

Access to Education for Learners with Disabilities in Cambodia as a Post-Conflict Country

Jan Šiška // Jan.Siska@pedf.cuni.cz

Faculty of Education, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic

Ondřej Suchánek // ondrej.suchanek@charita.cz

Caritas Czech Republic, Prague, Czech Republic

Abstract

After a long civil conflict which ended in the late 1990s, Cambodia has been experiencing a period of rapid economic development. However, improvements in living standards and the advantages gained from the reintegration of Cambodian society into the outside world do not appear to have had a positive effect on Cambodian society in general. In particular, the situation for the majority of Cambodians with disabilities is very different from the rest of society. The genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in the late 1970s and the subsequent extended period of civil unrest are the main reasons for the high prevalence of people with disabilities in this Southeast Asian country.

In 2012, the Cambodian Government ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and adopted the first laws for its enforcement. Government and public institutions, however, still directly and indirectly prevent disabled people from active participation on a large scale, and this is most evident in the approach to education. Although Cambodia has been considered to be a stable semi-democratic state for almost two decades, children and young people with disabilities still have limited access to quality education, despite international human rights obligations.

The Czech Republic has been supporting Cambodia in several projects run by non-governmental organisations such as Caritas Czech Republic. Since 2010 Caritas has been working in the central province of Takeo to support children with disabilities in their educational development. In this project, Caritas Czech Republic has been working with Catholic Relief Services and experts from the Faculty of Education of Charles University in Prague. This paper first introduces the situation of disabled people in Cambodia in the historical and socio-political context. Secondly, the results of a study focusing on the preparation of teacher institutions across the country for special and inclusive education are presented. The study was conducted during 2012 and 2013. The results show that only a very small number of these institutions are actively preparing educators to work with learners with disabilities. There is a need for more intense training for all tutors and teachers. The training programmes should focus on a range of disabilities, assistive devices, inclusive curriculum and management of inclusion in the context of the current demands on teachers at all levels of the educational system.

Key words: disability, inclusion, rights, socio-political context, access to education, Cambodia

Introduction

Before presenting the study on the access of persons with disabilities to education in Cambodia, a brief introduction to the historical context in Cambodia is provided, linked to the country's 20th century development, which is crucial to understanding the prevalence of disabilities in contemporary Khmer society.

Map 1. Provinces of Cambodia



(Wikipedia, 2015)

Up until the mid-20th century, Cambodia was a French protectorate. When the French lost their grip on the region during the Indochina war, Cambodia proclaimed its own independence in 1953. However, Southeast Asia was soon drawn into the Cold War and stricken by internal struggles for power. The US-backed dictatorship of Prime Minister Lon Nol ended in the mid-70s in a civil war, and this was a prelude to the onset of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime. By the time of the revolution in 1976, the year when Phnom Penh fell into revolutionary hands, the number of victims of the civil war was officially set at 800,000 dead with 240,000 disabled (Ponchaud, 1977). Internal power struggles, the long-lasting civil war, pervasive corruption and the absolute ignorance of the elite-led Cambodia plunged the country into the radical Maoist Khmer Rouge regime over just three years. This was one of the most tragic chapters of human history of all time. At the end of the Civil War in 1976, the population was estimated at 7.7 million.

By the time the Vietnamese army had defeated the revolutionary army in 1979, the population had declined to less than 5 million, with hundreds of thousands of people left disabled, mentally and physically (Brinkley, 2011).

During the last decade, several European countries, including the Czech Republic, have been conducting projects in Cambodia with the aim of improving access to education for learners with disabilities. This paper seeks to identify areas in the Cambodian educational sector which could be potentially targeted by international development programmes.

Before going into details on the specifics of the Cambodian educational system and its links to children with disabilities, it is necessary to define the difference between special and inclusive education. As an umbrella term, special education broadly identifies the academic, physical, cognitive and social-emotional instruction offered to children who are faced with one or more disabilities. On the other hand, inclusive education is where students with special needs are taught in mainstream classrooms alongside their general education peers.

This paper examines the data from a pilot study dealing with the broader context of disability issues in Cambodia. The authors of the paper were engaged in the training of trainers in Cambodia and work professionally in Inclusive Education.

