

# *Child Rights Foundation Strategic Plan 2013-2015*



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# Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CC-Ex.Com	Children Council Executive Committee
CCWC	Commune Committee for Women and Children
CFS	Child Friendly School
CMDG	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals
CNCC	Cambodia National Council for Children
CP	Child Participation
CR	Child Rights
CRF	Child Rights Foundation
COMMIT	Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Human Trafficking
D&D	Decentralization and Deconcentration
DoE	District Office of Education
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECCD	Early Child Community Development
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HDI	Human Development Indicator
HIV	Human Immune-deficiency Virus
ILO	International Labor Organization
MCRS	Mainstreaming Child Rights in School
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Mol	Ministry of Interior
NCDD	National Committee for Sub-national Democracy Development
NGO	Non-Government Organization
PoE	Provincial Office of Education
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PWG	Provincial Working Group
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SNAP-DRR	Strategic National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction
TSEC	Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of the Children
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

# Executive Summary

**Child Rights Foundation** is a child-focused, not-for-profit, non-political and non-religious Cambodian non-governmental organization with a mandate to work for full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other instruments related to children's issues. CRF was established on November 20, 2000 and officially registered with the Royal Government of Cambodia on March 6, 2001.

**Our vision is** "a world where all children enjoy their rights in all circumstances".

To reach this end CRF works through 5 main **missions**: 1. **to educate** state and non-state actors towards accountability in the implementation of child rights, 2. **to empower** children and young people to actively and meaningfully engage in decision-making process and to become their own advocate for the respect of children's rights at all levels, 3. **to support** duty bearers and rights holders in realization of child rights, 4. **to mobilize** individuals, resources and efforts towards personal and collective responsibilities for making the lives of children safe, positive and wholesome, 5. **to monitor** the implementation of the UNCRC in Cambodia with meaningful participation of children and young people.

**CRF's core values** lay on accountability, quality, creativity and cooperation.

**Child Rights Situation:** Emphasizing is put on the fact that despite profusion of relevant laws and policies the situation of the child remains to be improved.

The child rights situation focuses on 4 fundamental rights of the child, namely rights to health and health services, rights to quality education, rights to protection from all forms of violence and harm, and rights to participate as citizen.

With regard to **right to health**, despite substantial improvements with respect to infant and child health in recent years, the health status of the Cambodian children is still one of the worst in the world. Children continue to die from preventable and treatable diseases including diarrhea and pneumonia. Insufficient water and sanitation facilities and poor knowledge on primary health care are among the key hindering factors.

Concerning the **right to quality education**, even though Cambodia is likely to meet the CMDG target for universal primary education, meeting the targets from secondary education seems unlikely. While significant progress has been made with regulatory and policy frameworks, the actual implementation is still limited: resource constraint is among the major reasons.

In term of **rights to protection**, Cambodia has adopted many specific laws and policies to protect children; however, enforcement is weak and largely ineffective. As a result children are still exposed to one or more vulnerability situations such as physical/emotional/sexual abuse, exploitation and neglect. In addition, natural disaster becomes a growing concern in Cambodia which mostly affects education, health and living status of children.

In regards to **rights to participation**, the concluding observation for Cambodia made recently by the UN Committee on CRC raised concern about the persistence of traditional attitudes in the State party which limit children's rights to express their views in decision-making procedures affecting them and about the absence of a policy and supportive mechanism to promote child participation in the State party.

**Key trends** are induced by economic growth and investments, migration from rural to urban within Cambodia and across borders, urbanization, increased drug and alcohol use, climate change and natural disasters, agricultural production increase, tourism development, and D&D – decentralization and deconcentration.

**Key lessons learned** from previous periods encompass organizational learning and program learning.

In organization learning emphasis should be put on the fact that critical to CRF's work is the need to ensure that more social impact is achieved if the organization is effectively run, requiring quality collaboration at Ministry, provincial, district and school levels has been fully exploited as it is key factor of sustainability.

CRF is strongly engaged in the integration with the communities and donor society to be able to look more at emerging opportunities and to balance innovation and traditional implementation.

Program learning draws on the responsiveness to the needs of rights holders and duty bearers, the promotion child participation through the re-dynamisation of the children council, the mainstreaming child rights in school including the tackle of corporal punishment, the prevention of trafficking and sexual exploitation on children, and the monitoring & evaluation as a tool for constant improvement. Furthermore, CRF has been successful in up-streaming the prevention against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of the Child in the local education system.

Inventing a new paradigm of NGO-State synergy is another asset of the quality collaboration between CRF and the government.

### **Strategic direction**

CRF is committed to maximizing experience and strengths to become a key child rights organization over the next 3 years, with increasing capacity and influence to achieve sustainable change in the way that Cambodia's children are viewed, cared for and treated. To this end, the following 3-year strategic directions have been considered to strengthen quality and effectiveness of the organization through its programs between 2013 and 2015.

**Organizational strategy:** In the next 3 years, CRF will further strengthen management and leadership at different levels in order to ensure the long-term stability and sustainability of the organization. CRF will also significantly focus attention on developing quality and professionalism of its human resources with a particular emphasis on ensuring that staffs in key technical positions have appropriate skills to perform their work with required quality and effectiveness.

Strengthening CRF's role and influence among practitioners and policy-makers at national, regional and international levels calls upon communication and cooperation with key actors.

Developing CRF's donor portfolio will be a priority in the next 3 years, by intensifying relationships with existing donors; diversifying the numbers and types of funding sources including bi-lateral and private donors; generating income through provision of CR-related training services to other NGOs; and improving the skills and mechanism to access to funds with more complex proposal and reporting requirements.

**Program strategy:** In the next 3 years, CRF intends to mainstream in all the programs five key strategies that are **partnership** with national, provincial and local

levels, **advocacy** work to influence policy and practice at different levels, **building capacity** of state and non-state actors to become accountable duty bearers in the implementation of the convention on the rights of the child, **deepening interventions and scaling up results**. **Child participation** will be employed as a cross cutting strategy that will be applied in all projects and programs.

### **Program justification and goals:**

**The Child Rights Education program** finds its justification on the fact that many efforts have been done by the Royal Government of Cambodia and civil society after ratification of the UNCRC in 1992, many children's issues still remain and child rights (CR) have been violated on a daily basis through different forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation in public, workplaces, at homes and even in schools where people deserve to learn and acquire good education. Gaps analysis emphasizes the low awareness on CR and child related issues among policy-makers, practitioners, public and even children themselves due to the lack of systematic CR dissemination mechanisms and limited resources allocated for this cause.

The child rights education program ambitions to systematically institutionalize and scale up child rights concept to relevant professional groups working with and for children.

**The Child Rights Governance program** defines its justification on numerous gaps including the limited capacity and competence of local governance to deal with child and youth-led organizations. The fact that children issues are not explicitly highlighted and addressed in the commune council agenda hampers the allocation of budget and resources by the government to tackle those issues. Lack of reliable and comprehensive data on child rights situation at the sub-national level adds to the weakness of the monitoring system on child rights by the local governance.

The program aims to achieve the development and modelisation of good governing practice towards increased state accountability on child rights in CRF target areas. As key interventions, it will be focusing on 3 components, strengthening local governance, engaging CSOs in local governance and monitoring the UNCRC via children and youth led-groups.

**The Education program** takes into account the fact that Children Council's good practice in school is not yet at scale and this is partly because of government policy in CFS program is too slowly implemented due to lack of resource. To become more responsive to the education trends and globalization, CRF will be encouraging change in labor force influx that will result in significant increase of utilization of outside resources. The goal of the education program is to enable children in CRF target schools enjoy friendly learning environment as emphasized in the Child Friendly School policy.

**The Child Protection program** finds its justification that child labor is widespread especially in agriculture sector where a lot of children are employed and often exploited while protective and preventive measures are weakly implemented. In urban areas, lack of legal framework protecting children from abuse when they are employed in domestic work hampers effective monitoring by the government on this issue. With regard to corporal punishment including in school environment, poor law enforcement (e.g. Education Law 2007, article 35) and ineffective preventive

mechanism underpin increased efforts to provoke tangible changes through stronger protection network for children.

