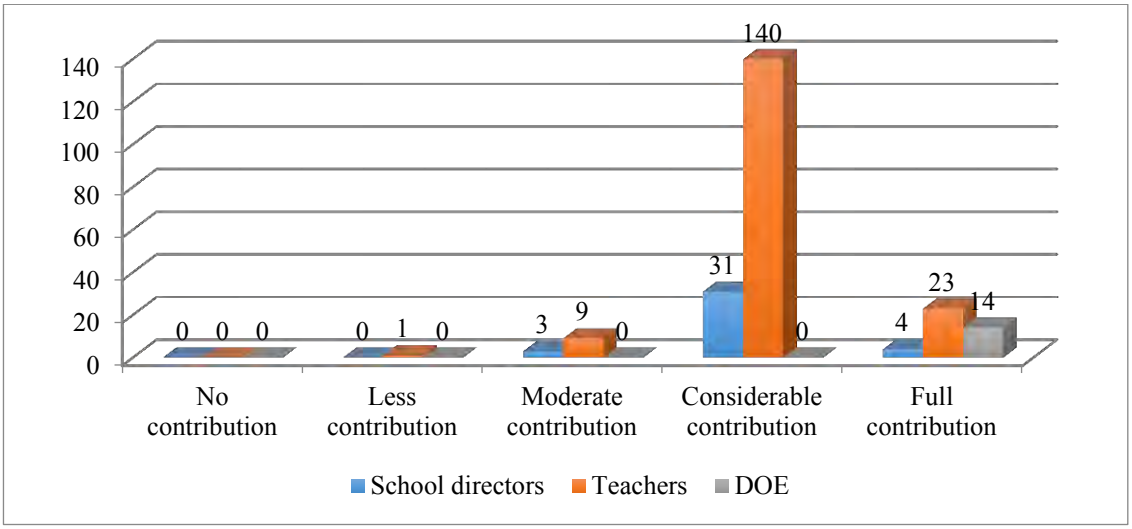
Before going into detail of the analysis, it is important to note the difference between the baseline figure (91.59%) and the target (90%). In accordance with the evaluation's TOR, the baseline survey was reassessed part-way through the program and resulted in some of the final targets being very close in value to their original baseline number. This should be noted and accounted for as appropriate in the qualitative analysis portion of the evaluation, which addresses the achievement of program indicators and targets.

The program intervention was very successful at improving the "quality of literacy instruction," as the program's achievement surpassed the set target. In accordance with Figure 3, the percentage of students who passed a standardized national grade 9 exam increased as a result of program interventions, from 91.59% (baseline) to 97.53% (final result).

b. Improved Student Attentiveness

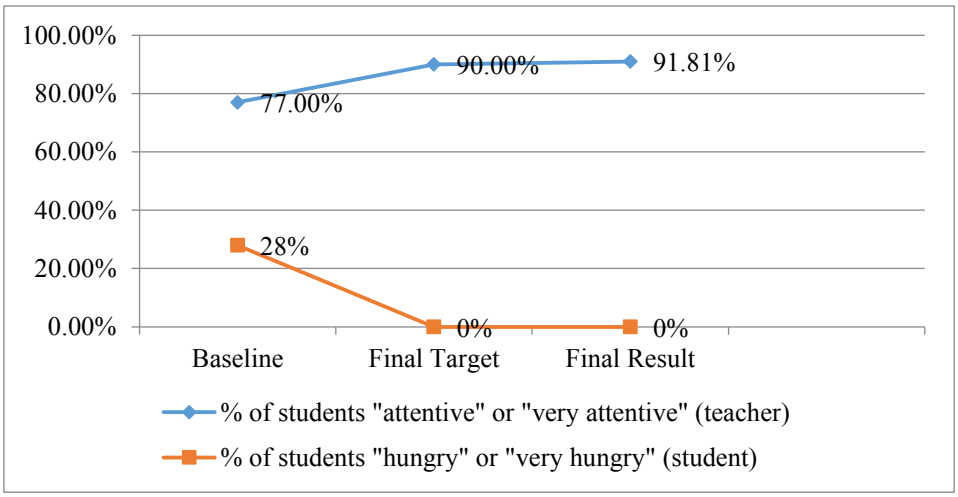
The school directors, teachers, and DOE felt that the Project objective of improving student attentiveness was greatly achieved. Figure 4 shows that a majority of responding teachers (94%) reported that the Project objective of "improved student attentiveness" was considerably or fully accomplished, with very few saying it was only moderately achieved. Among school directors, 92% thought it had been considerably or fully achieved, while only three directors cited moderate achievement. All 14 DOE representatives unanimously agreed that the objective was fully achieved.

Figure 4. Improved Student Attentiveness



FGDs with stakeholders confirmed the assessments from individual surveys. For the DOE, the high achievement was enhanced by the provision of food to students to help with their attentiveness. They believed that the Project was correct in associating higher attendance and attentiveness, supported with supplemental food, to better comprehension in the classroom and better learning outcomes.

Figure 5. Teacher and Student Perception on Attentiveness and Hunger (%)



Sources: mid-term evaluation and annual school performance reports

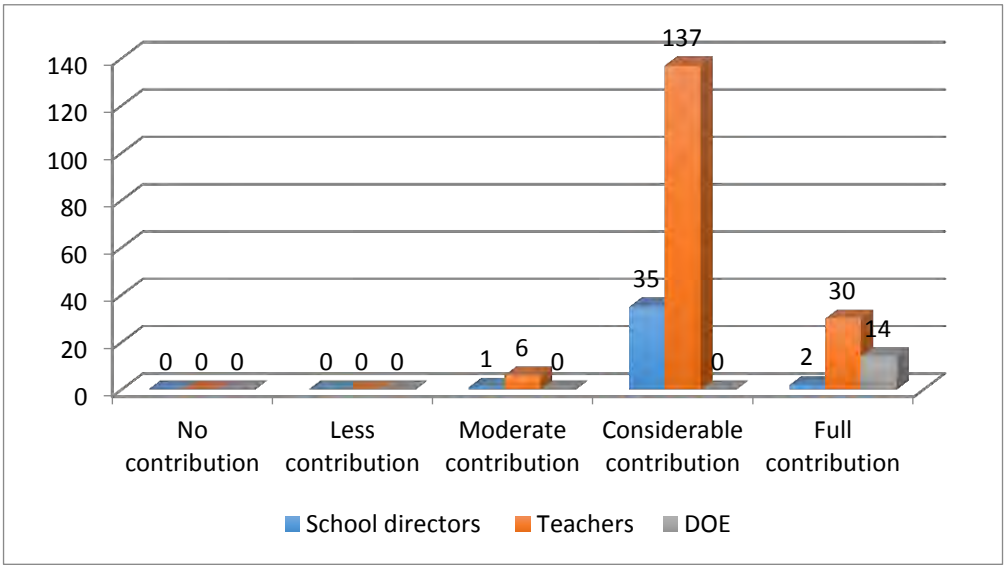
Students and teachers had similar views with regard to attentiveness and hunger. Based on the baseline survey conducted in 2013, 77% of the teachers interviewed felt that their students were attentive or very attentive during class as they were not hungry; while 28% (or 8,732) of the students engaged in the survey then expressed that they were hungry or very hungry. For teachers, the percentage of the students who were "attentive" or "very attentive" during class increased gradually after the Project was implemented for 1 year, i.e. from 77.0% in FY2013 to 87.8% in FY 2014, to 90.83% in FY2015 and 94.3% in FY2016, with a final result of 91.81%. The percentage of the

students stating they were “hungry” or “very hungry” during class decreased from 28% in FY 2013 to 7% in FY 2014 and to 0% in FY 2015 and 2016.

c. Perception of Stakeholders on Project’s Contribution to Improved Student Attendance

School directors, teachers, and DOE also affirmed the achievement of the Project objective on improved student attendance (Figure 6). The majority of school directors (92%) reported that this project objective was favorably achieved and only one director said that it was only moderately achieved. As for teachers, a majority of teachers (79% and 17%) assessed considerable and full achievement, respectively; only 3% claimed a moderate achievement. Again, all DOE respondents cited total accomplishment.

Figure 6. Perception of Stakeholders on Project’s Contribution to Improved Student Attendance

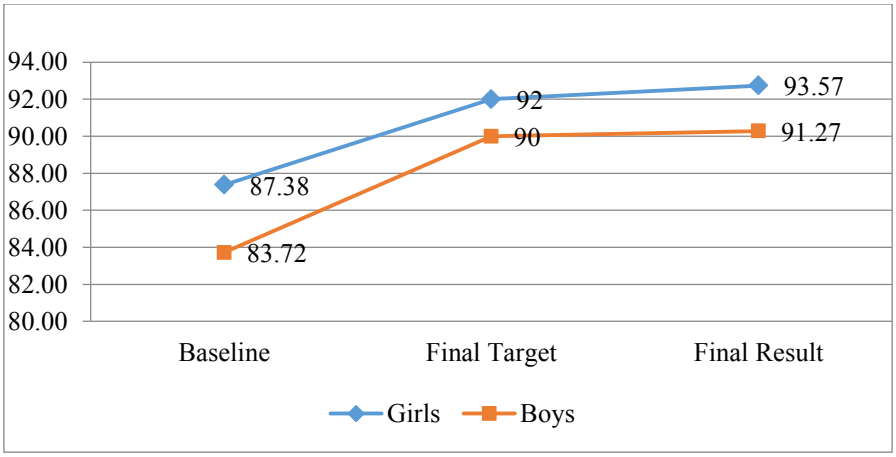


The cited reason by DOE respondents for the great success in improving student attendance were the incentives for food provision to students, stronger enforcement of regular attendance of students, information campaigns in the community that promoted the value of a school education, school enrollment drives, and heightened community engagement to support their schools.

"The completion rate [successful completion of a school grade] has increased from 87% in FY13 to 100% in FY16. I'm very proud of that result." At Klung Popor Secondary School, the numbers are very high because more students began to attend school regularly following implementation of the school feeding program.

*A 16-year-old student passed the grade-nine exam at Klung Popor Secondary and is now continuing her education in grade 10 at Teuk Phos High School. She expressed her deep gratitude for the IRD intervention, saying that "my parents motivated me to go to school since I was in grade seven because they knew about IRD's school feeding at this school. I'm so glad to have received a daily meal and take-home rations from grade seven to nine. Since then, I've never missed my take-home ration eligibility." She added that "my family depends most on rice farming as livelihood which is insufficient. During my time in primary school, my study was not satisfactory at all. I was always absent from school to help my parents with housework activities. In addition, I always went to school on an empty stomach in the morning. This made it difficult to pay attention to my teacher's lessons." Her life was in very difficult circumstances as she was transitioning from primary to secondary school. She said, "My study in secondary school was much better because the school feeding and take-home ration programs helped increase my focus..." **(Case Study Collected by IRD)**.*

Figure 7. % of Student Attendance with over 80% of Class Attendance



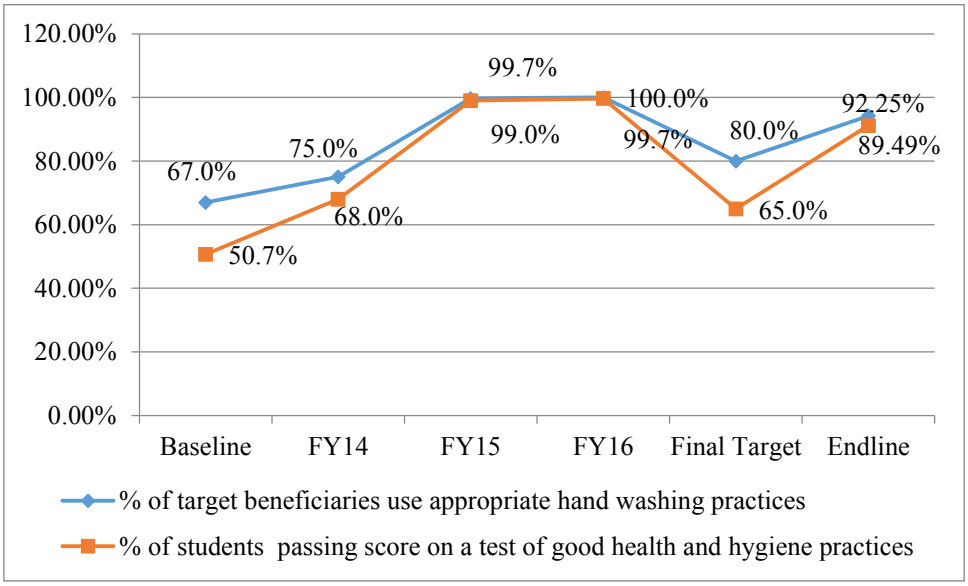
Student attendance rate also increased gradually as a result of program interventions. The above figure shows that the base rate of student attendance rates disaggregated by gender also gradually increased when compared to the baseline figures, and ultimately surpassed their respective targets. Based on the baseline survey the attendance rate for girls were just 87.38% and boys were 83.72% in baseline. After project implementation, the figure increased to 93.57% for girls and 91.27% for boys, surpassing both targets of 92% for girls and 90% for boys.

d. Improved Knowledge of Health and Hygiene

Overall, the Project's achievement of the objective on "improved knowledge of health and hygiene" was high. Figure 8 below shows that much had been accomplished, when baseline data is compared to end-line data. Generally, findings from the endline evaluation showed improvements in desired behavior, with the percent of beneficiaries using appropriate hand washing practices rising from 67% to 92.25%, and students with passing scores on tests of good health and hygiene practices increasing from 50.7% to 88.49%, surpassing their respective targets of 80% and 65%.

