



# Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School

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Understanding the Challenges

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## Abbreviations

CSP	Country Strategic Plan
CIPS	Cambodia Inter-censal Population Survey
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
KII	Key Informant Interviews
NGO	Non government organization
MOEYS	Ministry of Education Youth and Sports
MOSVY	Ministry of Social Affairs Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MOP	Ministry of Planning
NOVCTF	National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Task Force
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia

## Executive summary

In Cambodia, Plan International has targeted efforts to increase marginalised and vulnerable children's access to education, learning and has promoted child participation. However, Plan recognises that marginalised and vulnerable children still face challenges. This study is designed to identify the types of vulnerable and marginalised children in Plan's target areas, and identify the political and system factors, social and community factors, school factors<sup>1</sup>, that prevent full participation in education, learning and decision-making. The objectives of the study are:

1. To analyse the situation and challenges experienced by vulnerable and marginalised children (particularly children in Plan's sponsorship and children with disabilities) in relation to *access to education, learning opportunities in school and participating in school activities* (learning group, children club or other event) and out of school activities significant for their development and growth;
2. To understand and analyse the *gaps in existing education policies, capacity of teachers and NGO partners* to meet their commitments to support children with equal opportunities provision in realising their rights particularly on education;
3. To identify the *advantages and benefits to the most vulnerable children* (particularly children in Plan's sponsorship and children with disabilities) for being able to *learn and participate* in schools;
4. To make *specific recommendations* for programming/project interventions particularly on; *Education policies and legal instruments, school education environment practice, capacity building to the Royal Government of Cambodia, local NGO partners and Teachers* with particular attention to children in Plan's sponsorship and children with disabilities.

The methodology for the study was qualitative in nature. It included a desk review of existing secondary data, site visits to 2 provinces of project operations (Kampong Cham and Siem Reap). Key informant interviews were conducted with relevant government authorities, key service providers, children in school, children in Plan's sponsorship program, parents, teachers, school support committees and school administrators.

The findings identified the following:

The policy environment is generally in place to promote inclusive education of vulnerable and marginalised children. The challenges are with policy implementation. This includes lack of resources and commitment of duty bearers to implement policies. Key gaps include an inadequate teaching monitoring system, low commitment of teachers and education officials at all level, a shortage of teachers and irregular teaching (1-3 days a week, 2-3 hours a day).

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<sup>1</sup> **Political and system** factors include areas such as discriminatory policies, lack of policy or gaps in policy implementation or limited training of teachers. **Social and community factors** include social stigma and discrimination, parental barriers, lack of resources such as supplies and transportation. **School factors** includes inaccessible buildings, limited support for special needs such as language or accessibility for disabled children, limited awareness of issues for vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The most vulnerable children identified in the study were children that are from very poor families, have families that migrate for work, have a disability and other vulnerabilities such as illness, divorce, domestic violence or are orphaned. These categories were identified by all respondents with a significant emphasis on very poor families and the challenges resulting from migration for work. Clearly, poverty is a significant factor in children not being able to attend school and learn. Poverty results in children needing to work, poor nutrition, bad health, lack of money for school supplies, or for extra classes, transportation and other school costs.

Children with disabilities are seen as vulnerable, but present significant challenges to include in the public school. The only children with disabilities that were identified as participating in school were children with minor physical disabilities. Children with more severe disabilities, children with intellectual disabilities were not expected to be able to participate in school by the teachers, parents or community leaders. The reason cited was lack of resources including teacher capacity, teaching resources or adaptation equipment and building accessibility. Additionally, there is little clear data on the numbers of children with different types of disabilities in the target area.

Girls have been historically seen as more vulnerable, but according to respondents have achieved gender parity in access to primary education. This however drops significantly at the secondary and higher levels. Differences also exist in urban and rural areas. The researchers think this parity is fragile and given limited resources boys' education will still be prioritised.

Vulnerable and marginalised children are identified through mappings, ID Poor System and through community knowledge. A systematic mapping is supposed to occur at the beginning of the school year, however many of these mappings need to be updated.

A variety of barriers at the social and community level prevent children from attending school and learning. These include lack of family income and resources as well as barriers such as parental and child attitudes toward the value of education. Migration has a significant impact on children's access to education as well.

Stigma and discrimination is reported to be reduced or non-existent, however, it is likely that the dominate groups do not understand the discrimination that vulnerable or marginalised children experience.

School level barriers include limited number of schools, inadequate buildings, limited teacher training and commitment (low attendance by teachers), lack of specialised skills and resource materials for children with special needs. Additionally school facilities are not routinely accessible and face challenges with adequate toilets, accessible rooms, and lack of water.

Study participants identify programs that remove financial barriers as successful to helping vulnerable children especially poor children to participate in school.

Children in Plan's sponsorship program had some barriers to education removed as a result of the support for Plan. This was identified as a good practice model by the respondents. Other good practice models included programs to improve and maintenance the school facilities. This was usually a part of the implementation of Child Friendly School Policy.

Children in Plan's Sponsorship program were children living in very poor families, but the families showed a high commitment to sending the children to school. Families and children both reported the desire for further education, but economic barriers were a concern for children to be able to get additional education. Additionally children sometimes still lacked transportation, adequate school supplies and money for additional classes.

Child participation is mainly through the Children's Councils. Some examples of vulnerable children participating including one child with a disability, but participation of vulnerable and marginalised children on the Children's Councils was not routine. Children were able to impact change in the schools as a result of the Children's Council.

## **Recommendations**

### **Policies and Legal Instruments to Support Access to Education, Learning and Participation**

#### ***General Vulnerable and Marginalised Children (including children in sponsorship)***

- MOEYS in cooperation with UN agencies and NGO partners should develop clear indicators for most marginalised children accessing education and learning as key priority;
- MOEYS should include the most marginalised children into the existing Education Management Information System (EMIS) as a cross cutting themes to collect further disaggregated data on vulnerable and marginalised children;
- The RGC should fully fund programs to remove barriers to school attendance as outline in the National Standards for the Protection, Care and Support of OVC; and scholarship for vulnerable and most marginalised children in schooling or vocational trainings;
- MOEYS should advocate with the RGC for increased teacher salaries or other benefits to promote better school attendance and higher quality teaching by teachers;
- RGC, with support of NGOS, UN agencies should further assess the education needs of children migrating with their parents to ensure that gaps in education are removed. This could include education programs at work sites or mechanisms to include children in school part-time; and
- MoEYS should review the children's council statute to provide more clear guidance to schools to include the most marginalised children in children's councils and also the school decision making process based on the national guideline on child participation of CNCC and set clear indicator of most marginalised children participation in schools and sub-national levels.

#### ***Children with disabilities***

- The RGC should further define categories of disabilities and to prioritise adding children with intellectual disabilities in policy design and implementation; and

- Promote teacher training on the Inclusive Education Training Modules as strong mechanisms to implement the RGCs education priorities; this should include low resource solutions to working with the most marginalised children.

## **Community and Social Level Recommendations to Support Access to Education, Learning and Participation**

### ***General Vulnerable and Marginalised Children (including children in sponsorship)***

- NGOs, UN agencies should promote and support the RGC and local partners to work together to standardize mechanisms for identification of children out of school, and mechanisms to encourage children to attend school including updating mappings annually and follow-ups by volunteers or school authorities and school support committees;
- RGC, NGOs and other key stakeholders should promote efforts to improve family livelihoods, income generation such as promoting access to markets and other measures to stabilize family incomes so families can support children to go to school, learn and participate;
- MoEYS, UN and NGOs should promote increased collaboration between the school authorities, school support committees and local authorities to find local resources and solutions to remove barriers to education, learning and participation for vulnerable and marginalised children. This could occur by continuing to work with and strengthen the School Support Committees and partnerships with the Commune Committees for Women and Children;
- NGOs, UN agencies, and MOEYS should coordinate the Government and NGO agencies to promote removal of financial barriers of most marginalised children to attending school by continuing to provide scholarships for regular school cost and extra classes, support bicycles or other transportation, school uniforms, supplies and financial costs for school.
- MOEYS, NGOs, UN agencies should promote development of learning opportunities for non-formal education and vocational training skills (that respond to market needs) at the community level to provide increased opportunities for children not in school and for children in school to improve; and
- RGC should promote programs that address family issues identified as making children vulnerable such as lack of food, health crisis or domestic violence that prevent children from attending school.