The program ambitions to ensure that rights to protection of children in the CRF target areas are effectively enforced. The child protection program will encompass four sub-programs that aim to tackle issues of corporal punishment, child labor, migration and trafficking and disaster risk reduction - safe schools.

### **Geographic choices:**

Within the strategic period 2013 - 2015, CRF will prepare and perform the withdrawal of some projects/programs on the basis of potential sustainability and handing-over to the local institutional partner, namely MoEYS by it at the provincial, district and school levels. Intensification is essential to ensure full capacity of the partner institutions to expand the program's good practice to other areas after the withdrawal.

CRF will consider expanding its program activities with emphasis on the realization of children's rights in critical circumstances, especially in the context of low access to quality education, rampant human trafficking and sexual and labor exploitation, and low preparedness to disaster risk reduction.

In the 3 coming years, CRF considers to keep on operating in the provinces of Kandal, Kampong Cham and Siem Reap while expansion to Ratanakiri province and Phnom Penh city will constitute a promising opportunity. However, opportunities for funding and program development and emerging issues that may need to be addressed, will required some flexibility in this. By searching for this geographic and partnership proximity CRF expects to increase its insight in the rural society in the prospect to better address the challenges faced by children as right holders in their school as well as in their community.

### **Resources implication**

**Financial resources:** As a strategic response to emerging challenges, CRF will be striving to become main contractor with new donors by taking pro-active resolutions. For instance, it is of priority to increasing visibility and communication with potential supporters and media including private sector in a short-term delay.

Maintaining existing donors is a critical way to ensure availability of financial resources. However, CRF will be striving for diversifying the sources of funding. For instance, a donor coordinating meeting will be organized to present the outcome of this strategic plan. Furthermore, investing time and resources with one person in charge of fund raising task is essential to mobilize financial resources with effective support of Information Technology.

CRF will also consider to calling upon technical assistance from external human resources including foreigners as key innovation to inject new ideas and approaches such as income generation based on service provision.

**Human resources:** CRF is committed to achieve the positive transformation which will be to encourage the Board of Directors to play more active role in fund raising by diversifying his profile and composition.

Staff capacity building is a recurrent concern for CRF while the recruitment of new staff will tangibly contribute to help managing the risk of rapid turn-over as well as to address the weak gender balance. Membership is another representation mechanism

not to be neglected in the context of local civil society in search of stability and recognition. CRF membership will be enhanced to support stronger visibility among the general public as well as among the NGO community for the purpose of lobby and advocacy.

## **Conclusion**

CRF's Partnership with the government of Cambodia is important for bringing change with coherence and sustainability through this three-year strategic plan. CRF will engage in collaboration and expansion of its work with established civil society specialist organizations to further enrich programs in the realization of children's rights, especially for those hard to reach.

CRF's strategic direction is about improving governance as well as strengthening the capacity of middle level managers to handle stronger responsibility and leadership. Increased attention will be to develop quality and professionalism of human resources. It is also about strengthening CRF's role and influence among practitioners and policy-makers at national, regional and international levels by improving communication and cooperation with key actors. CRF will strive for developing its donor portfolio in a context of more complex proposal and reporting requirements.

The program goals will contribute to systematically institutionalize child rights concept, to achieve the development and modelisation of good governing practice towards increased state accountability on child rights, to enable children to enjoy friendly learning environment, and to ensure that rights to protection of children are effectively enforced.

Consequently, key interventions have been thought in a way that increased pragmatism and effectiveness will characterize all the program activities to serve the best interests of the children.

Scaling up good practice, supporting deconcentration and decentralization, phasing-out with emphasis on sustainability mechanism, diversification of resource mobilization and intensification of monitoring and evaluation constitute key factors of success of this strategic plan.

As most achievement relies on quality and dedicated human resource, CRF has little choice but to consider emerging donor trends in the context of rarefaction of finding opportunities, even though tougher competition will certainly impact on synergy and effectiveness of interventions for the best interests of children.

Diversification of the Board of Directors profile and composition, as well as fostering CRF representation through its membership constitute key mechanisms that will ensure stability and recognition by the general public and the NGO community.



## I. Child Rights Foundation's Background

Child Rights Foundation (CRF) is a child-focused, not-for-profit, non-political and non-religious Cambodian non-governmental organization with a mandate to work for full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other instruments related to children's issues. It was established on November 20, 2000 and officially registered with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) on March 6, 2001 in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

CRF strongly commits to establishing permanent changes in the way children are well treated, viewed and cared for in all parts of Cambodia.

Believing that investing in children and youth - who are today's citizen, not tomorrow's- is fundamental in strengthening civil society capacities to participate in democratic processes, sustained development and prosperity of Cambodia, CRF puts children's best interests as heart of its work, especially pays attention to encourage everybody to take personal and collective responsibility to make children's lives safe, positive and wholesome.

## II. CRF's Vision, Missions and Core Values

The three-year Strategic Plan offered the opportunity to review CRF's Vision, Missions and Core Values, by taking into account global and local trends, emerging challenges, opportunities and risks assessment.

### II.1. The Vision:

The CRF's vision is "a world where all children enjoy their rights in all circumstances".

### II.2. The Missions:

- 1- To **educate** state and non-state actors to become accountable duty bearers in the implementation of the UNCRC,
- 2- To **empower** children and young people to actively and meaningfully engage in decision-making process and to become their own advocate for the respect of children's rights at all levels,
- 3- To **support** duty bearers and rights holders in realization of child rights,
- 4- To **mobilize** individuals, resources and efforts towards personal and collective responsibilities for making the lives of the children safe, positive and wholesome,
- 5- To **monitor** the implementation of the UNCRC in Cambodia with meaningful participation of children and young people.

## II.3. Core Values:

- 1- Accountability:** CRF recognizes the importance of being transparent and accountable for all that we do, not only for donors and partners but for staff and beneficiaries as well. Hence, both annual financial audits and regular project evaluations have been conducted since CRF's inception and made available to interested parties, including children, parents, and teachers,
- 2- Quality:** CRF is committed to achieving high standards of quality in its work with children. Giving priority to quality instead of quantity implies that projects are identified in such a way that specific needs of children are met in a cost-effective manner, and then scaling them up to maximize the impact. It also means developing the knowledge and skills that its staff needs for achievement, while managing its relationships with a high standard of personal conduct. Search for quality be it in product, services, cooperation and results is the key CRF's philosophy for the Best Interests of the Child which dictate that all CRF actions, whether concerning policy development, staff recruitment or programming should be that the best interests of the child are of primary consideration.
- 3- Creativity:** Creativity is about constantly inventing new and pertinent paradigm to respond to the rapid transformation of the society. Innovation in all CRF actions is a catalyst for tangible improvement of the status of children's rights and lives, taking into consideration global and local trends, and gaps and opportunities. Best practices and lessons learned will be enriching present and future programming to foster creativity.
- 4- Cooperation:** Cooperation is critical factor of resource mobilization at the service of the children's benefit. For this purpose, CRF has been demonstrating constant openness and respect to various forms of collaboration with government duty bearers, stakeholders in the public and private sectors as well as in the civil society including children and youth-led groups, towards synergy for equal opportunities for all children regardless of their race, color, sex, language, religion, national, ethnic or social origin, disability, birth or other status.

## III. Situation Analysis

### III.1. Country Context

Cambodia is a signatory member country to most United Nations treaties and accords, and has adopted the Millennium Development Goals, the first and most important of which is the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. The population of Cambodia is approximately 14 million of which children under 18 years represents 41%.

Since early 1990s, Cambodia has achieved remarkable progress in addressing key drivers of poverty and vulnerability<sup>1</sup>, and there has been significant economic progress. Between 1995 and 2011, Cambodia's HDI value increased from 0.407 to 0.523, an increase of 28%. Cambodia is now considered in the medium human development category, though it only ranks 139 out of 187 countries and territories<sup>2</sup>, and remains one of the poorest countries in the South East Asia region.

Although the number of people below the official poverty line has fallen consistently, inequality remains a significant concern<sup>3</sup>. Consumption inequality between the rich and poor and between urban and rural residents has grown considerably, thus increasing the percentage of the most vulnerable people<sup>4</sup>. In both urban and rural contexts a large proportion of the population, including families with children, continues to live in precarious circumstances. The poorest families in both rural and urban contexts are highly vulnerable to shocks (ill-health, accidents, natural disasters) which can push them into debt, landlessness and a cycle of rights violations.