Figure 1: Sample representation according to Participants and Regions

REGION	Heads	Untrained Tutors	Trained Tutors	TOTAL
Kampong Chnang	2	1	1	4
Kampot	1		2	3
Takeo	1	1	1	3
Kampong Thom	1	1	1	3
Kampong Cham	1	1	1	3
Pursat	1		2	3
Battambang	1	1	1	3
Kampong Speu		2	1	3
TOTAL	8	7	10	25

Methodology

The following assessment is based primarily on fieldwork in Cambodia conducted in 2012 and 2013, in addition to desk research. Literature reviews, on-site visits, first-hand observation and in-depth interviews together with questionnaires were conducted with key informants and organisations working in the inclusive education (IE) sector. Respondents agreed to participate in the survey in writing. The questionnaires were divided into three parts: 1) an institutional questionnaire for Heads of PTTCs

(Provincial Teachers Training Centres); 2) questionnaires for untrained tutors, and 3) questionnaires for trained tutors. Institutional questionnaires and questionnaires for untrained tutors consisted of 14 questions. Questionnaires for trained tutors were composed of 21 questions. An attempt was made to ensure the accuracy of the data reported, however it is important to note that this was exceptionally difficult because of the lack of official statistics or any other reports related to disability, as a result of the political situation in Cambodia.

The analysis focused on a range of courses of special and inclusive education (IE) offered by PTTCs across the whole country. Data were collected from 8 out of 18 PTTCs¹ and 25 administrative personnel and professionals were included, of whom 8 were Heads of PTTC, 7 were untrained tutors, and 10 were trained tutors² (see the figure 1 below). This sample represents 45% of all PTTCs. At the time the data were collected in late 2012 and early 2013, only two PTTCs offered regular courses on special education and IE (Battambang and Takeo PTTCs). In both cases PTTCs were working with NGOs with a strong IE/disability component (Handicap International and Krousar Thmey in the case of Battambang province and Catholic Relief Services and Caritas Czech Republic in the case of Takeo province).

A sample of trained and untrained tutors were selected in order to establish whether or not previous training had had any influence on the development of IE courses at their respective PTTCs, and what may be necessary in subsequent tutor training to influence the further development of IE courses at these institutions. Heads of PTTCs were sampled to find out what influence they have on the development of inclusive education courses at their institutions and institutional needs in terms of such development in the future. A questionnaire for the three target groups of respondents was developed in English. Stratified sampling involved dividing the respondents into three groups, with members of each group sharing particular characteristics. The questionnaire was developed using closed and open questions and rating scales, and translated from English to the Khmer language. A working group was set up to assist with the data collection, using the questionnaires in a face-to-face interview approach. The data was then transferred from the Khmer questionnaires into the English version by the working group coordinator from DAC. The English versions were then analysed by the research team. All the quotations stated in the text are taken directly from the study itself, quoting respondents from the PTTCs and schools involved.

Disability context in South East Asia and Cambodia in particular

South East Asia is a region with the second highest prevalence of moderate disabilities and it is third highest in the world for severe disabilities (WHO, 2013). In SE Asia access to education is one of the most underdeveloped sectors, preventing people with disabilities from exercising their full rights. Most of the countries have already opened their education systems to people with disabilities, with 68% being educated in Thailand,

but the lack of nation-wide strategic frameworks and underfinanced educational systems are still the main issues in all SE Asian countries (WHO, 2013).

Statistics on disability in Cambodia are rarely available. Official numbers of disabled communities are notoriously unreliable or frustratingly incomplete and should be treated with caution and utilized for general conclusions and trends only (Zook, 2010). According to the latest census in Cambodia, 1.44% of the total population is disabled, about 200,000 people (National Institute of Statistics, 2009). However, most of the international organizations estimate the real proportion to be about 4%, i.e. more than 500,000 (VanLeit, 2007). Young people under 20 years old make up half the population of people with disabilities (VanLeit, 2007). As a post conflict country, Cambodia is regarded as an unfortunate global leader in terms of the prevalence of psychosocial impairments such as post-traumatic stress disorder. Modern studies estimate the current number of people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting from the genocide period, to be 11% of the total population, with a high risk of transmission to younger generations who did not experience the Khmer Rouge period – around 8% of those under 35 suffer from PTSD (Sonis, Gibson, 2009). This tendency results in a high proportion of domestic violence, mostly committed against women. Around 60% of women in Cambodia know a man who has acted violently toward his wife, and around 23% of females have suffered violence at the hands of their husbands (Ministry of Women's Affairs in Cambodia, 2009).