### ***Children with disabilities***

- MoEYS and donors should promote efforts of implementing partners to promote parent awareness of the rights of vulnerable and marginalised children to education, the benefits of education to children (long-term) particularly children with disabilities;



- Plan and implementing partners should work closely with the local authorities, and other community leaders to remove barriers for children with disabilities to attend school.

#### ***Gender***

- RGC, Plan and NGOs should continue efforts to raise awareness in the community of the importance of participation in school.

#### ***Children in Plan's Sponsorship Program***

- Plan should continue efforts to promote girls in Plan's sponsorship's participation in school particularly in the transition from primary to secondary school;
- Plan should promote efforts to improve and stabilize family livelihoods of children in sponsorship promote families better being able to support children to go to school, learn and participate;
- Plan should promote efforts in the community for non-formal education and additional learning opportunities for children in sponsorship.
- Plan should network with other organisations to promote longer term scholarships for children in sponsorship to get vocational training or other higher education.
- Plan should identify opportunities and promote further participation of children in sponsorship on decision making bodies such as the Commune Council, the School Support Committees.

#### **School Level Recommendations to Support Access to Education, Learning and Participation**

##### ***General Vulnerable and Marginalised Children***

- RGC, NGOs UN Agencies should continue to support efforts to improve school facilities. This was a particular concern of parents, children and teachers. All advocated strongly for improved school facilities, such as better building (including accessible), parking, toilets, water, and breakfast at school;
- MoEYS should continue to work with partners and schools to continue build the skills of the Children's Councils and set targets for inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised children on the councils; additionally find other opportunities for children's participation outside of school such as on the Commune Councils for Women and Children;

##### ***Children with Disabilities***

- Model projects should be developed by MOEYS, and NGO partners that model programs that include for inclusive classes in public primary schools paired with improved facilities and provision of special education teacher training;
- At the local level teachers should be provided with training on inclusive education. This could include simple methods that are not resource intensive on how to manage and teach children with special needs such as room placement, or other low resource methods;

- MOEYS with support of NGOs should promote use of Individual Education Plans for Children that are practical and achievable for each student; and
- Teachers, Children's Councils should increase efforts to include children with disabilities on Children's Councils to increase opportunities for participation in decision making.

#### **Gender**

- Schools should ensure separate toilet areas for girls

#### **Children in Plan's Sponsorship Program**

- Plan and its partners should work closely with children in sponsorship to encourage families and support children to participate on Children's Councils; and
- Plan should promote efforts to ensure girls are safe coming to and from school.

## 1 Background

Plan has developed its five-year Country Strategic Plan (CSP) and Country Programmes that sets the direction of Plan's work in Cambodia from 2011 to 2015. Plan has implemented an Education programme that seeks to improve the quality of primary and lower secondary education in Plan's operational provinces in Siem Reap, Rattanakiri and Kampong Cham. Plan also implements other community-oriented programmes that benefit schools and school children. These include its Child Participation and Protection Programme, Improving Health and Practices Programme, and Water and Environmental Sanitation for Children's Health programme.

The CSP was designed using the life cycle approach, which Plan believes will bring significant advantages for a more holistic approach to programming. This approach allows better use of resources by facilitating identification of gaps and prioritizing key interventions accessible to marginalised and vulnerable children.

Plan recognises that marginalised and vulnerable children are at risk for abuse and face challenges in access to education, learning and participation. This includes the children in Plan's sponsorship programme<sup>2</sup>, orphaned children, children with disability, children living in poor families, families having domestic violence incidents, minority children, children affected by poor health condition, children affected by HIV/AIDS, children living in the care centres/shelters, children living in neglected family etc. Children have the right to equal opportunities for education and participation.

In Cambodia, Plan International has targeted efforts to increase marginalised and vulnerable children's access to education, learning and has promoted child participation. However, Plan recognises that marginalised and vulnerable children still face challenges. This study is designed to identify the types of vulnerable and marginalised children in Plan's target areas, and identify the political and system factors (policy), social and community factors, school factors<sup>3</sup>, that prevent full participation in education, learning and decision-making. The study will result in recommendations that will help Plan Cambodia to improve its quality both in existing and future programmes.

## 2 Objectives

1. To analyse the situation and challenges experienced by vulnerable and marginalised children (particularly children in Plan's sponsorship and children with disabilities) in relation to *access to education, learning opportunities in school and participating in school activities* (learning group, children club or other event) and out of school activities significant for their development and growth;

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<sup>2</sup> Children in Plan's sponsorship programme includes children under 12 living in the community who are from poor families, children with special needs (disabled), girls (priority) and whose families are committed to sending their children to school.

<sup>3</sup> **Political and system** factors include areas such as discriminatory policies, lack of policy or gaps in policy implementation or limited training of teachers. **Social and community factors** include social stigma and discrimination, parental barriers, lack of resources such as supplies and transportation. **School factors** includes inaccessible buildings, limited support for special needs such as language or accessibility for disabled children, limited awareness of issues for vulnerable and marginalised groups.

2. To understand and analyse the *gaps in existing education policies, capacity of teachers and NGO partners* to meet their commitments to support children with equal opportunities provision in realising their rights particularly on education;
3. To identify the *advantages and benefits to the most vulnerable children* (particularly children in Plan's sponsorship and children with disabilities) for being able to *learn and participate* in schools;
4. To make *specific recommendations* for programming/project interventions particularly on; *Education policies and legal instruments, school education environment practice, capacity building to the Royal Government of Cambodia, local NGO partners and Teachers* with particular attention to children in Plan's sponsorship and children with disabilities.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research Questions

The research questions have been identified as follows:

- What are the most common *vulnerabilities and marginalisation's* children experience in Plan Cambodia's target areas (Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Siem Reap, Oddar Meanchey)?
- How do schools and relevant NGOs *identify the vulnerable and marginalised* children?
- Who are the "*vulnerable and most vulnerable*" children that attend school?
- What is the *current situation* for vulnerable children in school in term of *accessing, learning and participating* opportunities and in expressing their ideas?
- What political and system factors, social and community factors, school factors challenge vulnerable and marginalised children's experiencing in *accessing, learning and participation* in the school?
- What is the benefit for marginalised and vulnerable children in accessing learning and participation?
- Have children's lives changed when they have access, to learning and participation? What are the good examples and relevant case studies?
- What are the recommendations from various stakeholders – vulnerable and marginalized children, other children, teachers and NGOs workers for future interventions to promote equal opportunities to vulnerable and marginalised children in accessing, learning and participation?

### 3.2 Guiding Principles

The researches followed these guiding principles at all times in the study process

- Collaborative and participatory at all times;
- Respect for the rights of children;
- Gender sensitive;
- Ethical integrity in reporting data collected; and
- Suitable approach for children with disabilities.

### 3.3 Technical Approach

The study process was designed to develop a better understanding of the challenges of vulnerable and marginalised children in accessing education, learning and participation in school, at home, and at social places and make recommendations to help Plan Cambodia to improve its quality both in existing and future programmes.