The economic growth has been largely fuelled by the garment sector, construction, agriculture and tourism, and has increased trends of urbanization and migration. Over 20% of Cambodians lived in urban centers by 2010; and the rate of urbanization is estimated to increase by 3.2% per year (2010–2015)<sup>5</sup>. Rural to urban migration has a profound impact on the social fabric of Cambodian society.

Increasing numbers of people in Cambodia are migrating for work, including fathers, mothers, youth and children. While some parents migrate with their families in search of work and/or encourage children themselves to migrate in search of work, other children are 'left behind' in villages, often in the care of their grandparents or other related caregivers. Thus, families are being separated; children left behind face increased vulnerability and discrimination, especially if their parents are unable to send back regular income to their children's caregivers. Furthermore, children and youth who migrate for work are removed from the safe haven of family and community, and face increased exposure to possible high-risk behavior associated with dislocation in urban areas, including access to drugs, alcohol, gambling and gangs<sup>6</sup>. For the poorest families who remain in rural areas, economic opportunities are limited, and they face risks of insecure land tenure and idiosyncratic economic shocks which may result in debts and the sale of assets including land<sup>7</sup>.

While children in urban areas are often better off than their rural counterparts, due to higher standards of health, protection, education and sanitation; it is increasingly recognized that urban advances have been uneven, and significant numbers of children in marginalized urban settings confront daily challenges and deprivations of

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<sup>1</sup>Ministry of Environment of Cambodia and UNDP Cambodia (2011) Cambodia Human Development Report 2011. Building Resilience: The Future of Rural Livelihoods in the Face of Climate Change.

<sup>2</sup> UNDP (2011) Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for all Cambodia.

<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Environment of Cambodia and UNDP Cambodia (2011) Cambodia Human Development Report 2011. Building Resilience: The Future of Rural Livelihoods in the Face of Climate Change.

<sup>4</sup>UNESCO (2010) National Education Support and Strategy (UNESS) Cambodia 2010 – 2013. KH/2010/ED/28; United Nations in Cambodia (2009) Situation Analysis of Youth in Cambodia: Analysis and Policy Briefs

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.indexmundi.com/cambodia/demographics\\_profile.html](http://www.indexmundi.com/cambodia/demographics_profile.html) accessed 07/03/12

<sup>6</sup>United Nations in Cambodia (2009) Situation Analysis of Youth in Cambodia: Analysis and Policy Briefs.

<sup>7</sup>Care (2011) Drowning in Debt. The Impact of the 2011 Cambodia Floods on Household Debt: A survey of poor households in three affected provinces.

their rights<sup>8</sup>. Difficult urban living conditions reflect and are exacerbated by factors such as illegality, limited voice in decision-making and lack of secure tenure, assets and legal protection. Exclusion is often reinforced by discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, race or disability. In addition, cities often expand beyond the capacity of the authorities to provide the infrastructure and services needed to ensure people's health and wellbeing. A significant proportion of urban population growth is occurring in the most unplanned and deprived areas. These factors combine to push essential services beyond the reach of children and families living in poor urban neighborhoods<sup>9</sup>. Inadequate access to safe drinking water and sanitation services puts children at increased risk of illness, under-nutrition and death<sup>10</sup>. Urban life can also have a negative effect on the mental health of children and adolescents, particularly if they live in poor areas and are exposed to the dangers of violence and substance abuse<sup>11</sup>. Children and adolescents in urban areas are likely to have greater access to alcohol and illegal drugs than their counterparts in rural areas. They may resort to these substances as a means of coping with stress or as an outlet for idleness and frustration in the absence of employment or opportunities for recreation such as sports and youth clubs<sup>12</sup>.

### III.2. Child Rights Situation

Since ratification of the UNCRC in 1992, considerable progress in the right direction has been made in many areas. In terms of legislation, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has ratified relevant international and national instruments such as the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption, ILO Conventions on the Worst Forms of Child Labor, the UN Convention on Human Trafficking in Women and Children, the two Optional Protocols to the UNCRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime etc. Moreover, the Government has also adopted various child related laws including Education Law, Inter-Country Adoption Law, Law on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of the Victims as well as Social Security Law etc.

To ensure co-ordination among different Ministries for monitoring and implementation of children's rights the RGC has established the Cambodia National Council for Children (CNCC). The status of the CNCC was strengthened by a Royal Decree which provides that the CNCC has its own budget and creates structures at sub-national levels. However, this institution still lacks the necessary human, technical and financial resources to fulfill its coordinating role in relation to the

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<sup>8</sup>UNICEF (2012) The State of the World's Children 2012: Children in an Urban World; Save the Children(2012) Urbanization and Programming in Asia. Notes by Andy West to accompany a PowerPoint.

<sup>9</sup>UNICEF (2012) The State of the World's Children 2012: Children in an Urban World.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup>Patel, V., et al., 'Promoting Child and Adolescent Mental Health in Low and Middle Income Countries', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 49, no. 3, March 2008, pp. 313–334, <[www.sangath.com/images/file/Promoting%20child%20and%20adolescent%20mental%20health%20.....pdf](http://www.sangath.com/images/file/Promoting%20child%20and%20adolescent%20mental%20health%20.....pdf)>, accessed 30 September 2011.

<sup>12</sup>UNICEF (2012) The State of the World's Children 2012: Children in an Urban World.

implementation of the Convention. Furthermore, there is no independent mechanism, such as an ombudsperson, through which children can seek redress for breaches of their rights under the UNCRC.

Although many efforts have been done by the RGC and civil society to implement the UNCRC, significant gaps remain evident for children of today, particularly for children with disabilities or those who need protection from abuse and exploitation, leaving children vulnerable and sometimes unable to access even the most basic rights.

### **III.2.1. Right to Health:**

Despite substantial improvements with respect to infant and child health in recent years, the health status of the Cambodian children is still one of the worst in the world.

Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) 2010 data shows that there were 45 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births and 54 under-five deaths for every 1,000 live births, compared with 2005 when infant mortality was 66 and under-five mortality was 83<sup>13</sup>. However, despite such improvements, rates of infant under five and maternal mortality remain a concern, especially in rural and remote areas. Childhood mortality is much higher in rural areas (with an under-five mortality of 75, compared with 29 in urban areas)<sup>14</sup>. Most determinants of child health can be linked to poverty. Children whose mothers are in the lowest wealth quintile have a three times greater risk of dying before age 5 than those whose mothers are in the highest wealth quintile<sup>15</sup>. Under-five mortality is also much higher among mothers who have received no schooling (87 percent) than among those whose mothers have attended secondary or higher levels of schooling (35 percent)<sup>16</sup>.

There are significant concerns regarding nutrition and stunted growth of children in Cambodia. Stunting reflects a failure to receive adequate nutrition over a long period of time and is exacerbated by chronic illness. In contrast to other health improvements, the nutritional status of children has not improved much in the past five years. Currently, 40% of children are stunted and 11% are wasted (compared with 43% and 8% in 2005). Stunting is most common in Preah Vihear/ Steung Treng (56%) and least common in Phnom Penh (25%)<sup>17</sup>. The reasons for these high numbers are mainly due to poverty, food insecurity, maternal illiteracy and lack of awareness and understanding of child care and development. Access to health services are also limited and often of poor quality. The living conditions are rudimentary and the sanitation standards poor making children susceptible to disease.

A child's health status is largely influenced by the type of improved water and sanitation facilities that are available to the household and the way they are used and maintained. Proper hygienic and sanitation practices also reduce the

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<sup>13</sup>National Institute of Statistics, Directorate General for Health, and ICF Macro (2011) Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2010. Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Calverston, Maryland USA.