In general religious stereotypes often play an important role in a society's perception of disability. In Cambodia, as a predominantly Buddhist society, disability is usually seen as a result of bad karma resulting from the sins of the past. Such attitudes open the gates to human rights violations against people with disabilities, as well as to their neglect and isolation. As a result of extensive social exclusion, many people (children) with disabilities have experienced discrimination and even physical, sexual or psychological harassment. It is increasingly worrying that such high rates of sexual abuse of disabled women and girls are still the current reality. Deaf and mute girls and women are at particular risk, with estimates of up to 40% experiencing sexual abuse (Carter, 2009). Intellectual or specific disabilities (visual impairment, low vision, deafness, dumbness etc.) are more negatively perceived as there is almost no awareness among the general public, the local community or even family members. Such „abnormal“ behaviour is taken as pure madness (AusAID/UN, 2013). The cycle of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination (Stubbs, 2008) means that good policies are often crippled by poor and inadequate implementation (IIEP-UNESCO, 2011). Currently there are strong biases against the education of children with disabilities (Sau Man Mak, 2009). Recent studies have shown that more than 10% of all children have a disability, with the majority being cognitive and speech impairments (Huebner, 2012). Close to 90% of children and young people with disabilities have little or no access to any form of education (Handicap International, 2009). Limited accessibility leads to low literacy among people with disabilities and in their communities, especially in rural areas where around 80% of the Cambodian population live (FAO, 2011).

It is estimated there are around 50 000 deaf people in Cambodia with another 500 000 with hearing impairment, but only 1 800 people have been taught sign language. No government program exists to support these people and currently only two non-governmental organizations offer some support (Maryknoll, 2014).³ Perhaps the most poorly served community in Cambodia, with regard to the available institutions, facilities and resources to address disability, is the community of people with intellectual and cognitive disabilities. This has much to do with the distinct lack of resources in Cambodia and the much smaller presence on the ground of non-governmental organisations working in the field of intellectual as opposed to physical disabilities (Zook, 2010).

Rights of People with Disabilities

The Cambodian Constitution recognizes fundamental human rights for all people and its Article 74 states that *“the State shall assist the disabled and the families of combatants who sacrificed their lives for the nation”* (Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, 1993), which illustrates the stronger emphasis on physically disabled people as a result of the civil war. In 1996, the Disability Action Council (DAC) was established and in 1999 it was recognized as a semi-autonomous body by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). In recent years the RGC supported the rights of children with disabilities and disabled people in general by adopting key policy documents on education, such as *Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities* (2008), *Law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (2009), and with the ratification of the *United Nations Convention on Rights for People with Disabilities* (UNCRPD) in 2012. After the adoption of the 2009 Disability Law, the DAC became an RGC entity with its role as the national coordinator and advisory mechanism for disability.

The professional experience of the authors suggests that despite evolving legislative support, the situation in the education sector shows a critical shortage of professionals in the field of inclusive and special education (PED/MoEYS, 2011).⁴ Most of the activities in the field of IE are now concentrated at the level of primary education and implemented by either international or Cambodian non-governmental organizations (PED/MoEYS, 2013).⁵