Despite these successes, this evaluation did make note of one downward trend regarding a decrease in scores between FY16 and project end. This could be the result of a number of phenomena, including the Project's withdrawal of certain schools at the end of that fiscal year, especially higher-performing ones, whose data does not figure in the endline evaluation.

Figure 8. Improved Knowledge of Health and Hygiene

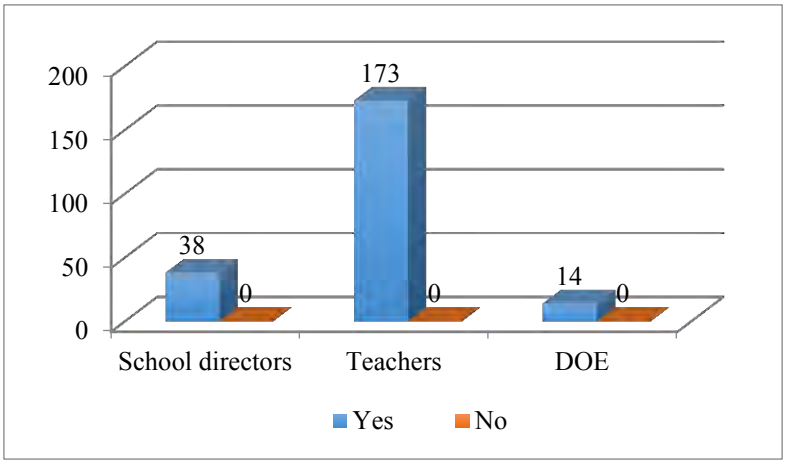


2.2.5. PROJECT ALIGNMENT WITH MOEYS'S POLICIES

All school directors, teachers, and DOE commonly agreed that the FFE Project was aligned with MoEYS's policies and priorities. While many could not cite the name or title of the policies by which project interventions were aligned, DOE did refer to the ESP. They also elaborated that the Project had mobilized school enrollment of children through promotional campaigns and that it had helped to reduce the dropout rate and encouraged good practices related to WASH.

Probe questions were raised on which project activities were aligned with the above-mentioned policies. Respondents said activities in alignment with ESP were those that supported teacher postings at remote, underserved areas; enhancing teachers' instructional capacity; and improved access to water and sanitation facilities on school grounds through the construction of rain water containers, pump wells, latrines, and hand washing stations. Teachings on recommended WASH practices also correspond to national education priorities. Likewise, regularly organized enrollment campaigns, distribution of textbooks, and provision of teaching aid supplies and library improvement materials were all seen to be aligned with the ESP.

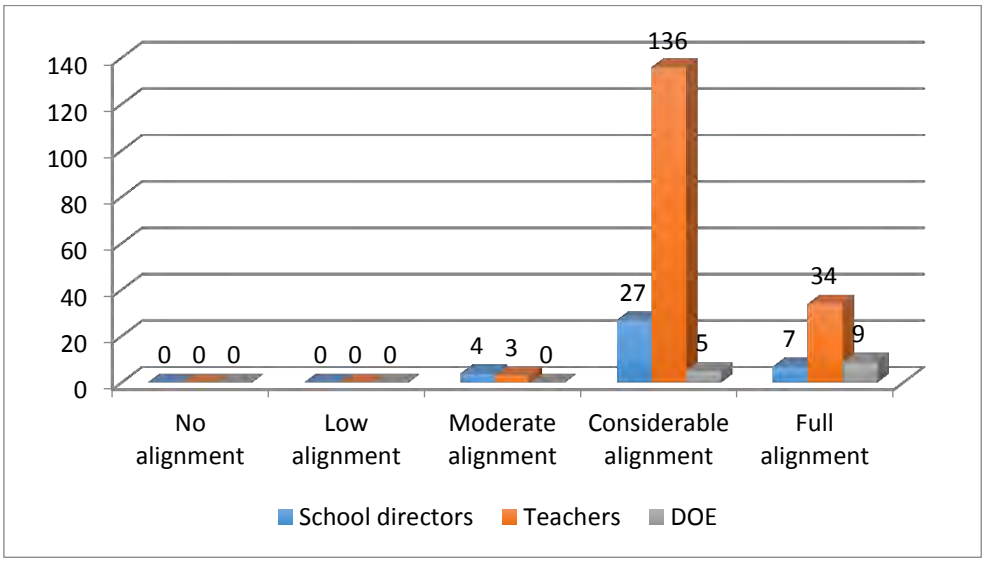
Figure 9. Alignment with MoEYS's Policies



2.2.6. ALIGNMENT WITH EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLAN

Since the stakeholders did not specifically cite MoEYS's policies, the research team raised specific questions about the Project's alignment with ESP as it is the main sector policy in Cambodia. Based on Figure 0, the perception of the stakeholders about the alignment was very high. For school directors, the majority (71%) thought the Project was considerably aligned and 18% thought it was fully aligned with the sector policy; some 11% thought it was only moderately aligned. The majority of teachers thought it was considerably aligned (79%) or fully aligned (20%); only 2% thought it was moderately aligned. Responses from DOE staff were split between 64.3% considerable alignment and 35.7% full alignment.

Figure 10. Alignment with ESP



Stakeholders' assessment of the alignment of project interventions to ESP policy supported their contention relating to their schools' specific objectives for achieving ESP indicators and administrative reforms, mainly to ensure equal access to educational services, to improve quality and efficiency of educational services, and to develop institutional capacity for educational staff for decentralization. As such, joint planning,

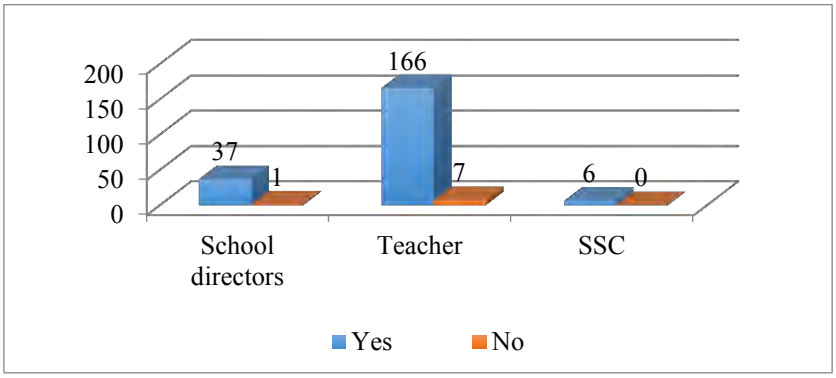
improved quality of school materials, and schoolchildren enrollment campaigns, were important contributions for fulfilling ESP reforms. These approaches indeed matched MoEYS's policies and priorities. Moreover, the provision of food and other essential materials students (e.g. shoes and school supplies) were vital for ESP 2014-2018 priorities, as these interventions helped to attract children to school and retain them. These were undertaken mainly as initiatives of a pilot WFP food program and of New Generation Schools, and the distribution of these supplemental provisions is being promoted separately by private donors and by other benefactor mechanisms, like IRD's Food for Education Project. These initiatives, however, cannot be scaled-up yet to the national level on a routine basis.

2.2.7. SCHOOL SELECTION APPROACHES

Stakeholders were made aware that IRD had conducted a study, in collaboration with DOE and POE, on rates of student absenteeism, grade repetition, and dropout rates. The study included household surveys to study the reasons for schoolchildren's difficulties with pursuing an education.

IRD's selection of schools for this study was seen by the stakeholders as having been appropriate and relevant to the research objective. Figure shows that nearly all school directors (97%) and teachers (96%) considered IRD's approach appropriate. There was unanimity with interviewed members from the SSC that the approach was appropriate.

Figure 11. Appropriateness of School Selection Process



The reason they thought it appropriate was that the process for selecting schools for inclusion in this project was based on considerations for those that are serving the educational needs of especially poor schoolchildren living in areas that are relatively far removed from schools.

IRD mentioned that its selection was appropriate due to the active participation of schools and communities, which led to their high levels of satisfaction when their needs had been met. The selection process was conducted in a transparent manner. Provincial/district education, school administration, and SSCs were involved in the process, with cooperation at the community level. POE and DOE said the selection criteria had been applied fairly, inclusively, and with collaborative approaches, as

decisions had been made jointly by stakeholders and community members rather than unilaterally by IRD.

2.2.8. ACCESS TO FOOD IN SCHOOL AND TAKE HOME RATIONS

As recorded by the project in December 2016, the cumulative number of school-aged children receiving daily school meals (breakfast, snack, lunch) was determined to be 43,786 (as this enumerator was accounting for unique students, not total overall), with non-unique annual subtotals as follows: 31,187 (FY13), 31,411 (FY14), 27,191 (FY15), and 16,729 (FY16). In terms of SFP implementation, it was found that participating schools strictly adhered to instructions and guides provided by the project for proper implementation, including scheduling of distribution, quantity of school meals cooked at school, all tracked against the total numbers of qualifying students. Additionally, take home rations were regularly followed up via interaction with recipients to ensure the volume and period of usability met the beneficiaries' specific needs.

Since Kampong Chhnang is one of the provinces where different groups of ethnic Cambodians live, the research team tried to find out if the Project had responded appropriately to the dietary habits and needs of the diverse groups—representing various cultural and religious backgrounds—among the Project beneficiaries who received food rations and school meals. According to 10 school directors (25%), their schools need to better accommodate their Muslim students. School directors and SSC unanimously agreed that they raised awareness in advance that the food provided at school and given as THRs would need to be acceptable for followers of Islam ("haram").

2.2.9. APPROPRIATENESS RELATIVE TO LOCAL CONTEXT

School directors absolutely agreed that the Project intervention approaches were appropriate to the socio-economic and cultural context of rural Cambodia. With regard to the current social situation, school directors emphasized that the Project encouraged communities to engage in different activities on behalf of the school. According to them, the community contributed some money, labor, utensils, and cooking spices to the FFE Project. This was important for the success of project implementation. Additionally, community members engaged in school enrollment campaigns, and encouraged each other register their school-age children at school in a timely manner.

On relevance to the current economic situation, the school directors claimed that the Project not only helped reduce family expenditures for breakfast for their children, but also added to their food supply for other meals, as some families got food rations when they registered their children for school on time. Furthermore, if their children maintained a certain rate of school attendance, they also received food packages. This incentive was effective in encouraging students to go to school.