<sup>14</sup>The highest rates of under-five mortality is in Preah Vihear/Steung Treng (at 119)

<sup>15</sup>National Institute of Statistics, Directorate General for Health, and ICF Macro (2011) Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2010. Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Calverston, Maryland USA.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

risks of leading childhood diseases such as diarrhea. The development of the water and sanitation sector in Cambodia is under its Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs) number 7: Ensure environmental sustainability. It stipulates increased safe water supply services for 50% of rural population and adequate sanitation services for 30% of rural population by 2015. While there have been improvements in sanitation and water coverage in the past decade, Cambodia is not on track to reach the MDG target for sanitation. 72% of the rural populations continue to defecate indiscriminately because they do not have a safe way to dispose of their excreta<sup>18</sup>. In Government reports in 2010 concerning the CMDGs indicate that only 41% of the rural population and 54% of the urban population have access to safe drinking water<sup>19</sup>. In order to improve water and sanitation in schools, School Health Policy is being disseminated to the Provincial Offices of Education nationwide. However, only 40% primary schools through the country do not have drinking water and 22% do not have toilet facilities while 47% of lower secondary schools do not have drinking water and 17% are not equipped with latrines. The lack of water and sanitation facilities in schools is a contributing factor in the high dropout rate of students, especially for girls.

### III.2.2. Right to Quality Education:

The RGC has established the Education for All (EFA) National Plan 2003-2015 that aims to reach Cambodia's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals. The nation plan has a focus on improving the quality of education and reducing the inequality in access to education. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has developed several policies, strategies, guidelines, including National Life Skills Policy for Provincial and District education officials to be followed at local levels. Donors, financial institutes and NGOs are also committed to assist the RGC and MoEYS in policy development and partly finance the implementation plan<sup>20</sup>. However, several challenges limit children's access to quality education at all levels. The UN Committee on CRC has expressed concerns '*that education is still not compulsory in the State party, and that only 1,9% of the GDP is spent on education and that education expenditure has dropped since 2007*' (para 65)<sup>21</sup>. Current status of education in Cambodia is summarized as followings:

Although education is still not compulsory in Cambodia, the average net enrolment rate for primary school has reached 95.2% in 2010-2011 (95.5% in rural areas and 93.8% in urban areas).<sup>22</sup> The children's completion rates for primary school are 85.3% on average, 91% in urban areas and 84.3% in rural areas. The completion rates significantly drop for lower and higher secondary education, especially in rural areas. The average completion rate in lower secondary school is 44%, 66.8% in urban areas and only 40.8% in rural areas. Thus, access to lower secondary education is still very low, less than

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<sup>18</sup>WHO/ UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation Estimate for the use of Improved Sanitation Facilities. Updated March 2012 Cambodia

<sup>19</sup>Ministry of Planning (Update 2010) Achieving Cambodia's Millennium Development Goals. Royal Government of Cambodia.

<sup>20</sup>Detail, please refer to SCNIC CSSA: January 2005: P12-19; Section related " Opportunities"

<sup>21</sup>UNCRC/C/KHM/CO/2

<sup>22</sup>EMIS Office, Department of Planning (March 2011) Education Statistics and Indicators 2010/2011. MoEYS.

half of all children who enter primary education will eventually complete grade 1-9.<sup>23</sup> Net enrolment rate in lower secondary school is 35% on average, with 51.3% in urban areas and only 31.7% in rural areas. On the other hand, seasonal work in some parts of the country affects children's attendance rates in school<sup>24</sup>. Due to family poverty significant numbers of children work before and after school, and significant proportions of children have dropped out of school in order to contribute to their family income.

Quality of education remains significant concern in Cambodia's education system. This due to insufficient pedagogical skills of teachers, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate school aid materials, lack of quality in school infrastructure (insufficient facilities such as toilets and drinking water and materials for pupils). Outdated teaching methods and the prevalence of corporal punishment negatively affects quality of education. According to Save the Children's Baseline study 17-39% of children in its targets areas don't feel safe in school, and more than 80% of the children report that they are sometimes hit by their teachers<sup>25</sup>. Child protection remains a major issue in the schools, with apparently pervasive acceptance of corporal punishment by District level staff, Head Teachers, Teachers and EFA Committee members<sup>26</sup>.

### **III.2.3. Right to Protection:**

Children are the most vulnerable group in Cambodian society. They are exposed to one or more vulnerability situations such as physical/emotional/sexual abuse, exploitation and neglect. Cambodia has adopted many specific laws and policies to protect children; however, enforcement is weak and largely ineffective. On the other hand, many child abuse cases go unreported because families feel it brings dishonor to their families or believe the formal justice system doesn't protect children.

Child work is prevalent in Cambodia. Girls and boys as young as 6 years of age are working within their homes and local environments to support their family. While Cambodia has strengthened its policy framework to address the worst forms of child labor through implementation of a National Plan of Action on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor (2008 – 2012) and through the Prakas by the Ministry of Labor and Vocation Training in (2004), gaps and inconsistencies continue to exist in the legal and policy frameworks, and weaknesses in their implementation remain.

While accurate data on numbers of working children are not available, in 2006 it was estimated that more than 1.5 million children aged between 7 and 17 are economically active, and that nearly 50% of Cambodian children are economically active by the age of 10<sup>27</sup>. A survey undertaken by the International Labor Organization in 2003 estimated that there are 28,000 child

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<sup>23</sup>EMIS Office, Department of Planning (March 2011) Education Statistics and Indicators 2010/2011. MoEYS.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup>Save the Children Norway in Cambodia (2010) Education Baseline Study. December – February 2010. p.49.

<sup>26</sup>Cambodia National Council for Children (2011) Cambodia Child Tracker

<sup>27</sup>ILO, UNICEF, World Bank (2006) Children's Work in Cambodia: A Challenge for Growth and Poverty Development.

domestic workers in Phnom Penh alone<sup>28</sup>. Due to the nature of their isolation within private homes, girls and boys working as domestic workers face increased risks of abuse (emotional, physical, sexual), neglect and exploitation (sexual and economic)<sup>29</sup>. Yet this type of child labor remains unregulated. Cambodia is a source, transit and receiving country of victims of forced labor and sex trafficking. Cambodian men, women, boys and girls migrate to Thailand, Malaysia, and other countries for work, and many are subsequently subjected to sex trafficking or forced to labor in the Thai fishing and seafood processing industry, on agricultural plantations, in factories, in domestic work, or for begging and street selling<sup>30</sup>.

Cambodia is a destination for Vietnamese women and girls subjected to prostitution, many of whom are also victims of debt bondage. The sale of virgin girls continues to be a serious problem in Cambodia, with Cambodian and foreign (mostly from Asia) men paying hundreds to thousands of dollars to have sex with virgins<sup>31</sup>. A significant number of Asian and other foreign men travel to Cambodia to engage in child sex tourism<sup>32</sup>. There are no comprehensive statistics on rape and sexual violence against women and children in the country. However, centrally placed sources, including at the General Commissariat of National Police, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the NGOs with nationwide or near nationwide outreach providing services to victims, believe that the incidence of rape in Cambodia is increasing and that a growing number of victims are children<sup>33</sup>. Data collected as part of the NGO joint statistics project from 39 NGOs, and collated by ECPAT Cambodia from January – December 2010 reveals insights into the profile of victims, however, the sample concerning trafficking victims was small<sup>34</sup>. In 2010 a total of 539 victims of rape and 39 victims of sexual trafficking were reported by participating NGOs. The age of victims of sexual trafficking has declined since 2007 with the majority of victims in 2010 between 13 and 17 years old.

There is also growing concern in Cambodia about climate change resulting in floods, drought and other natural disasters<sup>35</sup>. The key environmental problems in Cambodia include habitat loss and declining biodiversity (in particular destruction of mangrove swamps and declining fish stocks), deforestation, land degradation, and natural hazards and disasters. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and windstorms as well as coastal inundation due to sea-level rise<sup>36</sup>. Cambodia is ranked 5th out of 162 countries in terms of

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<sup>28</sup>ILO (2004) Child Domestic Labor in Cambodia: Why it has to stop and how we can stop it.

<sup>29</sup>IOM (2007) 'Out of Sight, Out of Mind?' Child Domestic Workers and Patterns of Trafficking in Cambodia.

<sup>30</sup>United States Department of State (2011) Trafficking in Persons Report - Cambodia. 27 June 2011

<sup>31</sup>United States Department of State (2011) Trafficking in Persons Report - Cambodia. 27 June 2011

<sup>32</sup>Ibid

<sup>33</sup>Five Year Strategic Plan 2009-2013 - Neary Rattanak III, Ministry of Women's Affairs, September 2009, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup>NGO Joint Statistics: Database Report on Sexual Trafficking, Exploitation and Rape in Cambodia, 2010. ECPAT Cambodia, NGOCRC, COSECAM and Cambodia ACTS.