The overall nature of the research was exploratory and analytical. The data collection and analysis framework was qualitative following inductive patterns, themes, and categories that emerged through the study process. This framework lets different sub-themes emerge rather than being imposed prior to data collection and analysis.

### 3.4 Data Collection

The method for collecting relevant input for analysis was a desk review and input from key informants.

#### 3.4.1 Desk Review

The desk review included a review of research studies; government strategy documents; routine administrative data from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and other relevant resources. A listing of sources utilized is available in the Bibliography.

#### 3.4.2 Semi-structured Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews (KIIs) were used as a method to collect input from 1) National (Ministry), Provincial and District Offices of Education, Youth and Sport; 2) Plan staff; and 3) provincial and national level NGOs. The KIIs were completed using a semi-structured interview format. A detailed listing of key informants is listed below in the sampling strategy. The KII interview guides are available in Annex A.

#### 3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGD) were used as a method to collect input from 1) principals and teachers; 2) school support committees; 3) parents; and 4) District Consultative Committee on Children and Women. For each focus group 8-10 members were invited. The FGDs were led by experienced facilitators with the support of a translator. The FDG guide is available in Annex A.

#### 3.4.4 Child Friendly Activities

Child Friendly Activities were carried out with 1) Children's Council Members; 2) Children in Grades 1-3; and 3) Children in the Community in Plan's sponsorship programme.

The following tools were designed to be used with the different groups. However during the field work, some groups had limited knowledge and during the data collection phase adjustments were made. The majority of the children's groups were interviewed using the H Assessment Tool.

**Spider Tool:** The Spider Tool was used with Children's Council Members. This tool was designed to help children assess the Children's Councils in a the core dimensions of 1) what they are trying to achieve, 2) what they feel they are good at and 3) areas they feel should be improved.

The elements examined in this study were:

- 1- **Dynamic Membership in Children's Council** (girls, vulnerable children, children with disabilities are members)
- 2- **Inclusive Leadership in Children's Council** (girls, vulnerable children, children with disabilities are in leadership positions)
- 3- **Promotion of Peer learning and participation** (activities to promote peer education and participation reach girls, vulnerable children, children with disabilities)
- 4- **Partnership and Influence:** (The Children's Council is well known and impacts decisions in the school, and community)

**H Assessment:** The H Assessment was used with children in the school and in the community. A happy face represented strengths and a sad face will represent weaknesses. A light bulb represented suggestions. The key areas explored in this manner with children were:

- Getting an education: Importance of education and challenges with education
- School attendance: factors that help school attendance and hinder school attendance (who are children that can't attend school (this should identify vulnerable and marginalised children)
- School resources: Good resources that help to learn, resources that are missing in school
- School facility: Good things about school facility, things that need improving in school facility
- Learning activities outside of school: activities to learn outside of school and activities not available
- Participation in Children's Council or other groups to influence school decisions. Good success or Influence on school or challenges with influencing at school.
- What are other barriers to going to school, learning while in school?
- SUGGESTIONS: What suggestions do you have that can help all children to go to school and learn?

### **School Risk Mapping**

This was used as a tool with children to help identify the types of vulnerable children in the school (or lack of) and the barriers to access to the school. Children will be asked to draw their school compound and then to identify the happy and unhappy place (strengths and barriers) for vulnerable children to attend or participate.

#### **3.4.5 Non-participant Observations**

Non-participant observations were carried out in classroom settings. Key areas for observation were learning approaches applied in the classroom, especially in relation to active participation of students with disabilities and girls. This method was used in 1 school in each district (not every school).

#### **3.4.6 Sampling Strategy**

A purposive sampling strategy was selected as the most appropriate to illicit the needed information for this study. The sample was as follows:

<b>Level</b>	<b>Key Informant</b>	<b>Type of interview</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>National Level</b>			
	MoEYS	Semi-Structured interview	2
	National Education Partnership	Semi-Structured interview	1
	Plan Partners	Email – and semi-structured interview	

NGO CRC	Semi-Structured interview	4
Disability Action Council	Semi-Structured interview	7
Cambodia National Council for Children	Semi-Structured interview	1
Plan Staff	Semi-Structured interview	3
<b>Provincial Level (4 Provinces)</b>		
Provincial Office of Education, Youth and Sport	Semi-structured interview	8
NGOs at Provincial Level	Semi-structured interview	6
KAPE	Semi-structured interview	1
<b>District Level (8 Districts)</b>		
District Office of Education Youth and Sport	Semi-structured interview	7 offices
District Consultative Committee on Children and Women	Focus group discussion	7 FGDs
<b>Commune and Primary School Level (16 schools)</b>		
Principals, Teachers	Focus Group Discussion	8 FGDs
School Support Committee	Focus Group Discussion	6 (2 included with teachers)
Parents of primary school students	Focus Group Discussion	8 FGDs
Children's Council Members	Activity	8 FGDs
Children Grade 1-3	Activity	8 H Assessments
Children in sponsorship	Activity	8 H Assessments

### 3.4.7 Site Visits

Site visits were conducted at the National Level in Phnom Penh and to 4 provinces where Plan International Cambodia implements education and/or sponsorship programmes. These are Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Siem Reap, Oddar Meanchey. Following is a listing of schools visited.

Province	District	Number of Schools	Schools selected L – Larger School S – Smaller School
Kampong Cham	Dambae District	3 schools	Bang Hoeuon Kleing (L)
			Prapaing Pring Commune
	Ponhea Krek District	3 schools	Sampor Primary School (S)
			Seda Commune
Kampong Thom	Prashant Sambo District	2 schools	Koang Kang School (L)
			Koang Kang Commune
			Toul Preah Ponlea (S)
			Kandoul Chrum Commune
			Kampong Chheu Teal (L)
			Sambo Commune
			Chaneang (S)
			Sambo Commune

Siem Reap	Angkor Thom District	2 schools	Svay Chek School (L) Svay Chek Commune
			Torp Svay (S) Chup Tatarav Commune
	Angkor Chum	2 schools	Prasat Trab School (L) Korboung Commune
			Pram Damleung (S) Ta Som Commune
	Srei Snam District	2 schools	Chrouy (L) Chrouy Commune
			Thlouk (S) Tram Sasol Commune
Oddar Meanchey.	Anglong Veng	2 schools	Toul Svay School (L) Trapaing Tav Commune
			Eak Pheap School Trapaing Prei Commune (s)

## 4 Ethical Considerations

### 4.1 Child Participation

As part of this study, children were interviewed through focus group discussions, individual interviews and child-friendly activities designed to illicit information. This direct communication with children required a review of ethical considerations. International standards stipulate the prime importance to consider is that the participation is fully informed, permission is gained and the data collection does not cause the participant harm.

Protection measures in this study include the use of interviewers skilled in interviewing children. All interviewers have past training and experience in data collection from children. Child participants were informed orally of the purpose and nature of the study.

### 4.2 Consent and Confidentiality

Because of low levels of literacy in Cambodia, and the fear people might have of recording their names, the interviewers requested verbal consent of the participants to conduct the interview. Participants were told the purpose of the study, and what that all data would be aggregated and no comments tied specifically to a name. Participants were asked if they had any questions and told they can refuse to answer any questions or leave at any time. This was explained at the beginning of interviewing process, and all participants were asked for verbal agreement.

## 5 Limitations of Study

The study is necessarily limited by the type of data collected. All data is self-reported and cannot be independently verified. It is necessary to take what people say at face value. The impact of this data was limited by interviewing a significant number of people, asking the same or similar questions to different categories of key informants to permit triangulation of data. Additionally in the data



analysis we looked for trends for example using more than one source for challenges, or ideas for recommendations.

**Selection Bias:** The sampling of interviewees was purposive and the majority of interviewees were suggested by Plan and implementing partner staff. This was necessary to target individuals who had the knowledge of vulnerable and marginalised children in the target areas. However this sampling approach may be subject to positive bias. To mitigate this, the communes and schools were selected by the researchers.