Access to Education for Learners with Disabilities

Access to education is difficult and hundreds of thousands of children with disabilities either do not attend school or have very limited opportunities for education. One reason for low literacy levels among disabled children is the lack of teachers prepared to work with students with special needs, despite recent efforts by the non-governmental sector (Lindsey, 2014). Even though greater attention is being paid to the needs and rights of vulnerable groups, namely people with disabilities, this does not necessarily mean real change on the ground. Government institutions are more likely to act in response to substantial and long-term criticism from the international community, rather than on their

own initiative and program priorities. The completion rate of around 83% and the repetition rate in primary school at grade 1 of 22% illustrate the difficulties of achieving education for all (UNESCO, 2011). However, school accessibility has significantly increased in all Cambodian provinces recently, hand in hand with economic development and the de-isolation of the country after a period of war (UN, 2012). This is not necessarily translated into benefits for all groups of people (VSO, 2013). Rapid economic development has meant an increased gap between the rich elite and the masses living in poverty (WB, 2008). This trend has negatively affected the most disadvantaged groups, including children with disabilities. According to the data, children with disabilities, along with women and children in general and ethnic minorities, were one of the most were one of the groups most overlooked by non-government as well as government programmes (Fujimoto, 2013), despite the rhetoric of such organizations, which favoured the disadvantaged groups .

Education in Cambodia is largely influenced by pre-colonial history. Traditionally only the aristocracy and men who were part of society benefited from education in pre-colonial Cambodia, which was heavily paternalistic within the Buddhist structure of monk-led temple schools (Kalyanpur, 2011). During the French era in Cambodia, schools largely provided for the future colonial civil service (Ayres, 2004). As a result, by the mid-20th century, the educational system was vastly underdeveloped, with no reach into rural areas and serving only privileged groups who were seen as having power (Tully, 2002). Larger educational reform started when Norodom Sihanouk was crowned king. Under his supervision, school attendance became compulsory, and in the early 50s the number of students nearly doubled (Tully, 2002). However, even though necessary changes were made, access to specific educational programmes crucial to Cambodia's development (vocational, technical studies) was largely overlooked by Khmer students as leading to prospective work opportunities (still closely linked to foreign or elite groups) (Ayres, 2004). With the well-known Khmer Rouge practice of destroying all the educated sectors of society and dismantling the previously established education system, Cambodia entered the post-civil war period in the 90s with prevailing bias and deeply embedded values of elitism and paternalism. This meant that vast sections of the population were excluded from education and society in general, in particular the most vulnerable: girls/women, ethnic groups, children/people with disabilities, and the poorest, among others.

The very recent political will to encourage the inclusion of children with disabilities into the education system on a legal basis, is mainly due to pressure from the international community (Kalyanpur, 2011), and it has not been entirely put into practice by government efforts on the ground. This is supported by statements from ministry officials interviewed in recent studies, indicating that the Ministry of Education would prefer to focus on those groups of students who require only minimal government intervention, before turning its attention to those groups that needed greater investment of resources (Kalyanpur, 2011).

Access to education in general is an undeniable right and key to successful sustainable development (UNESCO, 2014). It is the primary vehicle through which societies reproduce themselves and a society is a reflection of the education each generation receives (Robinson, 2012). Through educated societies, people and nations are exercising their basic freedoms, making their respective governments accountable and striving for changes for the better. Cambodia, as a post-conflict country, still bears the burden of the past. One of the visible scars of the past is the number of physically and mentally disabled people (Thomas, 2005). If there can be sustainable development, shared equally among different groups of people affected by the poor state of affairs, then there must also be inclusion for disabled people. When a person with a disability has access to health care, education, vocational training, employment or self-employment, and development initiatives on an equal basis with others, and is included in community activities, they can enjoy their rights and a better quality of life (UNICEF Cambodia, 2014). Disability in Cambodia is still an underestimated issue, with other issues receiving far more attention, such as gender, ethnicity and HIV/AIDS (Thomas, 2005). Cambodia's progress towards sustainable development, and the newly discussed Sustainable Development Goals, will be hampered unless efforts are taken to remove the barriers to the full participation of disabled people.

Pilot Study on Teachers' Access to Inclusive Education Training

This section seeks to identify those stakeholders who play a key role in special and inclusive education in Cambodia. As Vanleit (2007) points out, it is mainly civil society's organizations who actually work with children with disabilities in Cambodia. For a long time, central government was not involved, for the most part, in activities aimed at people with disabilities, but gave priority to access to education in general. However, the recently opened UN joint disability program (December 2013) coordinated by UNDP, UNICEF and WHO, and funded by the Australian government, also receives greater attention from the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). The programme will reimburse almost 13 million USD over a period of 5 years. However, inclusive education was not among the main identified priorities (AusAID/UN, 2013).