<sup>35</sup>Ministry of Environment of Cambodia and UNDP Cambodia (2011) Cambodia Human Development Report 2011. Building Resilience: The Future of Rural Livelihoods in the Face of Climate Change.

<sup>36</sup>University of Gothenburg (2009) Cambodia Environmental and Climate Change Policy Brief.



population exposed to flooding<sup>37</sup> and loses an estimated USD\$0.9 billion in GDP annually due to floods alone<sup>38</sup>.

#### **III.2.4. Right to Participate as Citizens:**

In general children in Cambodian society have little voice within family and outside. They have not been sufficiently encouraged to express their opinions, even issues concerning their own welfare. Consequently, Cambodian children and youth have so limited confidence in expressing their ideas and think that their views are not valuable. The existing adult relationship with children normally does not allow for their active and equal participation. Adults control and reserve the right to advocate, intervene and decide on behalf of children. Children in a traditional Cambodian setting will find themselves in a position where they may participate in social life, but under strict guidance of those who above them in the hierarchy.

There are still few structures that support children and youth engagement in the discussions at the national or local level. A 2007 World Vision Cambodia assessment of youth engagement in local governance in Cambodia revealed that there is space for people's participation, but such opportunities are not fully utilized. Participation mostly occurs in development activities, but not much at the level of governance or politics. Cambodia's enactment of the 'Decentralization and De-concentration' (D&D) local governance laws, in April 2008 has triggered a momentum around citizens' participation. The legislation seeks to devolve more resources and decision making to lower levels - Commune Councils (CC) - and provides an opening for community engagement in democratic local governance. Communities (and by extension, children) are to be engaged in decision making through new local development planning processes. This is an opportunity to support and facilitate children's participation in decisions and actions which affect their lives. The assessment also found that youths thought they had the right to participate, but identified that no consideration by CC had been given to including youth in governance or CC activities. From the same report, it is clear that youths do not have much formal knowledge of the official mandate, roles and responsibilities of CC and village authorities and this is also a barrier to their participation.

Children's Council is one of the mechanisms promoting child participation in schools, however, in most cases the type of children's participation is tokenistic enabling children to keep the schools clean and respond to the teachers requests for assistance, rather than enabling genuine children's participation where girls and boys can express their views and concerns, participate in school decision making processes concerning them<sup>39</sup>.

Most activities for children and youth are organized in schools with students, hindering the involvement of out of school youth and children. Children from

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<sup>37</sup>Cambodia, Risk Profile, <http://www.preventionweb.net/english/countries/statistics/risk.php?cid=29>

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup>Save the Children Norway in Cambodia (2010) Education Baseline Study. December – February 2010.

poor families are often too busy with economic and household work to join activities, though they are more favorably disposed to volunteering than youth in urban areas.

In recent concluding observation for Cambodia, the UN Committee on CRC is concerned about the persistence of traditional attitudes in the State party which limit children's rights to express their views in decision-making procedures affecting them and about the absence of a policy and supportive mechanism to promote child participation in the State party. The Committee reminds the State party of its obligation to undertake appropriate measures to fully implement the right of the child to be heard and urges it to actively combat negative attitudes and conceptions of the child which impede the full realization of her or his right to be heard, through public educational programs, including campaigns organized in cooperation with opinion leaders, families and the media.

### III.3. Key Trends

- **Economic growth and investments (and Inequality):**  
Remarkable economic growth under the direct effect of foreign investment in Cambodia paradoxically resulted in the worsening of gaps between the privileged and the unprivileged population, creating increasing disparities between rural and urban areas. Children's living conditions are significantly affected by the negative side of this economic growth.
- **Migration from rural to urban within Cambodia and across borders:**  
Even though the Cambodian people are mobile according to seasons, the emerging phenomenon is characterized by the permanence and the cross-boundary features of the migration impacting children education and safety (trafficking and sexual exploitation of children).
- **Urbanization** creates attraction for migrants who expect tremendous opportunities for employment and business. However, in the challenging context of socio-economic gaps, migration often increases hazardous environment for poor migrants in terms of safety, access to services including health, education and social. Urban environment could be both advantageous and risky for migrant children depending on their ability to sustain their living.
- **Increased drug and alcohol use:** youth alcoholism is induced by widespread marketing strategies used by abusive businessmen who focus their campaign on youth due to their overwhelming number, thus high potential consumption appetite. Drugs are easy to find in a context of corruption and laxity of the judiciary putting children and youth in an extreme vulnerability status.

- **Climate change and natural disasters:** climate changes bring tremendous consequences on children and their family's livelihood in terms of food security, access to education and health, and safety.
- **Agricultural production increase:** increase of cultivating areas and agricultural production put strong pressure on child labor both in the countryside and the cities, resulting in various forms of child exploitation and serious abuse.
- **Tourism** development is conducive to national economic growth. However, this growth could be at the expense of marginalized population including children whose vulnerability is aggravated by the rampant and insidious phenomenon of sexual exploitation and trafficking on children, and pedophilia.
- **D&D – decentralization and deconcentration:** D&D is playing a fundamental role in the realization of the rectangular strategy of the government aiming to reduce poverty, with the transfer of power and decision-making from the central administration to the communes. In every commune council it is found a focal person in charge in women and children (CCWC) whose role is to enhance access of women and children to social services be they education, health, legal and information.

## IV. Lessons Learned from Previous Periods

Key lessons learned by CRF have been summarized into organizational learning and program learning.

### IV.1. Organizational Learning

Critical to CRF's work is the need to ensure that more social impact is achieved if the organization is effectively run. For this purpose, quality collaboration at Ministry, provincial, district and school levels has been fully exploited as it is key factor of sustainability. Furthermore, creating a new paradigm of partnership with the government has been one of the major successes of CRF's effort to compromise different working methods towards more synergy and effectiveness in delivering capacity building services to the civil servants in the education sector.

With regards to mobilization of financial resources, CRF bases its learning on the philosophy *'Know ourselves and the donors so that we can work effectively together'*. There is a strong resolution to get out from the isolation from the rest of the communities and donor society to be able to look more at emerging opportunities and to balance innovation and traditional implementation.

## **IV.2. Program Learning**

### **Responsiveness to the needs of rights holders and duty bearers**

Addressing both the real needs of children and capacity building of duty bearers has constituted a real challenge for CRF. By working at provincial, district and school level to strengthen capacity of PoE, DoE and in-service teachers and directors, CRF has been contributing to put children as key right holders at the center of the realization of child rights. For this, a number of quality teaching materials and IEC have been produced and disseminated, as well as a significant amount of civil servants have been trained to perform their tasks effectively and accountably.

### **Promoting child participation: re-dynamisation of the Children Council**

One of the noticeable successes of CRF has been the enhancement of the children council in the primary schools towards organized and concrete participation of children in the life of the school. This tangible progress has been impacting on the transformation of the role of teachers and directors from commanding into facilitating children's activities, thus supporting the concept of child friendly school that is promoted by the ministry of education.

### **Mainstreaming child rights in school: tackling corporal punishment**

Corporal punishment practice in school is widespread at different degrees with complex socio-cultural and historical embedment. Despite existence of the education law which article 35 stipulates the rights of students to protection from corporal and mental punishment in school, and despite the increase awareness about child rights, teachers continue to punish children. The program has been effective in substantially reducing corporal punishment in school at the same time that it teaches new appropriate method of teaching without punishment. Strong ownership of teachers, school directors and provincial working group members has been identified as a critical factor of success.

### **Up-streaming the prevention against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of the Child in the local education system**

CRF has been decisively contributing to induce potential societal change despite the challenging context of Cambodia in which a culture of violence, crime impunity and corruption prevails. The nationwide Child Rights up-streaming approach at the level of the teacher training colleges and the regional teacher training centers definitely impacts on effective promotion of child rights in the local education system.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation: a tool for constant improvement**

Critical to all CRF's activities implementation is to inculcate a culture of monitoring and evaluation in every program that enables constant improvement of its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and potential impact. To achieve this, a set of tools have been developed and on-going adjustment of M&E tools will ensure consistent and reliable analysis of the deficiencies so that corrective measures are introduced in the lifetime of the program.