Regarding the current cultural context, school directors reported that the Project strengthened the knowledge of students and their families on the importance of sanitation and hygiene. Most students adopted the practice of washing their hands

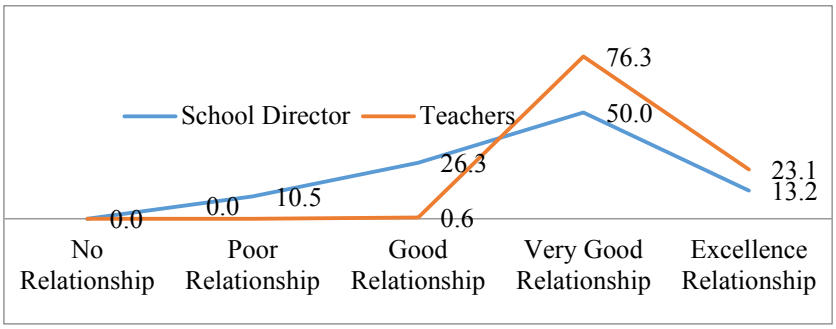
before eating and after using the toilet. Local products and local appropriateness was strongly considered and applied. For example, WASH stations, pump-wells, and rainwater containers were manufactured with local materials/equipment and by local labor.

2.3. EFFECTIVENESS

2.3.1. RELATIONSHIP BUILT AMONG STAKEHOLDERS

Most school directors and teachers expressed the relationship of the FFE Project and their schools as having been either very good or excellent (63.2%); just above one-quarter of them (26.3%) put it at only a "good" level and about one-tenth (10.5%) cited a "poor" relationship. "Very good" ratings from teachers were much higher than those from school directors (76.3% versus 50%).

Figure 12. Relationship between the Project and School (%)



The POE and DOE respondents also rated their relationship with the FFE Project as "strong." They cited that the FFE Project collaborated in a number of ways: project-related information was exchanged; project activity reports were regularly and timely submitted; existing mechanisms and procedures within MoEYS and education systems (POE, DOE, school directors, teachers, SSC) were regularly used; institutional and supervisory levels within their institutions were respected; advice from DOE and POE was followed; and scheduling of meetings and activities with DOE and schools was clearly and timely communicated.

The SSC and community members also shared a positive view of their relationship with the FFE Project. They said that IRD provided support based on their requests and needs, including the promotion of good hygiene and sanitation practices, improvement in livelihoods, promotion of school studies, child growth monitoring, provision of food to schoolchildren, promotion of school enrollment, and their own active participation in FFE Project implementation.

The SSC and community said that the Project promoted co-responsibility (to maintain food, ingredients, equipment). The FFE Project invited local people to attend their regularly scheduled meetings and enhanced their close collaboration and partnership through joint organization, planning, and participation of and in project activities. Furthermore, the Project provided support most needed by local people, including the provision of scholarships; construction of latrines; promotion of improved hygiene and

sanitation practices among parents; and family support through food aids (THRs) when their children had come to school regularly.

The project collaborated with local communities to address other challenges including environmental hygiene, collective sharing of scarce household needs (e.g., firewood, sugar), and advocacy to government institutions on other community school matters. All these initiatives encouraged children to attend school regularly, to adopt recommended WASH practices, and supported their nutritional well-being.

Table 6. Reasons for Describing Project Relationship as Supportive

Cited Examples of FFE Project Actions (multiple responses allowed)	Teachers All = 173		School Directors All = 39	
	N	%	N	%
IRD's Field Monitors supported and closely worked with school	75	43.3	18	46.2
Conducted regular follow ups and spot-checks	43	24.9	16	41.0
Provided the needed materials, as per requests	18	10.4	13	33.3
Provided food rations as incentives	1	0.6	4	10.3
Provided relevant training to all pertinent stakeholders	1	0.6	3	7.7
Improved school health curriculum, promoted WASH practices	44	25.4	-	-

IRD's own view of the relationship was that it was excellent and mutually engaging throughout the implementation of the Project. The education authority, local authorities, school directors, teachers, students, parents, and communities mobilized local resources such as sugar, kitchen utensils, fuel for cooking food, and volunteer cooks to contribute towards implementation of school feeding activities. Communities offered means of transportation to facilitate participation of their members at school enrollment campaigns, which community members played an active role in running. They also coordinated and cooperated with other project implementation activities, and took part in problem solving meetings held with school administration and SSCs.

Community members very much appreciated the intervention of provincial/district education officials in providing capacity building training to local school administrators on the management of the school feeding component, in clarifying the roles/responsibilities of the SSC, and in improving their competencies for monitoring school feeding activities. Similarly, there was appreciation of the SSCs, which had mobilized the local communities to contribute local resources (such as, sugar, firewood, cooking utensils, and household kitchens) to support school feeding activities and to provide a means of transportation for those having difficulties travelling to school enrollment campaigns.

2.3.2. PERCEPTION ON USEFULNESS OF PROJECT INTERVENTION

Student respondents were familiar with IRD's food support to students, even when the FFE Project was over at the time of their interview. The students appreciated this support at a very high percentage (95.5%). Students at primary and lower secondary schools (LSSs) felt that the school feeding had significantly contributed to their diets.

An overwhelming high rating was given by students on the likeability of food and amount adequacy, 98.0% and 95.0%, respectively. More than three-fourths said the THR was enough in meeting their needs, while also adding to the diet of other family members and helping to reduce some household food expenses. There was also an overwhelmingly positive high rating for the food received that was cooked daily (89.0%) and the CSB snack that were provided (98.0%). Overall, the food provision services were well received.

Figure 13. Students Perception of Given Food

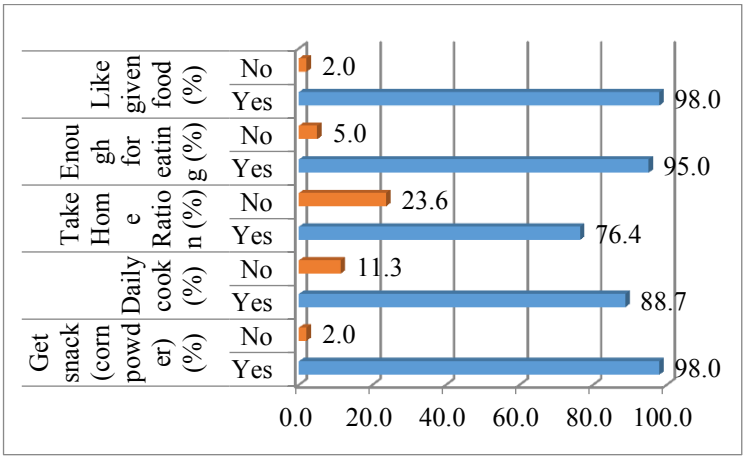


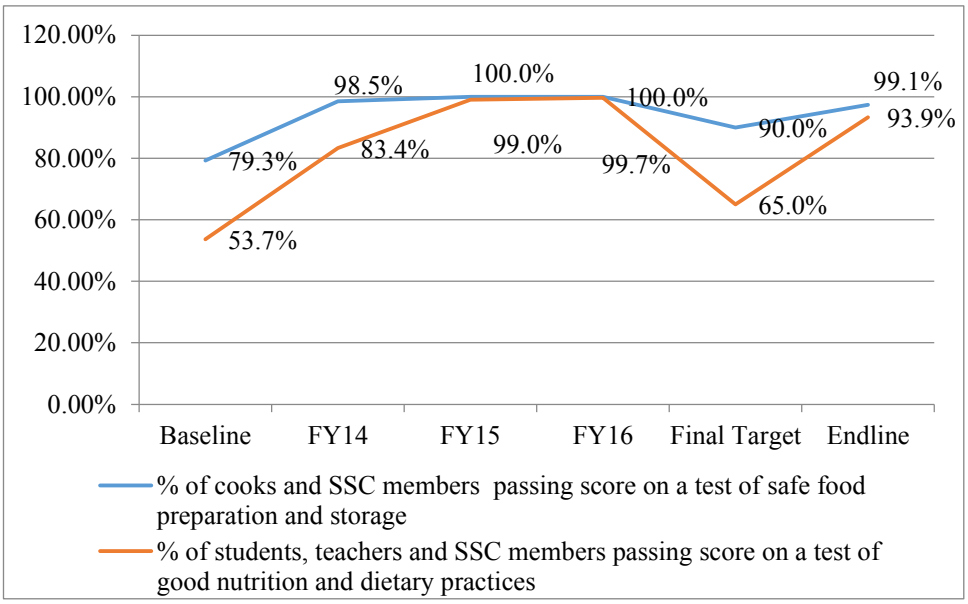
Table 7. Recipe of Food at One Week in 2015 or 2016 (1,350 Students Interviewed)

Items	N	%
CSB	1,288	95.5
Vitamin A&D-Fortified Vegetable Oil	1,174	87.0
Sugar	673	49.9
Do not remember/do not know	34	2.5

Most school directors, teachers, and volunteer cooks said that the food provided by the FFE Project was regularly delivered with no delays, and that it provided the target schools with quality food in the proper amounts to meet the needs of their schoolchildren. They believed that what was offered filled existing dietary gaps, which would have been difficult without IRD support. The data (Figure 15) indicates that the food provided by the FFE Project was regarded as "useful" and "very useful" by nearly all respondents interviewed at the target schools.

It must be emphasized that the Project had been well prepared to clearly assess the needs of the schools and communities before the launch of the FFE Project. This was due to the Project's close collaboration with key actors -- especially the POE, DOE, school administrators, and the SSC -- along with cooperation of the local communities, who lent support through co-organization of events and local contributions to the school-feeding component.

Figure 14. Beneficiaries Achieved Required Score of Safe Food, Nutrition, and Dietary Practices



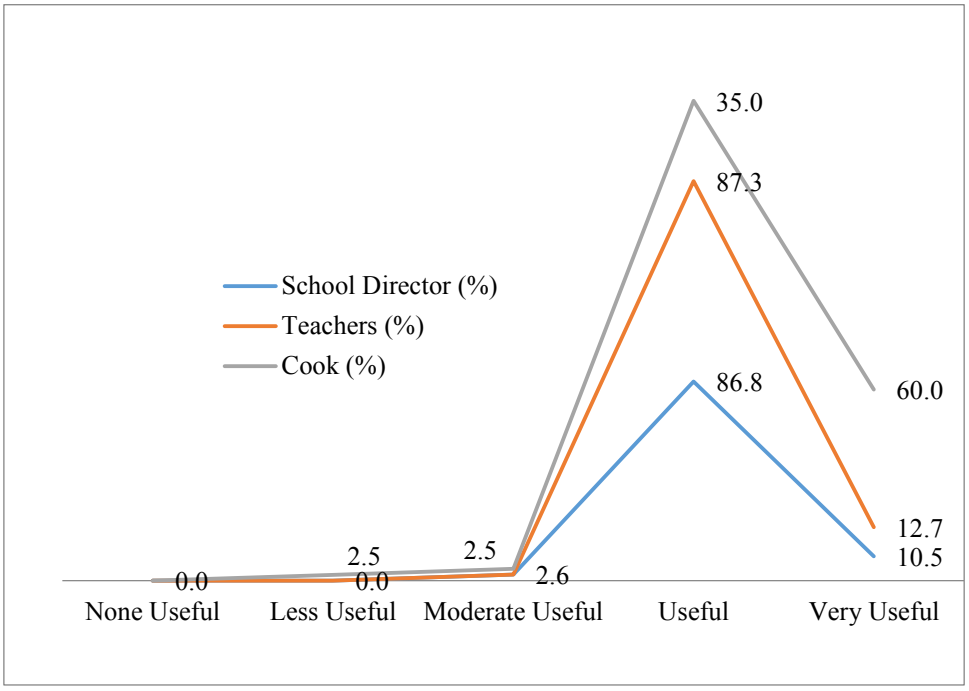
POE and DOE also responded that the Project aligned with the existing mechanism and policies of MoEYS.

The benefits of the FFE Project were enumerated:

- Lessened family expense for food;
- Reduced incidence of gastro-intestinal and hook-worm-related diseases, through the promotion of WASH activities and distribution to students of shoes and deworming medicines;
- Reduced dropout rates, especially among girl students;
- Improved access to functional latrines that were clearly labeled for girls, boys, and disabled persons;
- Promoted the construction of pump-wells, rainwater containers, and wash stands and provided hygiene materials and supplies—filling gaps in what schools could not fund on their own, leading to a substantial positive change in adoption of recommended WASH practices among students;
- Reduced hunger among students through the school feeding component, enabling them to fully concentrate on school learning and boosting their dietary intake of vitamins and minerals;

- School attendance improved through the distribution of food rations as an incentive; and
- Exchange visits between teachers and administrators were facilitated at the local and provincial levels.