## 6 Findings

### 6.1 Vulnerable and Marginalised Children Overview in Target Area

An initial task was to identify the children in Plan's target areas<sup>4</sup> that are the most vulnerable and marginalised. Study respondents were asked to identify the categories of children in their communities or schools that were most vulnerable and marginalised. To ensure the respondents understood the concepts of vulnerable and marginalised, the categories of orphans and vulnerable children identified by the National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Task Force (NOVCTF) in the National Standards on the Care Support and Protection of Orphans and Vulnerable Children were reviewed. These are as follows:

The National Standards on the Care Support and Protection of Orphans and Vulnerable Children<sup>5</sup> defined 10 categories of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Cambodia that should be prioritized in the provision of care, support and protection. These include:

1. Orphans, who are children who have lost one or both parents (maternal, paternal or double orphans);
2. Children with chronically ill parents or caregivers, including children with parents or caregivers living with HIV are;
3. Children who live outside of family care, including children in institutions and street children;
4. Children living in a poor household; that is, a household living below the poverty line;
5. Abused and exploited children;
6. Children in contact with the law, including children alleged to have been accused or convicted of committing a crime;
7. Children addicted to drugs and children of illicit drug users;
8. Children with disabilities, including children who are physically, visually, hearing or speaking or intellectually/mentally impaired;
9. Children affected by AIDS, who include: children living with HIV;
10. Children living in a household with a parent or adult living with HIV; children whose parent(s) died of HIV; and children whose parents are at higher risk of HIV infection and; Other children the community identifies as vulnerable.

In addition to the NOVCTF definition, the study expanded the definition to include children that are marginalized. Children in this category are typically outside the dominant culture of a group and are often already vulnerable from one of the factors above, but could be marginalised due to factors of ethnicity, gender identification, or other factors. This marginalisation results in lost opportunities for education, employment or participation in decision-making.

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<sup>4</sup> The study was carried out in Plan's target areas of Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Siem Reap and Oddar Meanchey.

<sup>5</sup> Developed by the National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Task Force 2011

The following categories of vulnerable and marginalised children were identified by the respondents in the target areas visited. While this list is not inclusive of all vulnerable children in Cambodia it highlights the vulnerabilities reported by the respondents in the study areas.

One obviously lacking vulnerable or marginalised group in Cambodia is children from religious minorities or indigenous groups. The group did visit schools in a region with a large number of Cham children, but this group was not identified as particularly vulnerable or marginalised by the respondents. However regions with higher numbers of other ethnic minorities were not visiting for the purposes of study.

**Children living in poor families:** Children living in poor families were the most commonly identified group of vulnerable or marginalised children in the target areas.

*“Poverty is the main reason children are vulnerable in our community. Their parents do not have a stable income so they cannot send the children to school regularly”*  
School Support Committee Member

When asked all respondents (FGD, KIIs, children) reported first group that poor children

are the most vulnerable are marginalised. Children in these families were characterized by large family size, having unstable livelihoods or lacking income stability. As a result families did not have money to pay school fees, buy school supplies or uniforms and also faced challenges in providing for basic needs such as nutrition and health care

**Children with families migrating for work:** Migration to work was another very common factor reported to lead to child vulnerability. Respondents reported that parents commonly migrated to Thailand or internally in Cambodia to work and would either take children with them (therefore out of school) or leave with elderly grandparents, who could not afford to send children to school.

*“Children of migrant families are left with grandparents that can’t always send them to school. Sometimes the children are expected to work themselves”*

Parent in FGD

**Children with disabilities:** Children with disabilities were also identified as a vulnerable group. Types of disabilities identified were hearing impairments or deaf; intellectual disabilities (mental impairment); and physical disabilities such as missing limbs or digits. Some disabilities were reported as a result of polio.

**Orphans:** Children that had been orphaned were identified as vulnerable. Children that were orphaned were either half or double orphans. Children in this category again often lived with an elderly

## Vulnerable Children in Cambodia

-In 2012, The Ministry of Planning Poverty Estimate is 18.89% (MOP 2012). In another report, children are reported to be disproportionately poor with over 50 percent of children in the bottom 33 percent of households. (UNICEF, 2014)

- While HIV rates have reduced, estimates are that 85,951 children are infected and affected by HIV. (NIS, 2013)

- 755,245 Children are working, 429,380 are in child labor, and 236,497 in hazardous labor (NIS 2013)

- 10 percent of children under 18 are orphans (double or single). (NOVCTF, 2013-2018)

- 28.9 percent of the total population had migrated by place of last residence. The vast majority of migration is rural to rural (58.4 percent) followed by rural to urban (24.5 percent). (NIS, 2013)

1 out of 5 migrants to work that have children under 15 have children not living with them. Of those 84% are living with a grandparent (MOP 2012)

-22% of women experience domestic violence (CDHS 2005)

-2.1% of the population of Cambodia has a disability. 10.63% of those are 0-14. (NIS, 2013)

grandparent and some communities reported if no relations could care for the children they were referred residential facility where they thought they would have a better chance at education.

**Children living in families with divorced parents:** Children that were from families with divorced families were also identified as vulnerable. In this circumstance children reported to be taken care of by older grandparents again without ability to send to school or by one parent with limited income resulting again in children being required to work.

**Children parents with chronic illnesses:** Some respondents identified there were families in their communities with parents that had chronic illnesses that made children vulnerable. The most commonly mentioned chronic illness was HIV.

**Children in families with domestic violence:** Children living in families with spousal violence were identified as vulnerable. Children were identified as not being able to attend school as a result of the violence in the family.

*"Some families in our community have domestic violence. It prevents the children from coming to school"*  
DCCCW Siem Reap

**Children with parents are neglected:** Children living with parents that were considered to "neglect their upbringing" were also identified as vulnerable. Examples were parents that did not value education, used the children to work, or had drug or alcohol problems.

**Children with multiple vulnerabilities:** Some children were identified as 'double vulnerable' meaning they might experience multiple vulnerabilities. This for example was a child that was an orphan and a might also have a physical disability from polio.

## 6.2. Identification of vulnerable and marginalized children by Government and Relevant NGOs

The most common methods for identifying vulnerable and marginalised children in the community are:

- Mappings
- ID Poor System
- Local knowledge

School officials and School Support Committees reported working closely with the local authorities in the community to identify vulnerable and marginalised children and children not attending school.

As part of the implementation of the inclusive education dimension of Child Friendly Schools Policy, the MOEYS promotes and cooperates with community mapping measures led by local government to help identify children who are not in school. The school and local authorities also follow up with parents and children to advocate for enrolment and attendance.

The mappings include identification of family characteristics such as poverty, violence, migration, single parent or elderly head of household or other factors that prevent children from school attendance. Mappings are expected to occur at the beginning of the school year.

Many of the mapping processes have been supported by NGOs working in the local community. School authorities identified the mappings as a useful tool, but some reported a need to update the mappings (See Figure 1).

Another mechanism used either on its' own or in cooperation with the community mapping is the RGC's ID Poor System. The local authorities and schools reported the use of the government's ID Poor System as a key mechanism to identify children vulnerable due to poverty. Children whose families have received ID Poor Cards were regularly reported by key informants as the poorest families in the community. Use of this mechanism fits with the identification of poverty as a significant factor in child vulnerability. These families were then targeted in efforts to encourage school registration and school attendance.

Other methods to identify vulnerable and marginalised children the community (particularly other vulnerabilities besides poverty) were through local knowledge of the village chief, commune council or other local authorities. Sometimes this might include information gathered from families seeking help or support or from reports from other authorities (such as health or police).