As a result, only a small number of development partners and institutions focus on IE in Cambodia. Nearly two thirds of the annual budget for general education in all three levels is funded by international donors (PED/MoEYS, 2013). The Primary Education Department (PED), which is also responsible for IE programs, budgeted 65 000 USD for the Special Education Office in the fiscal year 2013 (PED/MoEYS, 2013). Without the support of the international community, the whole education sector in Cambodia would collapse. However, such international support has to be targeted and planned, based on solid knowledge of the local situation and needs.

Context and aims of the research pilot

This paper presents the results of the study focusing on the preparation of teacher institutions across the country for special and inclusive education. The research objectives were further tapered: firstly, to investigate the current situation concerning the preparation of educational personal to educate learners with disabilities; secondly, to identify gaps in existing training in relation to current demands on teachers; and thirdly to recognise areas for potential international development aid in the field explored. In order to achieve these results, the emphasis was on 1) investigating the current involvement of Provincial Teachers Training Centres (PTTCs) in IE, 2) exploring the perceptions on IE held by senior managers and tutors at PTTCs and 3) identifying gaps in existing training in relation to current demands on teachers in schools.

The pilot study was entitled *Situation Analysis of Inclusive Education Training Courses in Cambodia*.⁶ In cooperation with two NGOs working in the field of education and supporting children with disabilities in Cambodia, Caritas Czech Republic and Catholic Relief Services, the analysis was developed in order to improve their IE programs in the southeast province of Takeo where respective NGOs are developing and running complex programmes to support more than 400 children with disabilities in 18 primary schools.

Sample

Cambodian PTTCs are government run/funded higher education institutions established to provide education for future teachers and school administrators around the whole country. The pedagogical courses for prospective school staff are offered only in these institutions, unlike the western concept of higher university education programs, where Special Education study programs are included in Pedagogical Faculties and usually with limited numbers in order to maintain the quality of the programmes and the specialization of prospective teachers. In contrast in Cambodia higher education institutions are established to provide the education system with the required numbers of teachers, regardless of quality. IE is part of a general two year training course at PTTCs, according to the law. However, in reality it is impossible for PTTC personnel to cover all the mandatory courses stated in the national curricula, given the current situation with the PTTCs' limited financial capacity (UNESCO, 2011). Special and inclusive education are among those courses currently only being provided by two PTTCs in Takeo and Battambang provinces.

Key findings

Our findings suggest that the limited development of IE courses at PTTCs may be a result of the fact that the training courses were only 4-5 days long. Thus the tutors had very limited knowledge themselves. As indicated earlier, there is a lack of commitment from the central authorities to undertake the necessary institutional changes to put IE at the forefront of education strategies in Cambodia. The educational sector is highly influenced

by international donors who often push authorities to adopt national strategies covering the whole country, without considering the necessary administrative and financial burdens associated with such strategies (Kalyanpur, 2011). Even though nationwide policies and strategies are adopted, there is no structure for implementation. Thus training course length is more a result of compromise between the government and development partners (NGOs, international donors) rather than an effective tool for the inclusion of children with disabilities and building the capacity of tutors at PTTCs.

The lack of focus in terms of the range of disabilities was also identified as a gap in the courses. Tutors pointed out the need for training on teaching methodologies to accommodate a wide range of disabilities, including severe physical disabilities, visual impairment and intellectual disabilities. In particular, training courses should be more developed in depth in order to adequately address the needs of children with disabilities. The following topics for the courses and suggestions were also identified through the survey:

- Issues on Child Rights & Child Friendly Schools.
- Information on all categories of disabilities including severe disabilities, visual impairment, deafness and intellectual impairment.
- Strategies for how to support all learners.
- Training on necessary assistive devices such as Braille and hearing aids for visual and hearing impaired learners, including the demonstration of actual devices.
- Curriculum for special and inclusive education and lesson planning.
- How to manage the additional workload under the current conditions with already insufficient lack of resources, materials etc.