Figure 15. Project Intervention



The SSC and the community commonly believed that the Project had increased knowledge on WASH; provided valuable supplemental food for schoolchildren; reduced expenses for families; and improved health among schoolchildren. POE and DOE supported these observations and added that the Project promoted school attendance and inclusiveness (supporting means of boat transport to poorer students living farther away in flood-prone areas). Teacher attendance was also bolstered. POE and DOE also noted that the FFE Project improved livelihood and agriculture skills, and that, overall, family welfare was improved and community harmony was strengthened.

Table 8. Reasons Supporting Successful Intervention

Cited Examples of FFE Project Actions (multiple responses allowed)	Teachers All = 173		School Directors All = 39	
	N	%	N	%
More attention paid to teaching and learning (within school and by community members)	90	52.0	28	71.8
Attendance of teachers and students strengthened	33	19.1	21	53.8
Improved use of WASH practices and hygiene facilities	109	63.0	15	38.5
School needs addressed	26	15.0	4	10.3
Food rations provided as successful incentive	1	0.6	2	5.1
More successful school enrollment campaigns	-	-	3	7.7
Reduced expenses on basic needs for families	3	1.7	2	5.1

IRD affirmed the same views as those held by the above key informants, believing that it planned and implemented all of its FFE Project activities in accordance with the expressed needs of the communities and schools. This included its interventions in school feeding, school health education, de-worming, promotion of school sports, construction of school hygiene facilities, local capacity building, and incorporation of in-kind donations from the community. IRD said that the FFE Project had gained positive responses and had fostered stakeholder ownership to sustain these outcomes.

2.3.3. Project Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism

FFE Project data collection was carried out in several stages to ensure its ongoing progress and to respond promptly to performance shortcomings. Project data was collected weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, and annually. While all school directors who participated in the survey consistently recognized that data had been collected and consolidated on a monthly basis, they did not realize that the compilation of this information would be used for quarterly, semi-annual, and annual reports.

Data collection was principally done by IRD's FMs using specially-designed forms, and their reports were jointly prepared with the schools and signed off by both parties, after verification by the FMs. The reports were then compiled and sent to the FFE Project's M&E Unit, which also received food usage reports, attendance records, and training/meeting reports. Before transcription of data into database applications, the M&E Unit carried out a second verification of the consolidated field reports; Excel, Access, and Statistic Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) programs were used to compile and analyze project data for ongoing monitoring of school requests for project contributions and monitoring their fulfillments, as well as achievement levels of activities planned and undertaken, and attendance results.

Data findings on the eight main performance indicators were presented at monthly meetings and collectively assessed for their conclusions and for recommended courses of action to be taken.

These periodic assessments on project progress also served as the basis for recommended changes to the Project's work plan, which was disseminated in written form to IRD Headquarters (HQ) and to government partners (Council for Development of Cambodia (CDC), POE, MoEYS, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Relations (MoFA)).

Since its launch, the FFE Project and its activities were revised a couple of times. There was a re-scheduling of activities due to delays in the import of certain food items for project distribution, and due to the lack of groundwater initially found when constructing tube wells for rainwater harvesting systems. Recommendations from the findings of the Mid-Term Review were mostly followed in order for the FFE Project to meet its targets, although the donor did not concur with the suggestion of modifying certain activities for literacy instruction.

In particular, several recommendations regarding strengthening Project performance indicators and M&E systems were thoroughly addressed through a modification to the award, which included revised indicators, definitions and targets, as well as a series of trainings for M&E staff, the agenda for which included a thorough review of the Project's database as well as methods for measuring and reporting on indicators. In support of refining Project interventions, IRD implemented a number of recommendations from the mid-term evaluation, a few which were: improved messaging to parents on child nutrition; linking the nutritional benefits of locally available food to tangible health outcomes; providing school feeding units with an established monitoring tool and training on its use for their routine school monitoring visits; mobilized external resources for child-sized life vests provided by World Vision to those children in flood-prone school zones.

For school directors, there were data on only a few common informational items for them to regularly collect, verify, and analyze; they would then submit to the FFE Project Monitors their reports on: monthly or periodic project activities completed; rates of student attendance and absences; and food and materials/equipment request and receipt confirmation forms. All these data, which reported on the Project's performance on behalf of the schools, were then submitted to their supervising institutions, such as the DOE. IRD HQ likewise received these reports, which also served as content for the FFE Project's Annual Report. The schools reported that the Project's M&E system operated consistently throughout the life of the Project.

2.4. Efficiency

2.4.1. Project Input/Resource Contribution Toward Achieving Project Intervention goals

To ensure successful implementation of the Project, different interventions were planned to include a) capacity-building training; b) ongoing engagement with different stakeholders during project implementation; c) provisions of food aid; d) provisions of

school supplies and materials; e) construction of WASH-related facilities to improve school sanitation facilities; f) arrangements for modes of transport for students to and from school who live in flood-prone areas; and g) distribution of cooking utensils. The following points will discuss how these provisions contributed to the overall project success, as based on the perceptions of different stakeholders.

a. Capacity Building

Table 9. Perception of Stakeholders with Regard to How Capacity Building Contributed to Overall Success of the Project

Stakeholders	Contributions from the Project's Capacity Building Activities to Promote the Project's Success
School Directors	• Teachers, students, and cooks were made well aware of the importance of WASH. • Teachers, students, and cooks were made well aware of diet and nutritious foods. • Students were able to raise awareness on WASH and nutritious foods with their families and communities. • Teaching and learning improved in the classroom due to food packages distributed as incentives and due to the school feeding component.
Teachers	• Teachers and students improved their knowledge on WASH and their schools provided better hygiene/sanitation conditions. • Management skills of school directors, teachers, and SSC were strengthened. • Awareness of communities about their role in being engaged with their schools improved. • Teaching and learning improved due to the reduction of sickness among students. • Greater attention paid by teachers on their teaching and their promotion of learning. • Improved capacity of teachers to raise student awareness of recommended WASH practices.
SSC	• Hand washing practices better known and adopted. • Improvement in knowledge of conserving rainwater. • Improved skills on school performance reporting. • Experience gained from co-sharing some project responsibilities with IRD. • Knowledge and skills gained in advocating for schools in the communities where they serve. • Knowledge gained proper storage of cooked and uncooked foods. • Conscientiousness gained in upholding best practices and closely

	following provided instructions. • Confidence gained on food stock management and storage. • Improved project management capacity of SSC from their collaboration with IRD. • Overall improved self-confidence.

Stakeholders	Contributions from the Project's Capacity Building Activities to Promote the Project's Success
DOE	• Full understanding gained of the importance and necessity of each piece of equipment and materials. • Knowledge gained in sourcing local materials and labor to have hand washing stations constructed. • Correct standards and procedures introduced into practice to effectively attain and maintain quality. • Skills taught and their use guided to better ensure effectiveness at work.
IRD	• Training on SOP enabled POE and DOE to manage and oversee the operations of the school feeding component. • SSC's ability to mobilize local resources to support school development and school feeding activities enhanced by training on their roles and responsibilities. • Rationale for timely enrollment of children in school better understood by parents and ability to organize school enrollment campaigns by SSC was enhanced through project instruction. • Improved capabilities of provincial/district educators to provide capacity-building support to school directors and teachers for running and overseeing school feeding activities. • Better coordination between SSC and school administration officials in the organization of school enrollment campaigns. • School directors and teachers trained on SOPs of school feeding component. • SSC trained on their roles and responsibilities.

b. Engagement of Different Stakeholders

Table 10. Engagement of Different Stakeholders

Stakeholders	Contribution from the Engagement of Different Stakeholders to Promote the Project's Success
School Directors	• Good cooperation between school and the community. • Promotion by SSC of greater awareness in community about school feeding component, WASH, and need for mobilized resources to support school feeding component. • Community contribution of some cooking spices (sugar) and

	firewood. • Community encouraged to have their children go to school and apply themselves more to learn their school lessons. • Community more actively engaged with activities of their schools and helping to fill unmet needs, as in providing volunteer labor and some funds.

Stakeholders	**Contribution from the Engagement of Different Stakeholders to Promote the Project's Success**
Teachers	• Smooth implementation of school feeding component, with community contributions in the form of labor, utensils, cooking spices, and some funds. • Encouragement of closer collaboration between schools and the community. • Greater attention paid to schools by the community and education authorities. • Heightened community awareness on the importance of WASH.
SSC	• Majority of SSC members (60%) in attendance at meetings and actively involved. • Smooth project implementation. • Students encouraged to attend school. • Money and firewood for the school feeding component provided through community contributions. • More community participation at school-related meetings open to the public. • Better dissemination of school related concerns in the community.
DOE/POE	• Clear understanding gained about the Project. • Transparency and inclusive participation as project principles of engagement with its stakeholders, along with project material and technical contributions. • Study visits organized to build good networks and relationships among communities in order to provide further mutual support on behalf of their schools.
IRD	• Implementation of project activities resulted in higher attendance rates, lower drop-out rates, higher enrollment rates of school-age children, as well as more efficient mobilization of local resources to support the schools. • Good coordination with MoEYS, CDC, and Customs for importation of project-related commodities with tax-free exemption. • Good engagement by provincial/district education officials, school directors, and SSCs in all stages of project implementation especially in the decision-making processes for school selection,

	and organization of efforts to mobilize local resources from the community. • As a member with NGOs Education Partnership (NEP), IRD joined to improve the practice of ESP and education policy. Ex. textbook policy survey. There was good cooperation between partners at all 132 schools and the 8 ODE and POE.

c. Food Aid Provision

Table 11. Food Aid Provision

Stakeholders	Contribution from Food Aid Provision to Promote the Project's Success
School Directors	• Students liked the food provided to them and they looked healthy after having nutrient-enriched food. • Students seemed to enjoy coming to school (they now come to school regularly). • Food aid reduced household expenses of students' parents (parents had usually given some money for their children to buy something to eat at school). • THRs reduced teachers' household expenditures. • Hunger of students reduced. • Attention improved for both students and teachers (since they had eaten breakfast). • Student learning outcomes improved and rates were reduced for student absenteeism, grade repeating, and dropping out of school. • Teachers encouraged to come to school more regularly to teach and their rates of absenteeism reduced.
Teachers	• Food aid reduced the household expenses of students' parents. • Students were much less likely to be hungry at school and they could pay better attention to their studies. • Rates were reduced for student absenteeism, grade repeating, and dropping out of school. • Students looked healthier and livelier.
SSC	• Project interventions led students to be encouraged to attend classes regularly. • Project received support and endorsement from community and the schools. • Food aid reduced the household expenses of students' parents. • Students looked healthier.

DOE/POE	• Schools have increased their effectiveness in educating children. • Project interventions have reduced some burden from students' parents, incentivizing them to send their children to school and affording them more time/means to pursue their own work or business.
IRD	• Project's school feeding component resulted in students no longer remaining hungry at school and their class attentiveness and performance accordingly improved. • School attendance rates of students rose. • Gender balance of enrolled students improved. • Attendance rates of teachers at schools rose. • Increase in the number of students who passed grade 9. • Increased numbers of school-aged children have enrolled and have enrolled on time, even among those from minority groups. • Improved rates of students graduating successful from primary school for promotion to LSS. • No students indicated having hunger while attending class, suggesting that they were more attentive to their studies. • Improved nutritional content of diets among schoolchildren.

d. Provision of School Supplies and Materials

Table 12. Provision of School Supplies and Materials

Stakeholders	Contribution from the Provision of School Supplies and Materials to Promote the Project's Success
School Directors	• Learning facilitated with students from grades 1 through 3 provided a sufficient number of textbooks and school instruction facilitated with teachers provided with their own guidebooks. • Students were attracted to go to school because their schools had been provided with different sports materials and food rations, and equipped with functioning toilet facilities. • Learning materials supplied to school enabled students to learn more effectively. • School supplies contributed to increased interest in school by students, whose rates of absenteeism, repeating of grades, and dropping out were all reduced.
SSC	• Students received learning materials for their schooling. • Photo sessions of recipients. • Reducing absenteeism among students. • Good relationship forged between IRD and community. • Operational costs of schools reduced. • Sufficient quantities of materials distributed to students.