**Figure 1 Mapping of Vulnerable Families**

## 6.3 Policy Environment

Following is a brief summary of the major policies related to access to education, learning and participation for vulnerable and marginalised children with challenges and recommendations. The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has a supportive policy environment to promote education in Cambodia. While the policy environment is strong implementation is weak due to lack of resources coupled with low awareness and training on the various policy mechanisms.

<b>Policy Environment</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p><b>Constitution:</b> Article 66 of the constitution of Cambodia establishes that the “State shall protect and upgrade citizen's rights to quality education at all levels, guaranteeing that all citizens have equal opportunity to earn a living”.</p> <p>Article 67 of the constitution of Cambodia establishes “The State shall adopt an educational program <i>according to the principle of modern pedagogy including technology and foreign languages</i>, as well as the State controls public and private schools and classrooms at all levels.”</p>	Strong Policy, however there is a lack of full resources to implement	No policy recommendation
<p><b>Cambodia Millennium Development Goals: Goal 2 is to achieve Universal Primary Education.</b></p>	Universal Primary Education is not mandatory, but primary enrolment has reached 97 percent	No policy recommendation
<p><b>Education for All National Plan 2015:</b> The Education for All National Plan promotes nine years basic education for every child and facilitation of favourable conditions in order to allow the children from poor families to attend school, especially by strengthening and expanding public educational institutions and increasing scholarships for poor students.</p>	Universal Primary Education is not mandatory, but primary enrolment has reached 97 percent Scholarships are helping poor children to attend school, however many are provided by NGOs	Education for All is a strong National Plan, ensure continued growth in resources to support the plan
<p><b>Children Friendly Schools:</b> The Cambodian Government has adopted Child Friendly Schools (CFS) as a national education policy to promote Education for All. The Child Friendly Schools has six dimensions: 1) All children have access to schooling (schools are inclusive) 2) Effective learning; 3) Health, safety and protection of children 4) Gender responsiveness; 5) Participation of children, families and communities in the running of their local school and 6) the National Education System supports and encourages schools to become child friendly.</p> <p>CFS have emerged as the most comprehensive models for achieving education related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Currently the Child Friendly School Policy is targeted to Primary Education, but the MoEYS expects it to be expanded to secondary</p>	<p>According to the MoEYS the Child Friendly School Policy has been implemented in the majority of schools and a priority is to expand to secondary schools</p> <p>The Primary Education Department has focused on inclusive education, accelerated education programs (for children not age appropriate for grade) bi-lingual education (see below) to some success, but again reports a lack of resources.</p>	<p>Expand CFS Policy to Secondary Education</p> <p>Fully fund the CFS Policy implementation</p>

schools next year	However, where it is most successful is where there is strong donor support. The MoEYS budget does not yet support full implementation of the policy.	
<b>Guidelines on Implementation of Education for Indigenous Children in Highland Provinces</b>  Cambodia has successfully expanded a relatively small-scale pilot programmes in three provinces to a widespread bilingual education approach for non-native Khmer speakers in state schools and communities in the five north-eastern provinces which have the highest number of indigenous communities: Ratanakiri, Mondulkiri, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear and Kratie.  The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has approved standardised writing systems (orthographies) for five languages - Kreung, Tampuan, Brao, Kavet and Phnong.	Policy is recognized as a role model in the Asia-Pacific Region for this policy  Needs further resources for implementation	Fully Fund the Bi-Lingual Education Program
<b>2008 National Education Law:</b> promotes lifelong education as a mean of contributing to personal development and society as whole. Additionally it recognizes the fundamental human right of disabled students on equal basis with other students.	Universal Primary Education is not mandated  Children have limited time for active participation and practise in school. Students in primary school spend only four hours a day at school, 5 days per week. Statutory instruction time is just 3 hours and 20 minutes per day. Class sizes range from 40 to 50 students in primary school and 40 to 45 students in lower secondary school. It is a challenge for teachers to manage classes of this size, and there is limited time for active participation and practise in class. <sup>6</sup>	Mandate Universal Primary Education  Increase actual instruction time  Reduce class sizes

<p><b>National Guidelines for the Care, Support, and Protection of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC):</b> Strategy 4 is to promote access to basic 9 years of education and informal education and vocational by removing financial barriers, promoting participation for orphan and vulnerable children.</p>	<p>And while the Standards and Guidelines for Care, Support and Protection of Orphans and Vulnerable Children prioritise removing education barriers for OVC, the reality is once again unless there is strong donor support these standards are not routinely met.</p>	<p>Fully fund programs to support OVC education</p> <p>Fully fund programs to remove barriers to OVC attending school</p>
<p><b>2008 Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities and its 2009 Master Plan:</b> aim to ensure equal rights of all children with disabilities to an equal education with other children.</p>	<p>The 2008 Policy on Education of Children with Disabilities is a strong policy however currently the focus is mostly on physical disabilities. Additionally stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in implementation are inadequately defined. Overall there is no standardized disability classification system in place, for operational purposes.</p> <p>There are currently limited special education programs. The new Inclusive Education Training Module does have a module on basic skills for children with special needs (See below) but few teachers are trained in special education.</p> <p>Non-formal education at the community level is also lacking.</p>	<p>Develop a standardized system for disability classification</p> <p>Increase teacher training especially in special education</p> <p>Promote options for non-formal education at the community level</p>
<p><b>2009 Law on Protection and Promotion of Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Chapter (6) on Education (Articles 27-32):</b></p> <p>Article 27: Right to enrolment, scholarships in both public and private institutions</p> <p>Article 28: The State is responsible for development of policies &amp; national strategies on: promotion of inclusive education and special classes establishment for pupils/students with disabilities</p> <p>Article 29: MoEYS is responsible for provision of accessible facilities for pupils/students with disabilities with regard to: buildings, classrooms/study places, sign language and Braille, educational techniques &amp; special pedagogy, teaching aids/equipment/study materials</p> <p>Article 30: Pupils/students with disabilities in poor families or military veterans with disabilities are entitled to free public education with access to study materials; private</p>	<p>Strong Law</p> <p>Implementation is weak as resources are lacking for accessible classrooms, teacher training</p>	<p>No policy changes</p> <p>Fully fund the law in order to promote accessible classrooms, buildings, and teaching aids and equipment</p>



<p>schools apply special discounts (determined by inter-ministerial prakas between MoEYS &amp; MoSAVY)</p> <p><b>Article 31:</b> MoEYS to include sensitization to the causes of disabilities/disability prevention/value of persons with disabilities into mainstream education programmes</p>		
<p><b>Children's Council Statute:</b> The Children's Council Policy promotes child participation through Children's Councils in the School. The statute was updated in 2011. Key changes to the statute includes: the structure of the CC, the management system, funding sources, vision/mission and logo.</p>	<p>Policy was recently updated</p> <p>The Children's Councils are positive vehicles for child participation, however some councils are not fully functioning</p>	<p>No Policy Changes</p> <p>Provide resources to fully operationalise councils</p>
<p><b>Non-Formal Education Policy:</b> The RGC defines the strategy of the Non-Formal Education as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating opportunities so that all people have access to lifelong learning.</li> <li>• Promoting literacy and continuing education by creating links, which provide credit, employment and vocational skills so that the population can live in happiness.</li> <li>• Regularly providing information and knowledge about vocational skill training and technical and scientific subjects to everybody.</li> </ul>	<p>Lack of priority</p> <p>Lack of resources for implementation</p>	<p>Provide resources for implementation and set as a priority</p>
<p><b>Inclusive Education Training Module:</b> Developed in 2012 with 7 Modules 1) Defining Special Needs; 2) Disability Awareness; 3) Education for children with special needs 4) Responding to diversity; 5) Teaching basic skills to children with special needs; and 6) Advice for teaching children in the classroom<sup>7</sup></p>	<p>Although the inclusive education training module has been developed and approved by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, few teachers have so far been trained on how to properly respond to the special needs of physically and intellectually disabled children.</p>	<p>No Policy Changes</p> <p>Provide resources to fully operationalise</p>
<p><b>Child Participation Guidelines:</b> CNCC has developed Child Participation Guidelines to support child participation in planning efforts at the national and sub-national levels</p>	<p>Guidelines have not yet been implemented</p>	<p>Continue with implementation</p>

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<sup>7</sup> (MOEYS, 2012)

## 6.4 Current situation for vulnerable children in terms of accessing, learning and participating opportunities and in expressing their ideas

### 6.4.1 General Vulnerable and Marginalised Children

The study respondents identified the most vulnerable and marginalised children in the target area are children living in poor families, children with families migrating to work, children with disabilities, children with chronic health issues or with parents with chronic health issues, children experiencing domestic violence or neglected. Some children experience multiple vulnerabilities. There are no specific statistics available on the numbers of children experiencing the different vulnerabilities outside of the national statistics and estimates identified earlier in this report.