Respondents also stressed the need to include effective facilitation of training courses and clear explanations to expedite understanding. Evaluation should follow such a course. In this sense, the course should exceed 4 (5) days as is its current length, and include all the above mentioned. In the study the respondents were asked to present their understanding of inclusion. Some of the tutors see IE as a process of educating disabled learners with non-disabled peers:

“Inclusive education is the inclusion of all children to study together, including children with disabilities.” (School Director, 2013)⁷

“Inclusive education is the main point to mainstream in the curriculum which helps the children who dropped out to have a chance to participate in society like other children.”

“Inclusive education is the way to access children with disabilities in school with children with non-disabilities.”

Others saw IE as an opportunity to learn about the challenges children with disabilities face:

“Inclusive education is a good opportunity to understand the challenges faced by children with disabilities.”

Only one tutor expressed a rather reluctant opinion on the inclusion of children with disabilities, focusing only on some particular impairment:

“Inclusive education is only for children with mild disabilities.”

Figure 2: Barriers to Inclusive Education

	Barrier	*Score (out of 10)
1	Teachers’ competencies	8.4
2	Child labour	8
3	Teachers’ workloads	7
4	Financial barriers	6.8
5	Environmental barriers	6
6	Planning and evaluation	5.6
7	Teacher education	5.3
8	Political leadership	4.7
9	Attitudinal barrier	2.7

*Score calculated as an overall percentage of individual scores

Most of the interviewees, however, saw the importance of the inclusion of children with disabilities in society and the possibility of children with disabilities being educated in mainstream schools (5 tutors).

We were also looking at which of the core values related to IE were being achieved by the courses currently provided. The tutor training courses, as well as the current courses on IE for teachers, were considered effective in enabling trainees to achieve the core values related to the promotion of IE, these mostly related to working with others and to personal professional development. Values in relation to supporting all learners and valuing learner diversity were achieved but to a lesser extent.

When asked whether participants felt that the courses responded adequately to the general demands made on teachers in schools, views were divided. The majority (13) agreed that they did, 7 disagreed and 5 didn't know.

Key demands on teachers that were identified by participants included lack of physical accessibility for students, such as ramps, modified toilets and wheelchair access; the lack of availability or shortage of aids and assistive devices such as glasses, hearing aids, visual aids, Braille, etc.; the lack of quality teaching and learning materials and guidance on how to teach children with disabilities; the lack of teacher knowledge, skills and training;

the lack of parental involvement; the lack of funding to enable access for children with disabilities; the lack of good health and nutrition.

Moreover, respondents were asked to assess the severity of barriers to IE listed in the questionnaire. Figure 2 represents the combined views of heads, trained and untrained tutors. The most severe barriers to IE were identified as teachers' lack of competence in the education of learners with disabilities, child labour and teachers' workloads.

Other barriers mentioned in the survey included the lack of capacity amongst teachers and teachers' low salaries:

"The teachers are unable to teach the children with disabilities because their capacity is limited."

"The teachers' salaries are very low. They are not motivated. It forces them to work part-time in such jobs as taxi drivers".

In the study, we asked the participants to formulate key recommendations for the development of IE courses in Cambodia, and their responses were as follows.

1. Participants felt that tutors at PTTCs, RTTCs⁸ and all teachers need to be better trained.

"The capacity of teachers who teach children with disabilities is limited, teachers need further training." (PTTC, 2013)⁹

2. The respondents reported that the content of the training courses already offered to tutors at PTTCs needs to be developed further to include: issues on Child Rights & Child Friendly Schools'; information on all categories of disabilities including severe disabilities, visual and hearing impairment, and intellectual disability; strategies to support learners; training in the necessary assistive devices such as Braille and hearing aids for visual and hearing impaired learners; demonstrations of actual devices; the curriculum for special and IE and lesson planning; how to manage additional work under current conditions with an already insufficient amount of resources, materials, etc. The methodology for the training should include effective facilitation and clear explanations to expedite understanding; the training should be evaluated; materials used in the training should be simple and easy to understand; the length of the course should be longer than just a few days and should include the content already highlighted above.