DOE/POE	• Students encouraged to come to school regularly. • Project interventions in alignment with MoEYS's policies and priorities.

Stakeholders	Contribution from the Provision of School Supplies and Materials to Promote the Project's Success
IRD	• Distributions of textbooks and instruction manuals and the rehabilitation of libraries improved means by which improvements in rates of literacy, numeracy, and schoolwork performance were gained. • Sport materials that were donated helped to strengthen the physical appearances of students, which was furthered by greater nutritional value offered by the school meals. • In-kind donations such as shoes, footballs, calculators, school kits, and personal care kits were additional means of incentivizing students to be enrolled and remain in school; they were also recognized as means for reducing household expenditures.

e. Improved Sanitation Facilities

Table 13. Improved Sanitation Facilities

Stakeholders	Contribution from the Provision of Improved Sanitation Facilities to Promote the Project's Success
School Directors	• Improved sanitation facilities led to improved student health. • Students knew when to wash their hands and had places to do so. • Students knew how to use toilets and keep them clean.
SSC	• Scheduling of students to clean latrines daily. • Instruction on personal hygiene. • Promotion of good WASH practices among students (latrines and hand washing) and in the community. • Encouragement of changes in practice in students and schools regarding health and hygiene.
DOE/POE	• Reduction in illness related to poor hygiene and sanitation. • Project interventions in alignment with MoEYS's policies and priorities. • Improved student learning outcomes. • Ability to respond to students' request for improved sanitation facilities.
IRD	• Construction of separate latrines for boy and girl students encouraged girl students to attend school more regularly. • Project constructed tube wells and RWHS and supplied water filters to ensure student access to clean drinking water, which resulted in

	reduced incidence of water-borne diseases and improved health of students to attend schools more regularly. • Project provided tippy-tap and latrine cleaning supplies to ensure proper maintenance of sanitation facilities in schools.

f. Provision of Transportation

Table 14. Provision of Transportation

Stakeholders	Contribution from the Provision of Transportation to Promote the Project's Success
School Directors	• Students better able to arrive at school on time. • Students who are boat operators were encouraged with food ration packages to transport their fellow students.
SSC	• Number of students in attendance at schools and their rate of daily attendance increased. • Reduction in accidents related to travels to and from school.
DOE/POE	• Project intervention in alignment with MoEYS's policies and priorities. • Students have better learning outcomes when they have been able to attend school more regularly due to support with transportation. • Ability to respond to students' request for assistance in traveling to and from school.
IRD	• Increased ability of students from poor households to attend classes regularly. • Strengthened students solidarity in helping classmates to attend schools, bolstering community values. • Students who are boat operators were encouraged with food ration packages to transport their fellow students.

g. Provision of Cooking Utensils

Table 15. Provision of Cooking Utensils

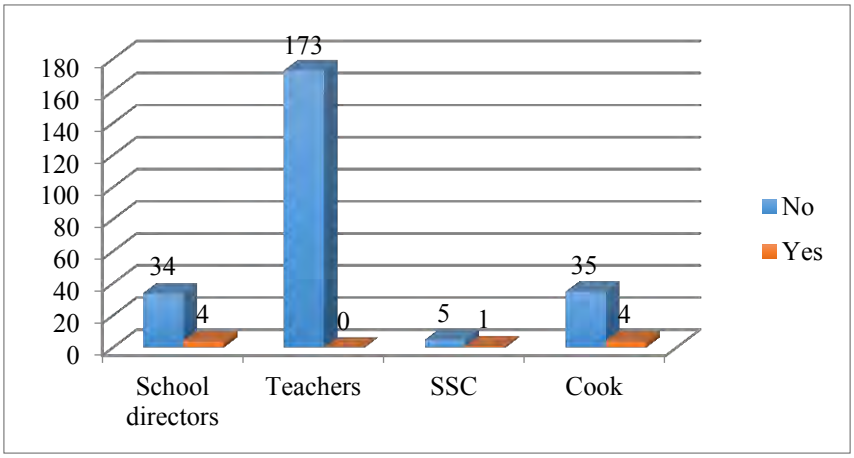
Stakeholders	Contribution from the Provision of Cooking Utensils to Promote the Project's Success
School Directors	• Schools supplied with enough cooking materials to prepare meals for students and teachers. • In-kind contributions from community members allowed for their engagement with the schools.
IRD	• Strengthened community involvement with school development activities and the school feeding component. • Stronger community sense of ownership and responsibility for school operations.

	• Project provided FFW to those community members who enlisted to cook for the students while they are at school.

2.4.2. Efficient Use of Resources Provided

Food and other materials that had been provided by the FFE Project reached the intended beneficiaries. Based on Figure 16 below, nearly 90% (or 34 of 39 school directors) and 100% of teachers reported that none of the resources provided by the Project were left unused. In further discussion with school directors 11% said that the Project resources that had not been used were those that arrived broken/damaged or were considered not relevant to the needs of the schools. Those broken/damaged materials included: footballs, three water filters, rainwater catchment materials, and two tube wells. After making an assessment, IRD replaced and repaired these broken/damaged items. Furthermore, one SSC group reported that some shoes were found to be bigger than any child's foot size. For cooks (around 10%) reported that some resources were not used because of minor issues in taste or quality. Overall, there was efficient usage of resources, as they responded to the needs of the school and its beneficiaries.

Figure 16. Materials Provided but Not Used



2.4.3. Measures to Use Project Resources Efficiently

Measures to ensure efficient use of project resources were required to be taken up by school directors; for example, the amount of food sent to the cook each day had to be based on the actual number of teachers and students present that day. School directors tried their best to follow the IRD guidelines that they had agreed to follow, and they, in turn, assigned some responsibilities to others. Teachers and students were assigned to clean and maintain the sanitation facilities each day. In collaboration with the SSC, some of the broken materials were sent to relevant community members for repair. Additionally, regular meetings were conducted between the school and SSC to discuss daily school operational matters, as well as school development strategies.

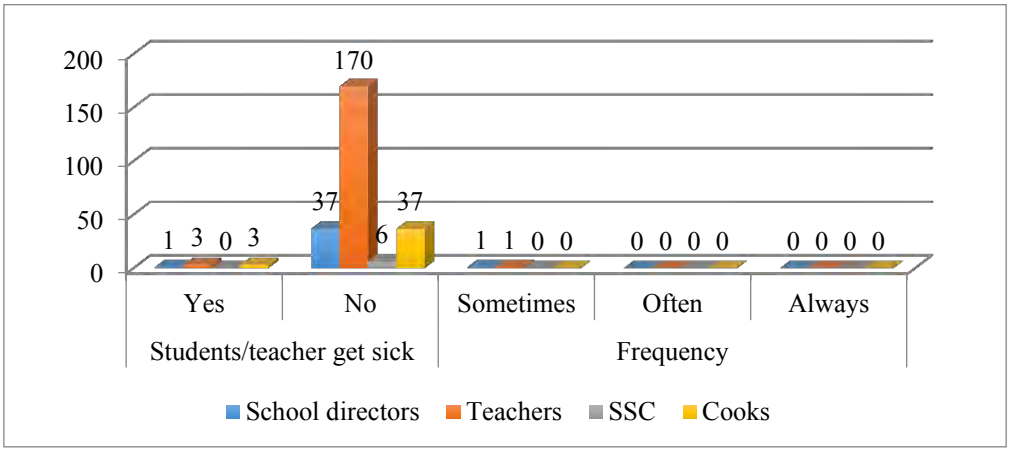
The findings from this evaluation were in total agreement with what had been cited by the Mid-Term Review, which reported that project resources had been used efficiently.

The question about the appropriateness of the use of project resources was also raised during the final evaluation. It seemed that school directors were strict on ensuring this and had enforced different measures. Some school directors made daily observations on the school grounds, checking on the upkeep of the sanitation and WASH facilities (to see if cleaning supplies that had been provided by the Project were still being used), and some monitored the record of uncooked food received and cooked food prepared, eaten, and left over. For this latter concern, certain persons were assigned to be responsible for food storage and delivery. Moreover, school directors counseled children to take great care with the materials given by the FFE Project, and both students and teachers were assigned rotating turns in tracking new materials received by the school.

2.4.4. Incidence of Sickness of Teachers/Students after Having Project's Food

In order to further understand the quality of food and food management, the research team checked with some stakeholders to learn if they had seen or heard someone who had gotten sick from the food provided by the Project at a school. The results showed that nearly every stakeholder interviewed expressed their opinion that the food was safe to eat, as based on 97% of responses by school directors, 98% by teachers and 93% by cooks. Through the FDG, none of SSC mentioned any problems with food-related sicknesses among students or teachers from food eaten at a school.

Figure 17. Incidence of Students/Teachers Getting Sick after Having Food Cooked at School



The research probed in detail if food provided had caused any health issues for beneficiaries. All students reported not having heard or seen such a case. Asked on what health problems the food may have caused for a student or teacher, no one could mention any mishap, as there were no reported cases they could recall.

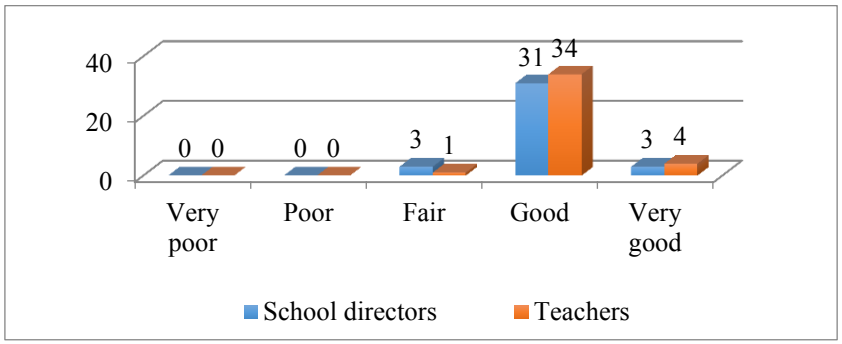
According to the surprising account of one school director, the provision of food by the project may have increased the incidence of diarrhea, as reported to him by 20 students at his school. Further investigations with the project on the type and quality of the food

items in supply for that school at that time suggest there was some other cause for the gastro-intestinal problems of these affected students.

2.4.5. IRD FOOD MANAGEMENT

Asked whether a specific person was assigned to manage the food provided by IRD, all school directors reported that a teacher was assigned to do so. Interviews with teachers affirmed this, revealing that 39 teachers from 39 target schools were selected to manage the food provided. This teacher was responsible for keeping records of food, regularly monitoring food stocks, producing reports on food, keeping and maintaining all materials received, and making requests for refills for food in low supply.

Figure 18. Competency of Teachers Responsible for Food Management



School directors felt that the competency of teachers responsible for food management was high. This was echoed by the teachers themselves. In accordance with Figure , most of school directors and teachers (31 out of 37 school directors or nearly 84% and 34 out of 39 teachers or 87%) believed that their competency was good, followed by 3 school directors and 4 teachers who said that the competency was very good.

Because of this high perception in competency, the research team asked if the school directors and teachers responsible for food management were trained. Both school directors and teachers (including teachers responsible for managing the food) reported they had attended training courses. Through these courses, they learned about food management, preparing records of incoming and outgoing food, food health and sanitation, and incident reporting, all of which they applied accordingly.

Following this training, different activities were completed by school directors and teachers to ensure that the Project implementation was successful. Activities included periodically raising student awareness of health and sanitation concerns and routinely advising cooks to maintain cleanliness in food preparation areas and to cook food carefully. With regard to additional skills they still needed, school directors informed that they wished they had learned how to promote health education messaging, gardening, animal raising, report writing, and techniques for preparation of food for large groups.

2.4.6. Food Storage and Cook Checking and Control System

School directors showed strong commitment to ensure school meals were carefully cooked maintaining high standards of food sanitation. When asked about the frequency of their visits to the food storage location and cooking hall, most of the school directors (84%) reported that they had visited these two places every day, a few (11%) had gone once every three days, and two (5%) had visited the places but once a week. Their visits were done to monitor how food was stored, check records of food ingredients that had been received, inspect the state of cleanliness of the cooking utensils, and observe food preparation and handling practices.