**Access to Learning and Education:** In the study access to learning and education was explored for vulnerable and marginalised children generally. An examination of national MOEYS statistics demonstrates positive progress in access to primary education. In 2012 the net enrolment rate is 97 percent for both boys and girls. As a result Cambodia has been successful at achieving almost universal primary education. The situation is more challenging for secondary education. The overall gross enrolment rate in 2012 for lower secondary is 53.6 and for upper secondary drops to 27.4.<sup>8</sup>

In the two target provinces of Kampong Cham and Siem Reap the rates and ratios for enrolment are at or near the national statistic. There was no data available to the researcher by target district. While at the country level this is significant, girls still lag behind particularly in rural and remote provinces. Additionally, the higher the education level, the lower the percentage of girls completing the program.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1 Summary of Focus Group Discussion:**

***What social and community factors include influence children's education and learning?***

- *Lack of Stable Livelihood in Families*
- *Children Drop out of School to Work*
- *Migration of Families to Work*
- *Late School Enrolment or Missing School*
- *Lack of Transportation*
- *Lack of resources to support extra classes*
- *Some parents do not think education is important*
- *Children do not like to study or experience peer pressure from other friends to stay out of school.*

In this study respondents described all children as having equal *access* to education, but described a variety of *factors* that prevented children from attending school or resulting in children dropping out of school. The factors were categorized by *Social and Community Factors* and *School Factors*. Following is a summary of the responses by category.

***Social and community factors*** that influence education and learning include social stigma and discrimination, parental barriers, lack of resources such as supplies and transportation.

All study participants were asked about barriers to education and learning at the social and community level (Table 1). The key factors identified by the respondents that *prevent children from attending school or reasons for dropping out of school* are:

<sup>8</sup> (MoEYS, 2013)

<sup>9</sup> (Srun, 2013)

- *Lack of stable livelihood in family:* Family income is limited and families either do not have the money to send children to school (cost of uniform, cost of transportation, teacher fees, extra classes, etc.). In all FGD, KII interviews respondents mentioned this as a factor in children being able to attend school. Some respondents reported that children would drop out because they did not have school supplies, uniforms or teacher fees.

*"Families here really need some financial support to send children to school"*

**Teacher**

- *Children drop out of school to work* to help supplement the family income. Respondents in FGD, KIIs and children reported in each of the target areas that children around grades 5-6 commonly drop out of school and start working in the fields with parents (both boys and girls). Children in this group were commonly young teens. This results in children not transitioning to secondary school. This fits with national statistics reported earlier about significantly lower rates of enrolment in secondary school.

*"Transfer to lower secondary school is very difficult because of lacking money."*

**Parent**

- *Migration to work:* Respondents reported that large numbers of families are migrating to work. Many families migrate domestically, others internationally both short (seasonally) and long term-term. Respondents in FGD, in KII, and children all reported significant impact from families migrating to work. The impacts were 1) children directly migrating to work themselves 2) children migrating with parents that are working 3) and children that are left behind with other family members.

*"Children can make a daily salary in the fields is USD 3 per day. This attracts both parents and children"*

**School Support Committee**

While not all children work when families migrate some schools will not let them register temporarily or the children do not want to attend a new school. The ability to register temporarily in a new school is up to the local authorities so even if not working some children cannot attend school. Other children remain behind being care for by grandparents or other family members who are not able to send them to school.

- *Late school enrolment or missing school:* Some children start school late or miss significant time from school resulting in being older than other children in the same grade.

Respondents reported as a result that children do not feel comfortable because they are older than their classmates and drop out as a result. The MOEYS has prioritized accelerated learning programs to respond to this challenge.



**Limited bicycles at some schools**

- *Lack of Transportation:* Transportation was an issue identified by respondents in some school districts. Transportation was identified as a problem as a result of

distance to school or type of road the children had to walk or ride their bicycles on. Some children even though they lived close had to walk on a busy road and parents worried for their safety particularly due to car accidents. Some children had to go long distances, and not all of them have bicycles.

- *Lack of resources to support extra classes:* Parents, children and other respondents reported the strong need for extra classes for their children. The need for extra classes was a result of children's own learning deficiencies or lack of adequate teaching. However at the same time many families cannot afford the cost of these extra classes resulting in their children getting even further behind and promoting increased drop-out rates.
- *Some parents do not think education is important:* While parents interviewed the study identified the importance of education, the parents along with government, school authorities and NGOs identified that some parents do not see the benefit of education for their children. Some parents do not encourage children to go to school because they need immediate income support so they send the children to work. Some NGO staff identified this as the biggest barrier they faced with promoting children to go to school.

*"The biggest challenge is that parents do not value education. It is hard to motivate them to send their children to school. They do not see the benefit"*  
NGO Staff
- *Children do not like to study or experience peer pressure from other friends to stay out of school.* Teachers, school authorities, and parents reported that sometimes children are tempted also by short term gain and want to work instead of go to school. Examples were given of children that wanted to leave school to earn money to buy things like smart phones or games. Others reported that children just did not like to go to school or study so they did not participate.
- *Discrimination:* Government authorities, teachers, and school administrators report decreased discrimination against children that are vulnerable or marginalized. In some cases there are reports of no discrimination in schools. However with further probing some discrimination identified. Some types of discrimination that were identified are as follows:

*"Children that are poor or disabled like to play by themselves"*  
Children in Group Activity

- *Children play or do activities separately.*

Children and school authorities report children sometimes play or do activities in separate groups. Children that are vulnerable are marginalized typically are separated from other children. The reasons for this separation were described differently by different groups. Children themselves report being embarrassed because they do not have enough money for food, bikes, supplies that other children have. Children without disabilities or that are not poor simply stated that the children that are poor or disabled prefer to play by themselves. This likely demonstrates a lack of understanding of the reasons for the separation.

**School factors** includes inaccessible buildings, limited support for special needs such as language or accessibility for disabled children, limited awareness of issues for vulnerable and marginalised

groups. All study participants were asked about barriers to education and learning at the school level (Table 2). The key factors identified by the respondents are:

**Table 2 Summary of Focus Group Discussions**

***What school factors influence children's access to education and learning?***

- *Lack of deep understanding of RGC priorities and policies*
- *Lack of adequate school infrastructure*
- *Lack of schools*
- *Low motivation of teachers and low salary of teachers*

- *Lack of deep understanding of RCG priorities and policies.* Few school support committee members, teachers or administrations could identify MOEYS priorities. Some were aware of basic policies, but the only priorities they could identify were related to actions in cooperation with an NGO. School authorities

and teachers could describe the Child Friendly School Policy and the Children's Council. Only the provincial level authorities mentioned the Education for All, Inclusive Education, or Disability Policies.