Phase-out strategies and sustainability mechanisms are critical issues that are brought to the reflection based on outcome of the monitoring evaluation.

### **Inventing a new paradigm of NGO-State synergy**

The local institutional partner – namely MoEYS – is highly satisfied of the quality collaboration with CRF. Education officers at all levels – ministry, PoE, DoE and schools – recognize that valuable benefits has been brought to children, teachers, school directors and higher level officials. They emphasize CRF's excellent communication skills, high quality ethics, strong dedication and adequate pedagogy in dealing with such sensitive issues. Respect for local values and culture is another CRF's strength. Because IEC materials have been developed with high pictorial quality, they have been made appropriate, practical and useful, especially when dealing with sensitive matters such as COP and TSEC. Accuracy and comprehensiveness of M&E tools and methodology, help schools as well as PWG and PSC to monitor and evaluate the progress and to bring necessary corrective measures.

Therefore, by testing and developing good practices and effective materials, and provoking strong ownership and sharing to other education development practitioners, CRF has been inventing a viable and sustainable paradigm of NGO-State synergy.

## **V. The Strategic Choices**

CRF's strategic choices draw on the consideration of the situation analysis, vision-missions-core values, lessons learned, gaps identification, challenges, opportunities and risks that have been analyzed.

Strategic choices encompass three aspects: choices and justification of strategic directions, choices and justification of program goals and geographic choices.

### **V.1. Strategic Direction**

CRF is committed to maximizing experience and strengths to become a key child rights organization over the next 3 years, with increasing capacity and influence to achieve sustainable change in the way that Cambodia's children are viewed, cared for and treated. To this end, the following 3-year strategic directions have been considered to strengthen quality and effectiveness of the organization through its programs between 2013 and 2015.

#### **V.1.1. Organizational Strategy**

In the next 3 years, CRF will further strengthen management and leadership at different levels in order to ensure the long-term stability and sustainability of the organization. This will include improving governance through increasing number and clarifying roles among Board of Directors, as well as strengthening the capacity of middle level managers to handle stronger responsibility and leadership in the future.

CRF will also significantly focus attention on developing quality and professionalism of its human resources with a particular emphasis on ensuring that staffs in key technical positions have appropriate skills to perform their work with required quality and effectiveness.

Strengthening CRF's role and influence among practitioners and policy-makers at national, regional and international levels calls upon communication and cooperation with key actors that will be sought through improved website articles, publications, networking with targeted stakeholders including mass media, and other forms of direct and indirect communication.

Developing CRF's donor portfolio will be a priority in the next 3 years, by intensifying relationships with existing donors; diversifying the numbers and types of funding sources including bi-lateral and private donors; generating income through provision of CR-related training services to other NGOs; and improving the skills and mechanism to access to funds with more complex proposal and reporting requirements.

### **V.1.2. Program Strategy**

In the next 3 years, CRF will mainstream the following key strategies throughout all the programs:

- **Partnership:** CRF will continue to strengthen links with government at national, provincial and local levels. In order to scale up and ensure the sustainability of our work, establishing long-term, effective partnerships will remain a priority for all projects and programs, with emphasis on collaborating with government ministries and institutions. In the next 3 years MoEYS will definitely keep on being the main partner, inclusive Ministry of Interior (MoI), local governance, with responsiveness to Decentralization and Deconcentration policy.

Also we will be actively exploring partnerships with children and youth led-organizations, CCYMCR, with the aim to scale up result and impact of our programs as well as to contribute building up a strong and healthy civil society group ensuring future sustainable development. To this end, continued support to the organizational capacity development will be done in the next 3 years to significantly improve governance and accountability of these organizations and strengthening their competence in program development and implementation.

- **Advocacy:** In the next 3 years, CRF aims to be more strategic in advocacy work to influence policy and practice at different levels. This will include tangible efforts to persuading the government institutions, particularly the MoEYS, MOI in developing necessary policies, procedures and guidelines and enforcing current policies/guidelines and mechanisms for the promotion and support of child friendly programs and child participation in decision-making process such as school improvement plan and commune investment plan etc.

**Capacity building:** CRF will be continuing to build capacity of state and non-state actors to become accountable duty bearers in the implementation of the convention on the rights of the child. These can be achieved through provision of a series of training workshop, on-the-job training, sharing session, study visit for civil servants particularly teachers, commune council members on CR and other necessary knowledge and skills working with and for children.

Regular follow-up sessions and monitoring activities for all target groups will be conducted to maximizing the impacts, dissemination of knowledge and application of learning.

- **Children’s participation:** CRF will continue to employ child participation as a cross cutting strategy that will be applied in all projects and programs. In the next 3 years, CRF aims to be more strategic in promoting meaningful child participation at different levels – local and national. For this purpose, efforts will be developed to prepare adults to accept and support children’s participation; build children's capacity for effective participation; strengthen child participation mechanisms at school and community levels, support the expansion of children and youth led-network to other provinces and empower children and young people to actively and meaningfully engage in decision-making process as well as to advocate and monitor for child rights at all levels.
- **Deepening interventions and scaling up results:** This strategy will essentially be harmonized with the above strategies as it will be enabling relevant stakeholders and target groups to apply their acquired knowledge and skills in daily work. The approach will not only be to allow them experimenting lessons learned but also broadening their experience in planning, monitoring and evaluation and more importantly, in creating ownership and sustainability process within the relevant institutions. This will include provision of necessary means to target schools, communities and children/youth led-groups such as material, technical, financial and moral support to jointly creating a safe and friendly environment for children in the target areas.

Wherever possible CRF will work through existing government mechanism and systems, complementing the implementation of government policies and procedures to make them become more sustainable and meaningful for children. We will also increase our efforts to involve government partners in our planning of projects and programs to be more effective and strategic in the way we operate and where we work.

## **V.2. Program Justification and Goal**

Four key programs will compose the CRF’s three-year strategic plan: child rights education, child rights governance, education and child protection.

### **V.2.1. Child Rights Education Program**

#### **Justification:**

Many efforts have been done by the RGC and civil society after ratification of the UNCRC in 1992. However many children’s issues still remain and child rights have been violated on a daily basis through different forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation in public, workplaces, at homes and even in schools where people deserve to learn and acquire good education. Gaps analysis emphasizes the low awareness on children’s rights and child related issues among policy-makers, practitioners, public and even children themselves due to the lack of systematic child rights dissemination mechanisms and limited resources allocated for this cause.

While noting with appreciation the information on the training provided to certain categories of professionals working with and for children, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is however concerned that such training remain insufficient and does not cover all professionals working with and for children and law enforcement authorities for whom awareness of the Convention remains limited.

Therefore, the Committee, in its concluding observations (CRC/C/KHM/CO/2), issued on 20 June 2011, to the RGC as a state party, consistently recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to disseminate the Convention throughout the country, to raise public awareness, including among children themselves and parents, and disseminate information about its principles and provisions. The Committee also recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to undertake systematic quality education and training programs on the principles and provisions of the Convention for all professional groups working for and with children, such as judges, lawyers, law enforcement officials, civil servants, personnel working in institutions and places of detention for children, teachers, health personnel, including psychologists, and social workers.

This recommendation allows CRF to work with relevant government ministries and institutions in addressing the above gaps. More importantly, CRF has a strong partnership with MoEYS and extensive experience on this particular area of work that enables us to deepen our intervention at the provincial, district and school levels by stimulating participation of officials and in-service teachers in mainstreaming child rights in the country's education system. On the other hand, quality teaching materials received high receptivity from the school teachers and directors while steady joint monitoring of the program activities enables constant improvement of the intervention by strengthening and building capacity of officials to handle the tasks in a sustainable manner.

Such relationship that has been built up so far signalizes that both CRF and MoEYS have clear vision of taking in seriously the children's rights situation and finding way together to improve its effective application in education system. In the next 3 years, CRF will replicate the approaches working with MoEYS and use the previous years' experience and learning with other government institutions in order to scale up our program promoting systematic quality education and training on the principles and provisions of the Convention for relevant professional groups working with and for children.

**Goal:** By the end of 2015 child rights concept will be systematically institutionalized and scaled up to relevant professional groups working with and for children.