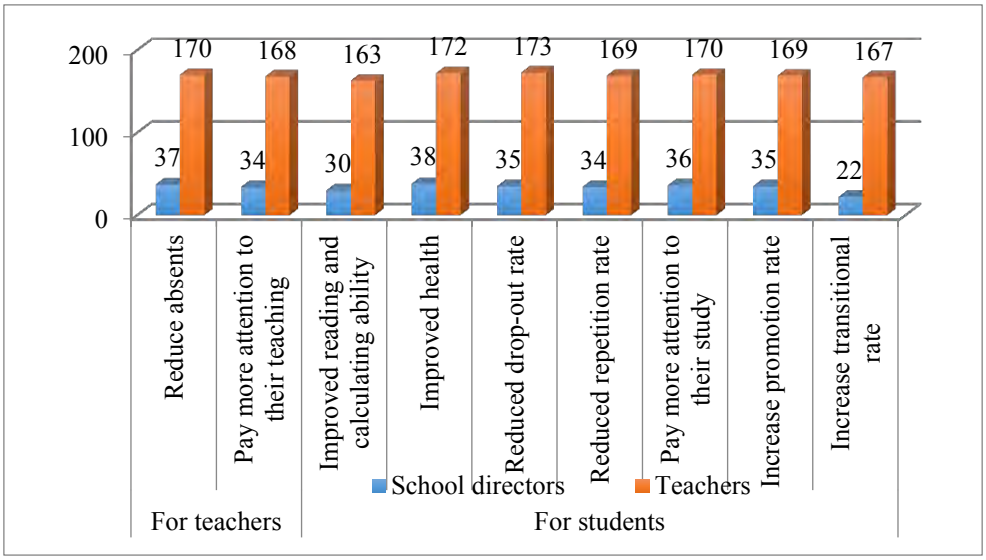
The SSC had lesser monitoring on the food storage and cooking process. Based on group discussion with them, two groups reported having inspected the cooking places weekly, two other groups had visited every two weeks, an additional two had gone on a monthly basis, and one group stopped by quarterly. During their visits, they normally checked the quantities and storage practices of cooking oil, beans, rice, canned fish, and firewood, and they inspected the cleanliness of cooking utensils and the quality of water being used for cooking. Additionally, they provided some counsel on recommended practices on food hygiene before and after cooking.

2.5. Impact

2.5.1. Changes resulting from the Project (Teachers and Students)

School directors recognized a high instance of change among both teachers and students resulting from project implementation. Nearly 80% of school directors confirmed the change in teachers and students. The highest indicator was improved health, followed by reduced absences, better attention to study, and an increase in transitional rates. On their part, teachers' perception was equally high with regard to changes for themselves and the students due to the Project's intervention. Surprisingly, none of the changes were lower than 90%.

Figure 19. Changes among Teachers and Students noticed by School Directors and Teachers



Not surprisingly, these sentiments are corroborated by numerous program achievements. Data collected by IRD demonstrates a marked increase in student attendance and in-class attentiveness as the project progressed. The number of students regularly attending project schools (80%+ attendance rate) increased from a baseline of 26,612 to 29,334 by project end. Further broken down by gender, the percent of boy students with regular attendance increased from a baseline of 83.72% to 91.27% as the final achievement, while similarly, girl students increased from 87.38% regularly attending at baseline to 93.57% as the final achievement. Not only did the program succeed in increasing student attendance rates, students were also paying more attention while in school; based on periodic surveys conducted with school teachers, student attentiveness increased from a baseline of 77.0% to a final achievement of 91.81%. All of these program achievements well exceeded their expected targets.

In further support of the above table, there are a number of areas in which the project data supports school director and teacher sentiments about improved student health. At the start of program implementation, a baseline study revealed that only 31% of target schools had access to clean water and sanitation facilities. Over the course of the project, IRD constructed 326 latrines and rehabilitated an additional 38, likewise constructing 37 tube wells and 61 RWHS, rehabilitating an additional 42 and 4 respectively. Accounting for the installation of bio-sand filters, the Project constructed/rehabilitated 164 water systems in total, ultimately providing 100% of the 132 target schools with access to clean water sources and functioning sanitation facilities.

To maximize the opportunity afforded by this infrastructure, IRD facilitated 215 community sanitation awareness training sessions (WASH), providing a total of 1,828 SSC members and school directors from all 132 target schools with the essential knowledge and skills to then be imparted upon the students. Indeed, these efforts were undertaken with great success, as the percentage of students achieving a passing score on tests concerning good health and hygiene practices increased from 50.7% as the baseline, to a final achievement of 89.49%.

2.5.2. Changes by the Project (Other Stakeholders)

Changes did not only take place inside the school but also transpired outside the school. According to school directors, changed practices were seen among the cooks and SSC in terms of improved participation, higher concern about nutrition and food safety, and general concern about children's health. Changed behavior among children's families were noted in their increased encouragement of children to attend school, their greater initiative in registering their school-aged children in school, and their contributions of labor, materials and budget to the school projects.

2.6. Sustainability

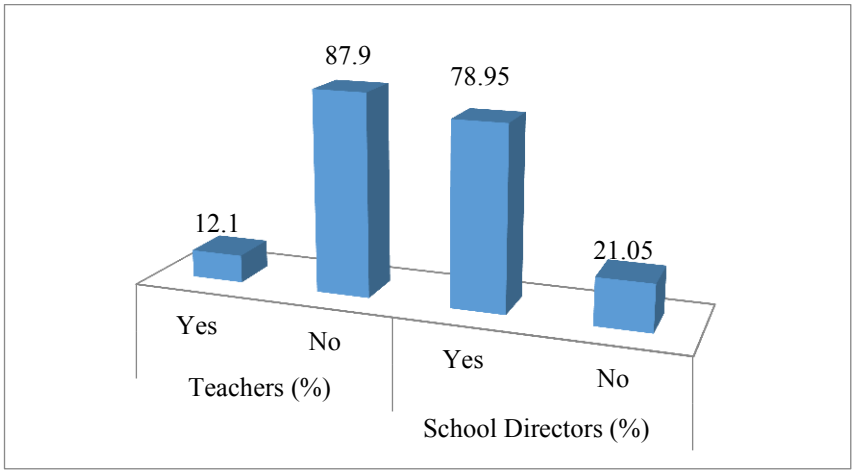
2.6.1. Continuation of School Feeding

When asked about the likelihood of school feeding programs continuing following the program's close, most teachers (87.9%), believed that such programs could not continue after phase out without first obtaining further, external support. Teachers brought out two primary reasons on possible non-continuation: budget constraints by

the schools, and economic constraints of the community and poor families. As these first two factors are unlikely to change in the near future, teachers ultimately cited the need for concrete external funding or direct NGO support as a prerequisite for continuing similar initiatives.

On the other hand, a majority of school directors (78.95%) indicated that their schools could continue implementing school feeding programs through new partners and local community support. Though, similar to school teachers, directors did acknowledge the need for continued external support, while another stressed local community support through co-sharing and co-contribution of basic ingredients.

Figure 20. School Continues the School Feeding Project Activities



Interesting to note, the continuation of transportation to school for children living further afield or in flood-prone areas generally received positive responses from boat operators (students). They affirmed that they would continue transporting other schoolchildren routinely in order to support their friends and classmates in accessing school.

Additionally, DOE and POE are considering the possibility of increasing the capability of each school to promote local support and co-sharing between the school and communities to enable continued community support for rice, basic materials, and equipment to schools.

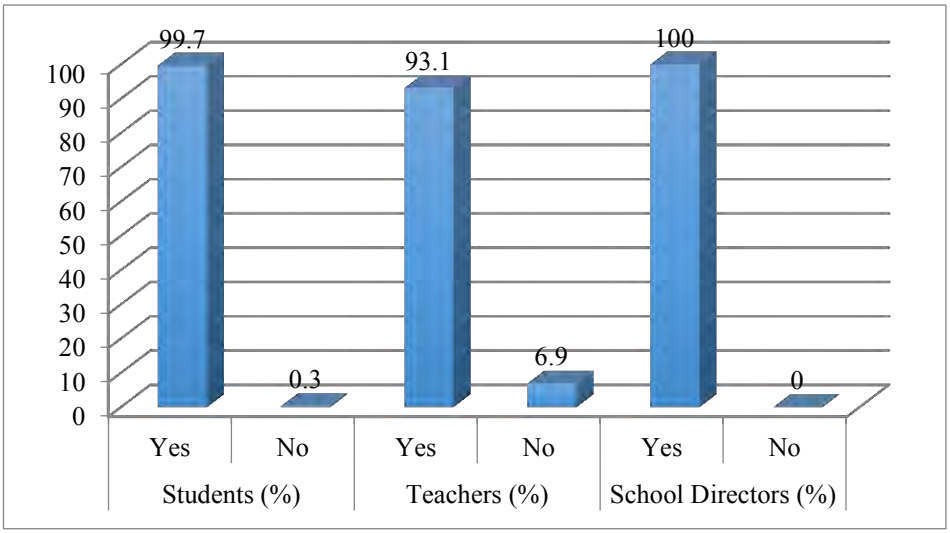
Consistent to the above, IRD maintains that economic constraints are a compelling reason for continuing the school feeding project as a collaborative approach among certain communities. Separately, WFP may also consider supporting school feeding activities at certain schools that IRD will phase out at the end of the Project. The ESP 2014-18 mentioned nothing about school feeding. To ensure that school feeding components function by community initiative, Cambodian Government support is required to develop national or provincial guidelines and establish mechanisms through which the purchase of school food stocks can be undertaken by way of legal bidding. Also, there should be a budgetary allocation for managing school feeding activities, although MoEYS's Program Budgeting (PB) does not currently allocate any funds towards sustaining such activities. Moreover, there is not even a budget line for this

type of expense, and funds cannot be transferred across line items, meaning that there is no possibility of financial support with the current budgeting process, posing a major challenge to school feeding's sustainability.

2.6.2. Intention to Continue School Feeding

An overwhelming number of students, teachers, and school directors would like the Project to continue (99.7%; 93.1% and 100%, respectively). DOE and POE have discussed with local communities the advantages of sustaining the school feeding component so as to encourage local people to contribute some basic materials (i.e. rice and firewood). The discussion was also held at multi-level bodies, which agreed that the most important actors were the local communities. If the communities understood and believed in the improvement and significant contribution to their children and community, then they would agree to contribute and participate in the feeding component's continuation. However, such contribution should be voluntary, and not compulsory.

Figure 21. Wanted to Continue the School Feeding Project



There are few changes that can be instituted by the school directors themselves, since they and their schools are dependent on the government system for funding school operations. They have little autonomy in securing and managing resources or in implementing activities that are proposed and supported by the local communities. Indeed, the directors are subordinate to the DOE, POE and MoEYS, and they are mandated to not seek or negotiate external funding support or partner with bilateral agencies, private donors, or charities for improving the performance of their schools. Some directors do take the initiative to engage with their communities in order to raise funds or to solicit work-in-kind contributions but these undertakings still need to be coordinated with the DOE, especially if they involve formal arrangements with other bodies.

As such, school supervisors are tied to mandated management tasks that must take priority over supplemental ones. Accordingly, school supervisors have not seriously

considered how to continue future activities that have been introduced by the FFE Project. Nevertheless, the school directors, as well as DOE and POE generally agree that demand for these activities is high and needed by the students and their communities. In the end, school directors are willing to participate as technical support for the communities served by the schools and will await their superiors for further action. At this point, school directors cannot decide on new initiatives, but can endorse background efforts. This poses a challenge for the sustainability of school feeding components after the Project's end.

IRD has the same strategy. In areas where the local economy is good and the communities are willing to provide support, the school's managerial role is still decisive. The lack of a national school feeding policy and the lack of independence accorded to school directors in school programming are inter-related issues. However, there is a New Generation School Project pilot in Siem Reap that could be promoted for adoption elsewhere in Cambodia. Also, during the project close-out meeting with beneficiaries, participants raised the concern that the THR distribution organized by the community itself (food scholarships) might not be feasible. On the other hand, school meals could be supported using the mobilization of local resources to provide food-for-work for cooks and food storekeepers. However, if this were not possible, then there would remain the recourse that parents improve the dietary content of home meals for their school-age children.