- *Lack of adequate school infrastructure:* Respondents identified several challenges with school infrastructure. These were identified in each province and at the majority of schools. These included the lack of water, separate and adequate toilets, lack of building space, leaky roofs and lack of playgrounds. Other barriers observed by the researchers were accessibility of buildings and toilets. The majority of schools did not have ramps for wheel chairs to classrooms or toilets.
- *Lack of Schools:* Respondents identified a lack of schools particularly for kindergarten and secondary schools. Sometimes children have to travel long distances and this promotes drop outs.
- *Low motivation of teachers and low salary of teachers.* A general barrier to children's learning was that some teachers do not attend school regularly. Respondents including School support committees, children, and parents reported that teachers would miss days of school either to work in their own fields, or because they did not make enough money and had other responsibilities.

*"They do not teach! They only let pupils to sit and talk with each other. They do not educate them!"*

*"Our children can go to school every day but often they get nothing from their teachers. Their knowledge is still low even after going to school. I know she [my daughter] cannot write properly"*

**Parent Group Participants**

*"We consider the quality of teachers here good and sufficient"*

**Parent Group Participant**

Respondents reported that they believed teachers very low salaries result in low motivation, and the need to supplement income. Additionally some students and parents reported that teachers do not teach while they are at school. But some parents did consider the quality of teachers to be good

Respondents were also asked about learning opportunities for their children outside of school. Very few parents or children could identify any additional learning opportunities in the community. The only examples given were extra classes by teachers.

*"The only opportunities we have to learn are in school. There is nothing like that in the community."*

Child in Sponsorship

### **Gender**

In Cambodia, traditional norms suggest that boys should have priority for education for their traditional role as breadwinner and that girls need less education for their traditional role as homemaker.<sup>10</sup> The combination of these norms combined with poverty in a large number of Cambodian households causes families to avoid sending girls to school. It is not perceived that any short-term economic benefit can be derived from their education.

To understand the current status of this cultural norm, respondents were asked if there were differences in access to education and participation for boy and girls. Respondents reported that access to primary school level was generally on parity for both boys and girls. The challenge was identified in the transition to secondary schools. All key informants reported that girls (and boys) dropped out in large numbers before attending secondary school. For girls, the reasons included helping at home with household duties, or the schools being too far away and parents fearing for the girls' safety (fear of rape or sexual harassment).

### **Participation**

Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions in their regard within the family, the school and community.<sup>11</sup>

All respondents were asked about children's participation in decision making process at school. Government and school authorities reported that the mechanism for participating is on the Children's Councils. Some Children's Councils were more active than others. At each school visited the school councils were interviewed using a Spider Tool and/or an H Assessment.

The majority of the Children's Councils were able to give successful examples of how their participation on the council had improved the school. Students reported they provided input through the Suggestion Boxes to the school administration. Areas reported to the school included issues of hygiene, playgrounds and teacher attendance. Students described improved responses by the school administration of improved hygiene, improved playgrounds and other facility improvements as a result of requests made by the Children's Council.

*"All children have an equal chance to participate"; "Children can participate in children's councils"*  
Government authorities

Some participation of vulnerable and marginalized children was occurring through the children's councils, but this was limited. When the Children's Councils were asked if vulnerable or

<sup>10</sup> (Gender and Development for Cambodia, 2010)

<sup>11</sup> (UNICEF, 2014)

marginalized children participate on the councils examples were given of poor children participating and one child with a disability. When examples of participation were given it was one child participating on a council. Reasons given for vulnerable and marginalized children not participating were the children did not have the skills, did not attend school regularly, or did not want to participate. However, most respondents identified that involving more vulnerable and marginalized children was important. And clearly involving more vulnerable and marginalized children in councils will permit their voice to be heard.

The respondents indicated that sometimes students do participate at the Commune Councils' events as well, but these are typically co-organized with NGOs. Parents shared that sometimes the schedule of the event(s) collides with the lessons at schools and parents think that children should primarily pay attention at school and if there is more time and space, then they can participate (if possible).

#### 6.4.2 Children with Disabilities

According to the recent Cambodia Inter-censal Population Survey (CIPS), 2013, 2.1% of the population of Cambodia has a disability. Higher numbers of people with disabilities tend to be living in rural areas of Cambodia (1.77 percent) than in urban areas (.28 percent).

The percentage of children 0-14 accounted for 10.63 percent of the total disabled population as against 29.4 percent among the general population.<sup>12</sup> Disabilities were categorised by 'in seeing', 'in speech', 'in movement', 'mental retardation', 'mental illness', 'other' and 'multiple disabilities'. In children aged 0-14 with disabilities the most common was for children to have multiple disabilities (66.05 percent). There was no clear definition or description of what multiple disabilities. This was followed by speech (28.85 percent); seeing (17.63 percent), and mental illness (13.42 percent); and mental retardation (12.67 percent).<sup>13</sup>

While the prevalence of different types of disabilities in children is generally known from the 2013 CIPS, a challenge is to understand the prevalence of different types of disabilities in children in the target area. The MOEYS collects data on children with disabilities in primary school through school registers but this is not reliable as it only captures the children that are registered in school. And only one school was able to provide the data. The MOEYS does collect this data, but it is not disaggregated by the target district.

**Access to Education:** During the study process 16 schools were visited. At each school key informants were asked about children with disabilities. Teachers and Principals in FGDs would report from 0-3 or 4 children with disabilities in each school. Most commonly these were children with physical disabilities such as being deaf, blind or missing digits or limbs. Occasionally a child with an intellectual disability was identified in school (slow learner).

When asked if there were other children in the community with disabilities that were not attending

*"There are other 2 children with disabilities in the community but they just cannot come here (school). The children are not able to come because the school does not have the resources to serve the children"*

Teacher in FGD

<sup>12</sup> (NIS, 2013)

<sup>13</sup> (NIS, 2013)

school, the answer was routinely yes. The teachers, school support committee members, children, and parents could all describe other children in the community with disabilities. The children not in school were typically not in school because the school did not have the equipment or resources to manage the child, the skills to work with the child. An additional factor was sometimes mentioned that parents did not see the need for education. Clearly many children in the community with disabilities are not attending school.

As identified earlier, the focus has been primarily on children with physical disabilities with limited interventions for children with intellectual disabilities. Currently the majority of interventions in Cambodia for children with disabilities have been NGOs. A common mechanism is to provide service to children (or adults) with one category of disability. For example some NGOs work only with children that are blind or deaf. Some NGOs are focusing on implementing the governments' inclusive education policy which focuses on inclusion of the poorest of the poor and other marginalised groups. These efforts have led to more vulnerable and marginalised children attending school. When school officials would report on a child with disabilities attending school they would share about an NGO helping to support their needs.

**Social and Community Factors** that influence education and learning include social stigma and discrimination, parental barriers, lack of resources such as supplies and transportation.

**Table 3 Summary of Focus Group Discussions:**

***What additional social and community factors influence education and learning for children with disabilities?***

- *Discrimination*
- *Children are kept at home because parents think they cannot learn*

All study participants were asked about barriers to education and learning at the social and community level for children with disabilities. The key factors identified by the respondents are:

- ***Discrimination:*** Children and school authorities report children sometimes play or do activities in separate groups. Some children (not vulnerable or marginalized) report that the children that were "poor or disabled" liked to play by themselves, demonstrating a lack of understanding of the reason behind the separation.
- ***Children are kept at home because parents think they cannot learn.*** Respondents reported that it was common for children with disabilities to be kept out of school due to the parents attitude about the importance of education. Some parents think that children with disabilities do not need an education, as they will not be able to use it, so the cost of sending the child to school is not worth the investment. This coupled with the lack of resources at the school and teacher skill, prevents children with disabilities from attending.