**Key interventions:**

The child rights education program will be engaging to achieve the following actions:

- Continuing to mainstream CR in the education system – teacher and student textbooks and education curriculum in general,
- Developing of training materials and practical guidelines for CR application for different CR practitioner groups – pre-and in-service teachers, commune council, social affairs and members of civil society in general including children and youth-led groups.



- Continuing to undertake systematic quality education and training programs on UNCRC for personnel working for and with children such as teachers, members of commune councils, social workers, etc.,

## **V.2.2. Child Rights Governance Program**

### **Justification:**

Numerous gaps have been identified in child rights governance, including the limited capacity and competence of local governance to deal with child and youth-led organizations. The fact that children issues are not explicitly highlighted and addressed in the commune council agenda hampers the allocation of budget and resources by the government to tackle those issues. Lack of reliable and comprehensive data on child rights situation at the sub-national level adds to the weakness of the monitoring system on child rights by the local governance.

Decentralization and deconcentration are new trends for CRF to design programs and interventions with the involvement of the local governance and the communities including children and youths. Decentralization and deconcentration are playing a fundamental role in the realization of the rectangular strategy of the government aiming to reduce poverty, with the transfer of power and decision-making from the central administration to the communes. In every commune council it is found a focal person in charge in women and children (CCWC) whose role is to enhance access of women and children to social services be they education, health, legal and information.

For CRF, there are many opportunities to collaborate with the local governance on the issue of child rights in the context of decentralization and deconcentration. Current partnership with MoI allows CRF to deeper its intervention at the commune level by stimulating the participation of officials and commune council members, especially the CCWC in mainstreaming child rights and child related issues in their agenda. This approach enables constant improvement of the intervention by complementing the local governance insufficiency, as well as building capacity of officials to handle the tasks in relevant and sustainable manners.

**Goal:** By the end of 2015, CRF aims to achieve the development and modelisation of good governing practice towards increased state accountability on child rights in CRF target areas.

### **Key interventions:**

The Child Rights Governance Program will be focusing on 3 components, strengthening local governance, engaging CSOs in local governance and monitoring the UNCRC via children and youth led-groups.

### ***Strengthened Local Governance***

This essential component will be translated into:

- Strengthening Commune Councils' function for children's interests through capacity building on children's rights, child protection, DRR, and other necessary skills to enhance effective and good governance towards child rights realization,

- Supporting local authorities and commune councils to do community education on children's rights and child rearing practice,
- Assisting CWCC to encourage/enable families especially those who are in the most vulnerable group to fulfill the rights of their child.

**Engagement of CSOs in Local Governance** through:

- Empowering children and youth led-groups to systematically and meaningfully engage and to voice their concerns in developing and implementing commune investment plan,
- Fostering synergies and facilitating a structured dialogue between civil society, especially children and youth led-groups, networks and local authorities.

**UNCRC monitoring and reporting via children and youth-led groups**

Through this intervention, CRF will effort to:

- Enhancing organizational and program development capacity of children and youth-led groups,
- Supporting and facilitating children and youth led- network, CCYMCR in monitoring the implementation of UNCRC in Cambodia and following up concluding observations/ recommendations from the UN Committee on CRC,
- Cooperating with children and youth led-network and other CR networks to advocate for change, using evident based,
- Strengthening linkage and networking with national (CNCC), regional and international monitoring bodies to share experience, good practices and to maximize impact on children.

### V.2.3. Education Program

**Justification:**

Gaps analysis brings the learning that Children Council's good practice in school is not yet at scale and this is partly because of government policy in CFS program is too slowly implemented due to lack of resource. Impacts on children's education are numerous such as significant drop-out rate (21% in lower secondary school, 11% in higher secondary school) which is aggravated by the lack of effective support for child slow learners. Few appropriate and effective government programs are available to address primary school drop-out be they life skills, vocational training and scholarship.

CRF will exploit valuable opportunities to support children's education by maximizing youth networking to adding on to current CRF's skills recognition on quality and professional human resources and leadership, as well as on monitoring. To become more responsive to the education trends and globalization, CRF will be encouraging change in labor force influx that will result insignificant increase of utilization of outside resources.

**Goal:** By the end of 2015, Children in CRF target schools enjoy friendly learning environment as emphasized in the Child Friendly School policy.

**Key interventions:**

The education program will be striving to achieve MoEYS Child Friendly School Policy at primary and lower secondary schools with the following interventions:

- Assisting MoEYS in developing and enforcing relevant policies, guidelines supporting CFS,
- Strengthening School Children Council's function (SCC) – build capacity of teachers and students on SCC and relevant skills, support children initiatives, promote local fund raising by SCC members to ensure sustainability,
- Modeling medical check-up, hygiene and sanitation programs for primary schools, starting from the pilot school and replicate,
- Building teacher capacity on effective teaching methodologies and enabling them to apply the acquired knowledge and skills,
- Supporting student sponsorship program - Providing support to vulnerable children in the target areas to access schools and to complete 9 year basic education,
- Assisting MoEYS in documenting and replicating good model and practice of child friendly school, SCC function, student medical check-up program.

#### **V.2.4. Child Protection Program**

##### **Justification:**

Gaps analysis indicated that child labor is widespread especially in agriculture sector where a lot of children are employed and often exploited while protective and preventive measures are weakly implemented. In urban areas, lack of legal framework protecting children from abuse when they are employed in domestic work hampers effective monitoring by the government on this issue. With regard to corporal punishment including in school environment, poor law enforcement (e.g. Education Law 2007, article 35) and ineffective preventive mechanism underpin increased efforts to provoke tangible changes through stronger protection network for children.

Opportunities are profuse. CRF has been demonstrating high potential for introducing innovations to tackle sensitive issues that are strongly embedded in the Cambodian society. Acting for the best interests of the child derives from CRF's core values conducive to dissemination of good practices on children council, child friendly school and prevention against child trafficking and sexual exploitation. Linking disaster risk reduction to safe schools with the participation of children and youth is another area of research-action that ambitions to generate useful lessons learned in the near future. Emerging trends related to disaster risk reduction bring new challenges but also valuable opportunities for CRF to tailor programs and interventions with the involvement of the local governance and the communities including children and youths.

**Goal:** By the end of 2015, rights to protection of children in the CRF target areas are effectively enforced.

##### **Key interventions:**

The child protection program will encompass four sub-programs that aim to tackle issues of corporal punishment, child labor, migration and trafficking and safe schools.

### ***Corporal Punishment***

To act in favor of substantial reduction of corporal punishment in schools and the communities, CRF will be continuing to:

- Introducing public education, awareness-raising and social mobilization campaigns on the harmful effects of corporal punishment with a view to changing the general attitude towards this practice and promote positive, non-violent, participatory forms of child-rearing and education as an alternative to corporal punishment;
- Introducing and enforcing positive discipline practices to avoid corporal punishment in the target schools and communities,
- Working with relevant institutions to take necessary measures combating violence against children in communities.

### ***Child Labor***

Through this intervention, CRF ambitions to:

- Conducting special research on labor related drop-out at CRF target schools,
- Working closely with provincial and local authorities to address roots causes of child labor,
- Establishing monitoring network at community level on migration movement, for instance through Commune Council mechanism,
- Sensitizing local authorities, communities and parents on consequences of child labor,
- Collaborating and strengthening capacity of local authorities and commune councils in dealing with issues of child labor with parents, who force their children to work, to explore to other alternatives,
- Supporting vocational/skill training program for drop out or out of school children and facilitate their decent work opportunities or income generation activities.

### ***Disaster Risk Reduction - Safe Schools***

- Cooperating with MoEYS to mainstream Disaster Risk Reduction(DRR) concept into the local education system,
- Advocating and supporting MoEYS to develop and enforce policy and guidelines in response to DRR,
- Building capacity of target schools and communities in DRR,
- Supporting and equipping target schools to effectively enhance DRR (preparedness, response and recovery),
- Supporting and strengthening child-centered DRR in the target schools,

### ***Migration and Trafficking***

- Introducing public education, awareness raising and social mobilization campaigns against the harmful effects of migration and trafficking,
- Educating primary and secondary school children on self-prevention against trafficking and sexual abuse, exploitation and on safe migration,
- Supporting school initiatives in actions to prevent and protect children from trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation in schools and surrounding communities,

- Identifying appropriate referral system for effective protection, intervention and integration.
- Building National and Regional network with other NGO working in the area – meeting, study trips, information exchange...