Study limitations

There were some limitations to the study which occurred during the data collection and the analysis. Firstly, it was necessary to get official permission from the national Ministry of Education (Teachers Training Department) and regional government representatives. Even where this was obtained it was not always satisfactory for PTTCs to work with.

Thus it would have been useful to conduct follow up in-depth interviews to clarify answers and get information from all the PTTCs in Cambodia for a clear and heterogeneous picture of IE courses, the obstacles and the opportunities for future scholars.

Conclusion

Comparing Cambodia as regards IE with other countries in the region, we found similarities in accessing equal education for children with disabilities in Thailand and Vietnam. Both countries struggle to transfer policies into practice. In Thailand, as with Cambodia, the opening up of education for all is slowed by an underlying cultural attitude of blame towards people with disabilities (Vorapanya, 2008). Traditional Buddhist society treats disability as bad karma coming from the sins of the past and as such, a person with disability is perceived as having lower status. Recently, teachers colleges in Thailand have introduced the role of compassion with the recommendation to stress the necessity of gently coaching school staff to overcome their disability bias (Vorapanya, 2008). One of the good examples of a successful approach to IE programs coming from Vietnam is the use of resources within the community. To support the inclusion of children with disabilities, some more specialized NGOs are using community peer education consisting of support from students who are performing well and live close to disabled children. They are more open to the disabled children and work in their own environment. This has been shown to improve disabled children's success in learning and breaks down psychological barriers to their full participation in the community (Sellers and Eversmann, 2007).

Access to education for learners with disabilities has significant limitations in Cambodia. Despite some efforts made by the RGC and international non-governmental organisations, large numbers of disabled children are either still not being educated or face barriers to their full access to education. Access to education for all is still not regarded as an issue of human rights. Instead, disability is seen more as an individual and family tragedy. Barriers to IE such as lack of teachers' competences to educate learners with disabilities, child labour and teachers' workloads were identified in the study, and recommendations provided. Overall, for the future development of professional care and work with people with disabilities in Cambodia, it seems necessary to establish university programs which focus on IE and to rethink the existing model with PTTCs as the only pedagogical institutions in the country. Thus, international development programmes should be targeted at supporting study programmes in higher education on special and IE; those programmes which would respect Cambodian culture and history. The pilot study has shown that much more attention needs to be paid to high quality inclusive education practices in training the trainers at PTTCs, so that they can further educate prospective teachers and promote diversity in the classroom.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank Dr. Sulochini Pather for her contribution to the study.