The project had promoted knowledge on good health and nutritional practices to schoolchildren and parents. Pagodas and SSCs have played an important role in extensively disseminating these practices to parents during Buddhist ceremonies and other village events. Therefore, parents know and have access to locally available food resources and can provide their children with breakfasts and/or pack school lunches and snacks that are more nutritious. This was emphasized when IRD conducted the exit workshop on August 12, 2016 with POE, DOE, school directors, and SSC members. There was general agreement at that meeting that parents would be crucial in maintaining the good nutritional well-being of children through their home-feeding strategies, even if the Project were to end.

Aligned to the Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D) Policy, the Commune Council (CC) could play a very crucial role in sustaining the school feeding initiative. However, POE and DOE informants were not so positive of the possibility of this, because the CC has a limited, annual budget, with allocations pledged for numerous other activities described in the Commune Development Plan. Given its limited budget, the CC is unlikely to be able to support a school feeding component. Moreover, the CC budget is developed at the national level with mandated expenditure lines that cannot be re-adjusted. The reality is that while Communes have been prioritized to serve as de-centralized administrators of government services, policies and regulations are still established at the national level, and appropriations for Commune operations have not been adequate to meet their direct and indirect costs in community development. Also, the CC has a limited understanding of specific development programming, and their operations are linked to the concerns of political parties whose influence is significant.

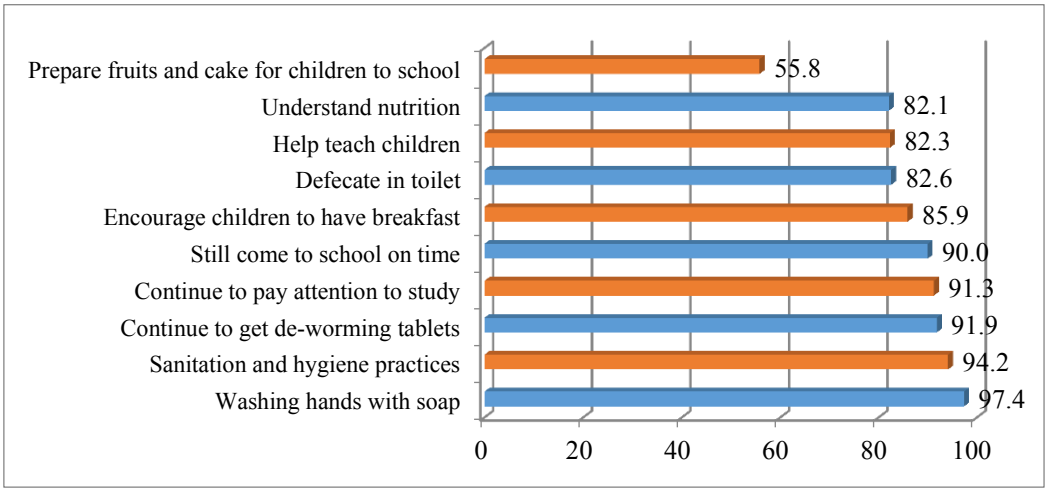
IRD also agreed that the limitation of CC in both their fiscal resources as well as their managerial capacity poses a big challenge. Without a national policy to legally and financially support school feeding components, grass-root institutions would be hard-pressed to operate such initiatives on their own.

2.6.3. CONTINUATION OF ACTIVITIES AFTER PROJECT END

Based on the students' own responses (n=1,350), they are consistently following practices that had been promoted by the FFE Project—especially those relating to improved nutrition and WASH, such as trying to have a good breakfast to start their day (85.9%), washing hands with soap (97.4%), and using latrines (82.6%).

There is a considerable challenge for parents and local communities to provide food and fruits on a regular basis for children to take with them to school. Only a little more than half of them have been able to do so after the Project's end. This implies long-term limitations of households to ensure good nutritional diets for their schoolchildren.

Figure 22. Project Outcomes that have Continued After Project End, per Student Respondents



According to teachers (n=173), sanitation and hygiene practices are the top practices maintained by students, even after the Projects end (63.0%). Responses by school directors are consistent with this observation (66.7%). The maintenance of WASH facilities is a practice that has been upheld by schools, as cited by a majority of both sets of respondents (48.6% and 71.8%, respectively). In a self-assessment, 44.5% of the teachers thought they as a group retained their attentiveness to teaching and the promotion of learning; in contrast, only 28.2% of the school directors thought they had done so.

From teacher and school director responses, it appears that some of the learned practices and skills from the Project are being continued. This is a very good sign and an improvement compared with the general stagnant performance of schools outside the Project. This shows that the Project has nurtured some practices that might be sustainable, with continued, routine, and independent implementation by the schools.

Table 16. Project Outcomes that have Continued After Project End, per Teacher and School Director Respondents

Elements Continue	Teachers		School Directors	
	N	%	N	%
Maintaining pump-wells, WASH facilities	84	48.6	28	71.8
Sanitation and hygiene practices	109	63.0	26	66. 7
Enrollment campaign	33	19.1	16	41.0
Pay more attention to teaching and learning	77	44.5	11	28.2
Continuing sport activities	25	14. 5	10	25.6
De-worming tablets	-	-	8	20.5
Using existing textbooks and story books	16	9.3	4	10.3
Maternity and child health	9	5.2	3	7.7
Performance trained leadership/skills	26	15.0	2	5.1
Strengthening teachers & students attendance	31	17.9	2	5.1

Perceptions of the sustainability of appropriate practices in the schools were also asked of SSC members of the SSCs. They responded by stating that there would be continuation of:

- Assignment of roles and responsibilities established by the FFE Project in managing some of the introduced interventions;
- Use of teaching and learning materials that had been provided by the Project;
- Transportation to and from school of students living farther away;
- Availability of safe and clean drinking water at the schools;
- Promotion of WASH practices in the schools; and
- Organization of school enrollment campaigns with community support.

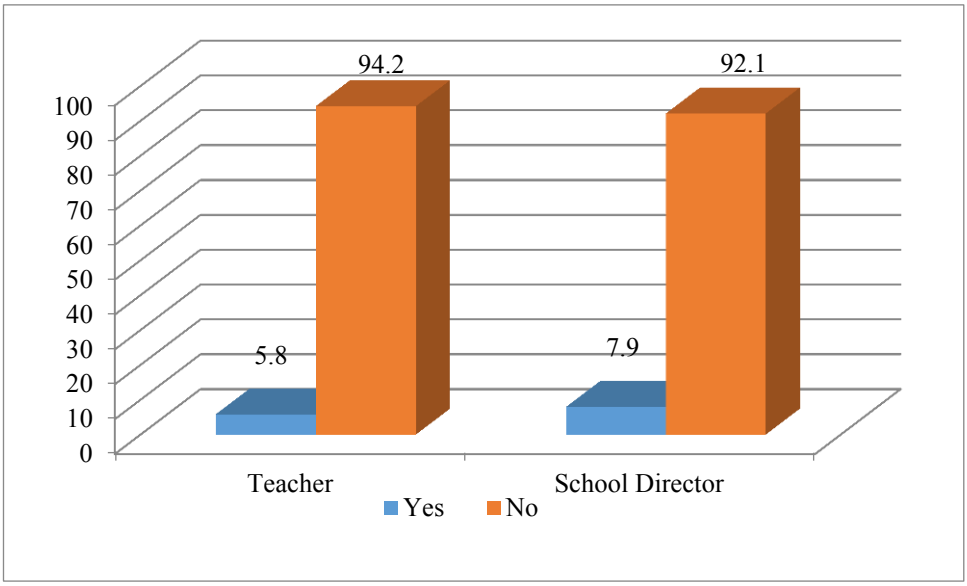
They also acknowledged the need for some support for WASH materials and equipment and they spoke of their interest in continuing the promotion of home gardening with students.

Information from volunteer cooks also affirmed continued WASH practices linking to hand washing (before eating, after using the latrine, before cooking, before giving food to children and babies) and continued attention to safe cooking techniques. They thought that schoolchildren would be encouraged to have a good breakfast, that schools would regularly maintain the latrines, hand washing stations, and systems for harvesting rainwater for potable water that had been constructed by the FFE Project. School grounds would also be kept clean, they added.

Responses from the community FGD confirmed these observations: maintenance of hygiene and sanitation facilities and of their use as related good practices, promotion of learning and studying in children. Furthermore, the community members cited their willingness to continue with the school feeding program through their own, independent support.

2.6.4. IDENTIFIED STRATEGIES FOR CONTINUATION ACTIVITIES

Figure 23. Discussion with CC, Parents and Community on Sustainability of FFE Project Interventions



When asked whether teachers and school directors had engaged in discussions on Project sustainability with community actors, a majority of those surveyed responded negatively. As such discussions amongst Project beneficiaries was commonplace throughout implementation, the responses received may be more indicative of a lack of productive discussions producing tangible results. In support of this conclusion, the following must be taken into consideration.

Prior to Project phase out, IRD conducted a project close-out meeting with key actors (except the CC) to find collective considerations and ways of building sustainability after the Project ended. At this gathering a number of approaches and strategies were brought up. The common sentiment was that the stakeholders are committed and will actively attempt to continue the Project interventions introduced by IRD.

In addition to the close-out meeting, most schools held meetings and discussions among key players, including communities and the CC, to advocate for continuation of project-related activities, such as the school feeding component. Most school directors and teachers endorsed the value in sustaining these activities, which had resulted in benefits and positive changes, notably high attendance by school teachers and students over a four year-period, high enrollment of school-aged children, SSCs improved skills in

creating school development plans, improved nutrition in schoolchildren, and the uptake of recommended WASH practices.

There are several suggestions by schools superiors (DOE and POE) to ensure project sustainability. First, schools and communities must have a clear future plan before approaching new partners and donors, which should include a rationale for needed support and commitment by schools and parents to join in active partnership. Second, other local authorities (CC, DOE, and POE) should have already defined and prioritized activities, with plans developed through community consultations. Third, moving forward, it would make sense to pilot test the sustainability of new interventions at a few select schools before scaling up. Endorsement and support for this approach by all stakeholders, including the national MoEYS, is necessary.

MoEYS itself should consider its role and responsibility in this endeavor, including allocating a national budget line item to support some priority school-based activities. It could also provide technical support to sub-national levels of ministry to draft policies and guidelines on behalf of these activities, and champion their piloting at select schools. A similar effort had been made in Siem Reap in partnership with WFP, which could serve as an example for school systems elsewhere in Cambodia.

3. Best Practices and Lessons Learned

3.1. Best Practices

The communities had an excellent opinion of the WASH facilities, including latrines, handwashing stations, and rainwater harvesting equipment that had been constructed or given by the FFE Project. The facilities were inclusive, since their design and construction had considered differentiated usage by boys, girls, and children with disabilities. There was undeniable success in changing schoolchildren's behavior and practices related to personal hygiene, as had been introduced by the Project. They became so widely accepted by students that they, in turn, asked their families and communities about having local sanitation conditions improved. In some cases, this led to families constructing their own household latrines.

This initiative may also have influenced an improvement in school attendance and grade completion rates, especially among girl students. Community behaviors have changed towards girls receiving the same benefits as boys in education. While an annual school enrollment campaign had been instituted before the Project started, it was not well organized and did not attact broad participation. IRD's innovations were to establish clear and well-understood objectives of success; broaden the target range of its audience to ensure wider participation; and to heighten its appeal by making it a festive, community-building event. As a result, the enrollment campaign has been transformed into a collaborative, mutually-reinforcing school and community activity.

There are model approaches introduced by the FFE Project that have been adopted by the local communities to continue to promote school attendance and attentiveness of teachers to instruction and students to learn, so that all children successfully attain at

least a basic education. An example are the schools in remote and flood-prone areas which continued to transport their students and teachers in cooperation with local boat operators. In fact, the local communities there said that they would sustain this initiative even after the end of the Project. This serves as a good model of cooperation and collaboration among families in a community. This project has brought about positive outcomes related to the education of schoolchildren that can be furthered using the techniques introduced by IRD.

In closing out this section on best practices, it is a given that monitoring and evaluation of a project are essential aspects of project management from which evidence-based, decision-making can be made to more assuredly foster achievement of planned outcomes and impact. Besides the impact indicators that were built into this project, measurement of education-related outcomes—specifically, school enrollment rates of eligible children in a community, grade completion rates, school graduation rates, and student drop-out rates—could have worked as annual measures to substantiate project outcomes.