### **V.3. Geographic Choices**

CRF considers to adapting the following strategic choices to its program goals and strategies towards better coherence and relevance. To this end, the geographic choices will combine phasing-out from some target districts, intensification in three target provinces, establishing CRF sub-branches in the target provinces and expansion to 2 target provinces.

#### **Phasing-out from some target districts:**

Within the period of 2013 and 2015, CRF will prepare and perform the withdrawal of some programs/projects on the basis of potential sustainability and handing-over to the local institutional partner, namely MoEYS by it at the provincial, district and school levels.

- CRF considers to phasing out the projects: Mainstreaming CR in TTCs from 18 provinces where all TTCs are located and Preventing Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (TSEC) and Corporal Punishment in Schools from Kandal and Kampong Cham provinces, as well as from Banteay Srey district in Siem Reap province by early 2013. The main justification lays on the fact that both implementation capacity of target schools and monitoring system by PoE and DoE have been satisfactorily owned to continue inducing the changes.
- After 2 phases of implementation in Dambae district which lessons learned will be duly exploited in Ponhea Krek district since 2012, the project: Mainstreaming Child Rights in Schools (MCRS) will phase-out in end 2015. In the meantime, CRF will effort to strengthen the monitoring-evaluation system so that good practice is introduced and sustained.
- Added to several existing projects such as MCRS and Preventing TSEC and COP in Schools, the Safe School project is expected to generate impact in the oldest target schools in Dambae, Kampong Cham province and Angkor Chum, Siem Reap province within 2011 and 2015 to reasonably enable a phasing-out by end of 2015.

#### **Intensification in the target provinces:**

Intensification is essential to ensure full capacity of the partner institutions to expand the program's good practice to other areas after the withdrawal.

In the 3 coming years, CRF considers to keep on operating in the provinces of Kandal, Kampong Cham and Siem Reap while expansion to Ratanakiri province and Phnom Penh city will constitute a promising opportunity. However, opportunities for

funding and program development and emerging issues that may need to be addressed, will required some flexibility in this.

The intensification process will focus on capacity strengthening of MoEYS, PoE and DoE officials who compose both Project Steering Committee and Provincial Working Group and the school directors to embedding child rights, child participation, banning of COP, positive discipline, and concepts of child friendly school in the educational practice.

Monitoring and evaluation will also be part of the intensification process.

#### **Establishing CRF's branches in the target provinces:**

So far, CRF has been operating in a centralized approach by setting an administrative office in Phnom Penh. This has led to high operational cost due to regular and frequent missions to the target districts, be they for training PoE and DoE officers, and in-service teachers, or for conducting monitoring activities.

In order to maximize its programs cost-effectiveness, CRF will consider to establishing sub-branches in the target provinces during the strategic period. By searching for this geographic and partnership proximity CRF expects to increase its insight in the rural society in the prospect to better address the challenges faced by children as right holders in their school as well as in their community.

#### **Opening to Ratanakiri province and Phnom Penh municipality:**

The remote province of Ratanakiri is a pioneer area where rapid agro-industry growth has taken place during the last decade at the expense of social care and protection of the people including children who migrated with their parents in search of employment. This unprecedented migration resulted in marginalization and increased vulnerability for children whose rights are far from being respected and cared.

Despite its modern infrastructures, Phnom Penh municipality is representative of disparity between the privileged and the unprivileged under the effect of massive foreign investment and urbanization. The acceleration of migration trends contributes to worsen social issues impacting on children's vulnerability, be they through blooming tourism or inequitable access to social and legal protection, and care.

CRF will consider expanding its program activities during the 3 coming years with emphasis on the realization of children's rights in critical circumstances, especially in the context of low access to quality education, rampant human trafficking and sexual and labor exploitation, and low preparedness to disaster risk reduction.

## **VI. Resources Implication**

### **VI.1. Financial Resources**

Emerging donor trends consisting of localization of international NGOs in a context of scarcity of funding resources and opportunities for existing local organizations will unavoidably result in tougher competition at the expense of synergy and effectiveness of interventions for the best interests of children. As a strategic response to this challenge, CRF will be striving to become main contractor with new donors by taking pro-active resolutions. For instance, it is of priority to increasing

visibility and communication with potential supporters and media including private sector in a short-term delay.

Maintaining existing donors is a critical way to ensure availability of financial resources. However, CRF will be striving for diversifying the sources of funding. For instance, a donor coordinating meeting will be organized to present the outcome of this strategic plan. Furthermore, investing time and resources with one person in charge of fund raising task is essential to mobilize financial resources with effective support of Information Technology.

CRF will also consider to calling upon technical assistance from external human resources including foreigners as key innovation to inject new ideas and approaches such as income generation based on service provision.

## **VI.2. Human Resources**

As an influential administrative body, the Board of Directors is essential in fund raising strategy while guiding the organization towards sound and effective implementation of the strategic plan. However, emerging challenges dictate more active role to play for the Board whose profile and composition need to be diversified within the 3 coming years. CRF is committed to achieve this positive transformation. Capacity building of staff is a recurrent concern for CRF while the recruitment of new staff will tangibly contribute to help managing the risk of rapid turn-over as well as to address the weak gender balance. For instance, CRF's human resources will be valued through the successful application to NGO Governance and Professional Practice (GPP) certificate.

Membership is another representation mechanism not to be neglected in the context of local civil society in search of stability and recognition. CRF membership will be enhanced to support stronger visibility among the general public as well as among the NGO community for the purpose of lobby and advocacy.

## **Conclusion**

Obviously, children's rights cannot be fulfilled and protected unless governments, donors, international and local organizations look behind the broad averages of development statistics and address poverty and inequality that characterize the lives of so many children.

CRF's partnership with the RGC is important for bringing change with coherence and sustainability through this three-year strategic plan. CRF will engage in collaboration and expansion of its work with established civil society specialist organizations to further enrich programs with activities such as research on child labor issue, and advocacy for policy change etc. Innovations, pilots, dissemination of outcomes and lessons learned will underpin all our work.

CRF's strategic direction is supported by an organizational strategy which is to improve its governance as well as strengthening the capacity of middle level managers to handle stronger responsibility and leadership. Increased attention will be to develop quality and professionalism of its human resources. It is also about

strengthening CRF's role and influence among practitioners and policy-makers at national, regional and international levels by improving communication and cooperation with key actors. CRF will strive for developing its donor portfolio in a context of more complex proposal and reporting requirements.

With regard to the program strategy, CRF intends to mainstream in all the programs four key strategies that are partnership with national, provincial and local levels, advocacy work to influence policy and practice at different levels, building capacity of state and non-state actors to become accountable duty bearers in the implementation of the UNCRC, deepening interventions and scaling up results. Child participation will be employed as a cross cutting strategy that will be applied in all projects and programs.

The program goals that will be met through child rights education, child rights governance, education and child protection will contribute to systematically institutionalize child rights concept, to achieve the development and modelisation of good governing practice towards increased state accountability on child rights, to enable children to enjoy friendly learning environment, and to ensure that rights to protection of children are effectively enforced.

Consequently, key interventions have been thought in a way that increased pragmatism and effectiveness will characterize all the program activities to serve the best interests of the children.

Narrowing the gaps to honor international commitments to all children will require tremendous efforts not only in rural areas but also within cities where emerging challenges – sex tourism, pornography, and pedophilia, lack of social protection and care, disaster threat - continue to worsening the situation of vulnerable children.

Scaling up good practice, supporting deconcentration and decentralization, phasing-out with emphasis on sustainability mechanism, diversification of resource mobilization and intensification of monitoring and evaluation constitute key factors of success of this strategic plan.

As most achievement relies on quality and dedicated human resource, CRF has little choice but to consider emerging donor trends in the context of rarefaction of finding opportunities, even though tougher competition will certainly impact on synergy and effectiveness of interventions for the best interests of children. Pro-active resolutions will compose the 3-year strategic plan's agenda, be they to become main contractor, to increase its visibility and communication, or to recruit a fund raising specialist. Diversification of the Board of Directors profile and composition, as well as fostering CRF representation through its membership constitute key mechanisms that will ensure stability and recognition by the general public and the NGO community.



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