Reference

- Ayres, D.M. Anatomy of a crisis: Education, development and the state in Cambodia, 1953-1998. Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books. 2004.
- Brinkley, J. Cambodia's Course: The Modern History of a Troubled Land. New York: Public Affairs. 2011.
- Carter, J. Preparing for the Journey: A Cooperative Approach to Service Provision for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Cambodia. Phnom Penh: Hagar. 2009.
- Diamond, J. Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive. London: Penguin Groups. 2005.
- Elms, L. Strengthening Practical Teachers' Training Options for Inclusive Education: Mapping Teaching Aid Use and Production in Cambodia. Prague: Caritas Czech Republic. 2014.
- Fujimoto, H. Aspects of Social Work with Vulnerable Groups in Cambodia. Journal of Social Policy and Social Work. No 13. Tokyo: BUNSHIN, Co. 2009.
- FAO. Cambodia and FAO: Achievements and success stories. Electronic Publishing Policy and Support Branch. Rome. 2011.
- Garkani, T. et al. Education and Fragility in Cambodia. UNESCO. Paris: IIEP. 2011.
- Huebner, A. Disability Prevalence Project: Final Report. Handicap International. 2012.
- Jarus, O. Angkor Wat: History of Ancient Temple. LiveScience [online] [cit. 8/10/2014]. Available at: <http://www.livescience.com/23841-angkor-wat.html>.
- Kalyanpur, M. Paradigm and paradox: Education for All and the inclusion of children with disabilities in Cambodia, *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 2011, Vol. 15, No. 10.
- Lowe, D. Disability Rights Initiative Cambodia: Join Programme Document. Phnom Penh: AusAID. 2013.
- Ministry of Women's Affairs, Violence Against Women: 2009 Follow-up Survey. Kingdom of Cambodia. 2009.
- National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning, General Population Census of Cambodia 2008, Final Census Results, Figures at a Glance. [cit. 10/10/2014]. Cambodia. 2008.
- Pochaud, F. Cambodia: Year Zero. Canada: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1977.
- Robinson, Jo. Education is a key to development success. [cit. 07/04/2015]. UNA-UK. 2012. Available at: <http://www.una.org.uk/content/education-key-development-success>.
- Sau Man Mak, M. Unravelling the Barriers to Education for Children with Severe Disabilities (Cambodia). University of Hong Kong. 2009.
- Siren, Un. Inclusive Education in Cambodia: Practices and Initiatives [online presentation] [cit. 8/10/2014]. PED/MoEYS presentation at 2nd Annual Forum of SEAMEO: Danang City. 2011. Available at: <http://seameoforum.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/presentation-ie-for-vn-trip.ppt>.
- Sellers A. and Eversmann E. Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities: How-to Guide. Catholic Relief Services. 2007.
- Sonis, J. et al. Probable posttraumatic stress disorder and disability in Cambodia: associations with perceived justice, desire for revenge, and attitudes toward the Khmer Rouge trials. *The Journal of the American Medical Association*, 2009, Vol. 302, No. 5.
- Stubbs, S. Inclusive Education: Where there are few resources. Oslo: The Atlas Alliance. 2008.
- Sulochini, P.; Siska, J. Situational Analysis of Inclusive Education Training Courses in Cambodia. Caritas Czech Republic. 2013. Available at: <http://svet.charita.cz/res/data/032/003705.pdf>.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia. Art. 74, Chapter VI. 1993.

Tully, J. France on the Mekong: A history of the Protectorate in Cambodia, 1863–1953. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. 2002.

Un, L. A comparative study of education and development in Cambodia and Uganda from their civil wars to the present. Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research. 2012.

UNESCO. The Right to Education. [cit. 07/04/2015]. 2014. Available at: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/right2education>.

UNESCO-IBE. World Data on Education. VII Ed. 2010/2011 [revised version]: Cambodia. 2011.

VanLeit, B. et al. Children with Disabilities in Rural Cambodia: An Examination of Functional Status and Implications for Service Delivery, *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal*, 2007, Vol. 18, No. 2.

Vatha Ch. Reaching the Unreached: Bridging the social divide in Cambodia through inclusive education. Phnom Penh: VSO International. 2013.

Vorapanya S. A Model for Inclusive Schools in Thailand. University of Oregon Graduate School. 2008.

World Bank. Growth, poverty, and inequality in Cambodia [online presentation] [cit. 10/10/2014]. External Advisory Panel for Cambodia: sustaining rapid growth. Phnom Penh. 2008. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTDEBTDEPT/Resources/468980-1218567884549/Cambodia_GrowthEquity.pdf.

Zook, D. Disability and democracy in Cambodia: an integrative approach to community building and civic engagement, *Disability & Society*, 2010, Vol. 25, No. 2.

Notes

¹ Cambodia consists administratively of 24 provinces with 18 PTTCs altogether. Some provinces are merged under one PTTC.

² Untrained tutors are those who did not receive any prior training in special and inclusive education. Trained tutors are those who had undergone some training in special and inclusive education.

³ Personal meeting of authors with Maryknoll organization, February 2014, Phnom Penh.

⁴ PED/MoEYS – Primary Education Department of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia.

⁵ Personal meeting of authors with PED representatives from Ministry of Education, September 2013, Phnom Penh.

⁶ Situation analysis with other publications can be found at following website: <http://svet.charita.cz/en/where-we-help/asia/cambodia/studies-about-inclusive-education-in-cambodia/>.

⁷ School Director, Cambodia. Situational Analysis of Inclusive Education Training Courses in Cambodia. Caritas Czech Republic. 2013.

⁸ RTTCs – Regional Teachers Training Centres – for upper grade teachers' training.

⁹ Ibid.