The CFS indicators that have been recently developed into a checklist for mandatory reporting by schools in Cambodia could also be important means for measuring levels of teaching and learning performance. IRD missed out on the opportunity to incorporate these indicators in its own work of monitoring the project or in having the project evaluated by them. While this evaluation explored key areas of project relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency, such quantitative data could have provided, in retrospect, more substantial input for measuring the impact of the Food for Education Project, and help confirm the findings drawn from the qualitative data, upon which this evaluation relied, admittedly to a significant degree.

One would like to add, although not as an excuse, that a thorough study of education-related outcomes and/or the CFS indicators would have required additional time for data compilation at the 39 schools sampled for this evaluation. However, the terms of reference for the consultancy of the external evaluator accorded only eight days for field work, although six days of desk review were also scheduled, but only for reading and familiarization of project-generated documentation.

3.2. Lessons Learned

Project sustainability requires early and systematic planning

The transition to sustainability of a project that initially has the backing of external resources but eventually relies on local stakeholders is never quick or easy. The findings of this final evaluation on the sustainability of FFE Project initiatives, despite successes in gaining local school and community support, suggest there are numerous challenges in light of the limitations of MoEYS, POE, and DOE. Furthermore, school directors are hampered by institutional and financial constrictions to undertake experimental approaches for improving school infrastructure and supplies. These hindrances of tight budgets and centralized administrative powers similarly affect sub-national government bodies, like Communes and District governments. The

commitment to sustain and expand the Project's initiatives may be strong—with local communities especially eager to partner—but external funding support still remains crucial.

It would be unreasonable to assume that other development agencies would assume this responsibility for continuing the work of IRD; WFP, as a possibility to serve as a succeeding, implementing agency, has its own limitations and priorities. Therefore, if there had been an intention for the entire project or some of its initiatives to be sustained after the Project's end, then IRD as the lead agency should have sought out future partners early on in the Project.

It would also have been important to identify which project initiatives have the highest chance of continuation if they were to be managed by the schools and community themselves; the findings of this evaluation do suggest the viability of WASH practices and the use of teaching skills by teachers themselves. In this way, those other initiatives that would be harder to sustain could be the focus of support by other prospective agencies; the school feeding component is a likely candidate for external financial and technical support.

Any project with many components should have developed a separate plan for sustainability for each of them, and individualized strategies for piloting and scaling up. Overall, a project requiring more resources and undertaking a wider range of initiatives will pose greater challenges in replication, especially if undertaken with little or no guidance and financial support from external sources.

PROJECT INNOVATIONS SUCCEED BEST WITH SUSTAINED SCHOOL-AND COMMUNITY-LEVEL OWNERSHIP AND SUPPORT

The overall good performance by this project indicates the immeasurable value of active participation by the Project's beneficiaries. This project highlights the need for innovations that are introduced by an external actor (IRD) to be linked to the local context and firmly planned out with local actors—the schools, the educational institution, the community, parents, students, and volunteers. The project's emphasis on this resulted in activities that were "contextualized" and achievements that were "owned." It was essential that the FFE Project's initiatives were adapted to local contexts and supported by a broad base of local stakeholders concerned with education. In this way, new knowledge and practices would be more assuredly promoted, and outcomes and prospects of sustainability more likely gained.

However, such an inclusive approach also comes with challenges, although IRD correctly proceeded by conscientiously linking up with their beneficiaries and mentoring them, while also monitoring and following up on project activity implementation. Identifying appropriate, education officials and advocates at local and higher administrative levels and encouraging them to support project initiatives are essential for sustainability.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1. CONCLUSION

Relevance

Based on several indicators, assistance from the Project was relevant in terms of responsiveness to school issues and needs, especially on improving teaching quality and learning outcomes. This was shown by the improved quality of literacy instruction, improved student attentiveness and attendance, and improved knowledge and practice of WASH initiatives. Secondly, the Project aligned with MoEYS's policies and education reforms programs under the ESP. It was designed with appropriate approaches in school selection and project services were carried out with sensitivity to local contexts, receptiveness to inclusive participation by beneficiaries, and responsiveness to the stated needs of both beneficiaries and stakeholders.

Effectiveness

The project was able to achieve most of its intended objectives. Its implementation was characterized by a strong relationship between the Project and each of its set of stakeholders: schools, POE, DOE, SSC, local community members, students and their parents, and volunteers. This inclusiveness enabled local partners to share roles and resources, which helped towards the achievement of most of the intended objectives. The usefulness of the Project's initiatives was perceived to be at a high level.

Efficiency

Efficiency was manifested by IRD's ability to mobilize local counterparts for participation in FFE Project initiatives and for mobilization of local resources, which afforded some cost-efficiency. A strict monitoring of project goods and services ensured an efficient use of project resources, especially on provided food and its safe handling and storage on behalf of the school feeding component. In addition, attention was paid to quality in the construction of WASH-related facilities and education-related materials produced. There was reported full use of resources provided. The project also worked with a well-managed M&E system that operated within DOE structures and that incorporated school directors and other implementing actors (e.g. SSC, cooks, teachers) to support IRD's established reporting systems (on food storage and food hygiene standards). Capacity building strategies were integrated in project operation, which optimized the skills of key persons with management roles within the Project.

Impact

The main changes resulting from the Project, as seen among students, was improved health, followed by reduced absences, better attention to their studies, and some increase in their grade promotion rate. Regarding teachers, the more significant changes perceived were an increase in their own attendance at school, and in the quality of their teaching. Other changes noted were improved participation of community members in activities to support the schools, and a higher concern about proper nutrition, food safety, and general concern for children.

Sustainability

The following project initiatives to increase educational outcomes were found to be especially well adopted by the Project beneficiaries and more likely to be sustained: improvement in the quality of teaching instruction, promotion of school enrollment, adoption of good nutrition and WASH practices, and support for transporting students living in flood-prone villages to and from school.

The school feeding component is most likely unsustainable without extended FFE Project support, because it demands donor financing to be viable. This initiative cannot be turned over to MoEYS, since there is no specific policy in the ESP for it; additionally, there are constraints in how budget allocations are identified and funded. Turning it over to the CC would also not be feasible, nor to the WFP, unless the latter makes a specific commitment to it. Nonetheless, a school feeding component could be locally maintained in areas whose populations have parents with stable economic bases to finance such a project themselves. The alternative would be to have households ensure that their schoolchildren are properly fed breakfast and supplied with nutritious lunches.

IRD identified strategies for continuation of project initiatives through the Project closeout meetings with key stakeholders. These discussions revealed a general endorsement for continuation and a strong commitment for involvement. However, funding concerns remain unresolved, although some solutions to this were aired. Still, the institutional limitations of MoEYS remain a key issue, which cannot be addressed at sub-national or local levels.

FFE II has provided capacity building to all relevant actors (i.e. SSC to assist school development plans and resource mobilization, in-kind contributions, etc.), with the intention for schools to self-manage feeding programs by themselves with active support from DOE, POE and local communities. After the phase out of qualified target schools from the Project (30 schools in 2015 and 2016 equally), follow up measures of student attendance rates noted sustained attendance rates following phase out (remained 92.85% for 60 phased out schools from school feeding against 93.02% for the 72 continuing schools—according to IRD annual record of fiscal year 2015-2016). Secondly, WASH training and instructions with regards to best practices were another factor emphasized as critical to sustaining lasting Project impact; the Project constructed numerous facilities providing access to clean water and latrines, as well imparted on key actors the soft skills necessary to leverage these resources both in the present and for many years to come. The evaluation observed that these practices were systematic in their implementation across all target schools.

In an effort to disseminate the positive results of the Project, IRD conducted annual training sessions on Management & Supervision of School Feeding Programs to government officials at the district and provincial education levels, covering all 132 target schools. Furthermore, in the final year of implementation, IRD organized an exit workshop, the participants of which included key government officials, in order to

highlight Project successes, most notable of which were demonstrated improvements in literacy scores, student and teacher attendance rates, increased enrollment, decreased drop-out rates, etc. Though these Project successes, and many others, have repeatedly been highlighted and communicated directly to relevant government officials and departments, it is ultimately their burden to take the necessary steps to both draft policy and budget properly for the continuation of school feeding programs.

4.2. RECOMMENDATION

The evaluation's findings suggest that the institutional limitations of MoEYS at national and sub-national levels be addressed, regarding the perceived restrictions that the Government Ministry has set on its mandate, level of resources, and its programmatic priorities. Although communities are enthusiastic about having support for this project continued, they are also limited in terms of current Commune resources and the low economic levels of most households. Some local capacities and resources developed by the FFE Project could be sustained. Skills that were taught such as management, teaching methods, ingrained practices, and enrollment promotion as well as the continued maintenance of provided resources including WASH facilities could all feasibly persist. While there will always be parent's support for their own children, project initiatives, like the school-feeding component, are very much at risk of being discontinued, despite popular support.

These recommendations are propounded on the assumption that IRD and the USDA will turn the Project over to the government, the school, and communities, as has already been discussed with the stakeholders. Therefore, strategies suggested here address mainly these actors, although general ones may address future similar actions.

For MoEYS and DOE

The MoEYS has existing structures for the implementation of its Child Friendly School Program, and for enforcing current education reforms through the District Technical Management Teams (DTMT), who represent specific school clusters in a geographical area. MoEYS should enhance the implementation of school reforms, including: facility development and maintenance; periodic in-service training on quality approaches in child education; and promotion of improved education outcomes (rates of student enrollment, grade promotion, graduation, and school retention). Several steps can be taken to achieve this, such as:

- Enhance the capacity of DOE's M&E unit to develop a stronger monitoring of the CFS Program through the development of better guidelines and reporting mechanisms, using the methodology developed by CFD. Focus should be placed on aspects for encouraging community inclusiveness and participation, with state subsidies to poor families with school-aged children and extra support provided to those children who lag behind their peers and those with physical and intellectual disabilities.
- Sustain Effective Teaching and Learning (ETL) initiatives by ensuring that teachers follow child-friendly practices in their instruction (through periodic

teacher training on innovative and adaptable pedagogic methodologies) and by continuing the provision of classroom learning materials.

- Enable support for greater responsiveness to the CFS Program by sustaining linkages with UNICEF so that they can offer its technical assistance in assessing and re-designing the CFS Program as well as improving the Program's M&E systems.
- Expand support for WASH-related activities.

Prospective new NGO/INGO Development Partners on Sustaining Educational Quality among the Targeted Schools

- Design a new project with strategies not only for implementation but also for withdrawal-and-sustainability ("exit" strategies), especially in the absence of a clear funding commitment from MoEYS to sustain the project.
- Collaborate more closely at all levels (government, support NGO/INGOs and with the schools and community) for a common understanding on project strategies and various approaches for tackling project objectives.
- Conduct a more comprehensive assessment of the conditions of project beneficiaries, partners, and stakeholders to ensure that the project is designed to be responsive to their respective needs, while also enabling the development of needed capacities of stakeholders with potential to sustain the project mechanisms (schools, communities, CBOs, and support institutions).
- Pilot innovative approaches so as to address challenges and mitigate risk factors, and gain lessons learned so that good practices can be identified for their broadened and replicated usage elsewhere.
- Build the capacity of local resources at community and household levels to support project initiatives, even ones as challenging as a school feeding components, with approaches that are innovative and integrated in project activities, such as ones that enhance farming livelihoods, where the additional food cultivated is used to support the school-feeding project.
- Link nutrition to resource management (LANN) or use the Positive Deviance-Hearth approach as a basis for a community-based feeding component than can expand to a school-based feeding component.

ANNEXES

- ANNEX 1: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (IRD)
- ANNEX 2: KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS (DOE)
- ANNEX 3: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (BOAT OPERATOR)
- ANNEX 4: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (SCHOOL SUPPORT COMMITTEE)
- ANNEX 5: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS (COMMUNITY MEMBER)
- ANNEX 6: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS
- ANNEX 7: PROJECT INDICATORS AND RESULTS
- ANNEX 7.1: COMMENTS ON PROJECT INDICATORS AND RESULTS