**School factors** includes inaccessible buildings, limited support for special needs such as language or accessibility for disabled children, limited awareness of issues for vulnerable and marginalised groups.

*"Children with disabilities – they cannot come because they use a wheelchair"*  
Children in Group

**Table 3 Summary of Focus Group Discussion:**

***What additional school factors influence education and learning for children with disabilities?***

- *Lack of teachers trained to work with children with disabilities*
- *Lack of educational materials*
- *No equipment for children with disabilities*
- *Buildings are not accessible*

*Lack of teachers trained to work with children with disabilities.* Clearly the respondents raised concerns about the schools ability to teach children with disabilities. Only a child with a mild disability, usually physical, is expected to be able to attend school. The parents think that school is not ready to teach children with disabilities. The assumption was clearly that a child with a wheelchair could not come to school, as the wheelchair could not move around the school building.

According to respondents at the national level out of 7,000 Primary Education Teachers in the country few have been specially trained to work with children with disabilities according to the Department of Primary Education. Teachers did report some adaption methods they had been taught by NGOs or as a result of the Inclusive Education Training or by school authorities. These included practical solutions such as placing children that do not hear or see well in the front of the classroom.

*"The teachers here do not have proper training how to teach children with disabilities. They know just about the mainstream (children without disabilities) ones"*  
Parents with children in sponsorship

- *Lack of educational materials* specialised for children with disabilities or other vulnerabilities. School, government and other key informants reported on a general lack of educational materials for children, and specifically on the lack of specialised curriculums for children with any type of disabilities. In one school authorities did discuss bilingual education, but said that the school taught in Khmer even though many students were Cham. The school described that these children were

*"We cannot handle teaching children with special needs, do not have the time, training or equipment."*  
Teacher in Primary School



**School building with a ramp**

- *No equipment for children with disabilities:* In general schools had not equipment or special tools to work with children with disabilities. No teachers have sign language training or available resources. School authorities reported they deal with

children with disabilities on a case by case basis citing it impractical to prepare for a child they do not have.

- *Lack of accessible buildings:* In addition to the barriers identified earlier in this report (inadequate buildings, toilets and lack of water water), few school buildings or toilets are accessible. The majority of schools did not have ramps for wheel chairs to classrooms or toilets.

### Gender

In general no differences were reported based on gender of children with disabilities. However, one example of a disabled child that stopped school was a girl. The school was not able to manage her once she started menstruation.

*"One disabled girl who started to feel embarrassed or ashamed about her body changes around her 13<sup>th</sup> birthday and dropped-out because of that."*

Teacher

**Participation:** Participation of children with disabilities was more limited. Only one example of a child with a disability was provided that participated on the Children's Council. No other examples of children with disabilities were provided. When asked why few children with disabilities were participating the respondents cited low participation in general in school. Respondents typically said children with disabilities were welcome and this was an area they wanted to improve, but also raised concerns if children with physical disabilities could manage the responsibilities.

### 6.4.3 Sponsored Children

**Table 4 Summary of Focus Group Discussion:**

***What are the social, community and school factors for children in plans sponsorship program that impact access to education, learning and participation?***

*Children and parents of children in Plan's sponsorship program identified the same factors impacting school attendance as identified above in general vulnerable and marginalised children.*

*\*A key observation is that children and families in Plan's Sponsorship showed a high commitment to education.*

Children in Plan's sponsorship includes children under 12 living in the community who are from poor families, children with special needs (disabled), girls (priority) and whose families are committed to sending their children to school. In the study parents of children in sponsorship and children in sponsorship were interviewed in Plan's Sponsorship in Siem Reap and Kampong Cham Province

*"Despite the fact we are poor, we want our children to get education!"*

Parent of Sponsored Child

s. In general these respondents provided answers that are included in general vulnerable children and in children with disabilities above. However specific differences are identified below.

**Access to Learning and Education:** During the study process FGD were held with children in sponsorship and with parents of children in sponsorship. All families in these FGDs were receiving

**Table 4 Summary of Focus Group Discussions:**

***What are the advantages for vulnerable and marginalised children in accessing education and learning?***

- *Better job opportunities as adults*
- *Reduction in the need to migrate for work*
- *Increased earning potential*
- *Increased opportunities for socialisation by play and learning together*

sponsorship support for at least one child in the family to attend school. Respondents in FGDs described financial support to attend school, income generation support, bicycles for transportation and school supplies that were received that helped to remove barriers. As a result of the support their children were more likely to be attending school. However, for children in sponsorship many of the barriers to attending school were removed due to the support, the respondents still described the factors that impacted school attendance and learning.

**Social and community factors** Children and parents of children in the sponsorship program identified similar social and community factors for access to education as described above in general vulnerable and marginalised children section above. Key social and community factors causing barriers to education and learning included lack of resources to support school costs and supplies, lack of transportation, discrimination against children that are poor or disabled and children's commitment to attend school. Parents of children in sponsorship also described the need for children to work, or families need to migrate to work also limited children's access to school. Severe poverty is the major barrier *"we just have no money to support our children"* reported one family in the sponsorship program.

However, clearly the parents valued education. Respondents routinely shared the importance of education and their desire for their children to go to school. Clearly parents of sponsored children valued education.

**School factors** Children in sponsorship and their parents of children in the sponsorship program identified similar school factors for access to education as described above in general vulnerable and marginalised children section above. These included lack of teachers or teachers not attending school, lack of school materials, lack of adequate school buildings including classrooms, parking for bicycles and playgrounds. Other factors were lack of water, or adequate toilets. Some described that their children did not learn in school as well. This was typically attributed to the lack of teacher attendance.

**Gender:** Children in sponsorship and their parents reported no difference generally in girls and boys attending primary education. One respondent in a parent group did report that she thought boys' education should be prioritised, but others in the group disagreed. The sponsorship program prioritises girls' education, so many of the children sponsored were girls.

**Participation:** Children in sponsorship and their parents reported that children did participate in the Children's Council and sometimes at the Commune Council meetings. The respondents reported that Plan had helped to organise child participation at Commune Council meetings with vulnerable children participating. Parents could not identify differences children's participation had made.

Children were able to tell about different suggestions that had been made at the school. Some examples were school cleanliness and hygiene efforts.

#### **6.4.4 Advantages for marginalized and vulnerable children in accessing learning and participation and good program models**

Clearly many respondents valued education and could identify the important gains to be made by children with increased education and learning. School authorities, teachers, government authorities and parents identified the benefits of education and learning primarily as a mechanism to access to better job opportunities resulting in increased income earning potential.

Improved education was also seen as a possible reason to reduce the need to migrate for work, although limited opportunities in rural communities make this unlikely. At the same time respondents in the study identified the importance of education, they also reported that many parents in the community did not value education because they could not see the benefits, as no jobs were available in the community, and the additional time (years) would have to be invested for education, when the family needed immediate income. This identifies the reality of meeting immediate needs in the family particularly for very poor families.

But still, study participants overall valued education significantly. Other benefits to attending school were identified by the school authorities. These include increased opportunities for socialization by children learning and playing together.

*"Children will be able to get a good job, for example in a hotel."*

Parent in FGD

*"I want to be a teacher, and if I don't finish school I will have to migrate to Thailand to work."*

Child in Group Activity

Respondents were asked about good program models that helped children to attend school and learn. Good models for support children's attendance in school and learning were identified as efforts that helped to improve school facilities, teacher skills or removed barriers. Efforts that were identified as successful included scholarship programs that defrayed the costs of education, provided needed supplies and equipment and programs. Some respondents reported on programs that helped families with income generation so they do not need to keep the child out of school. Others reported on local authorities' follow-up with families in the community that were not sending children to school. Other respondents pointed to efforts to improve the facilities such as providing water supplies or new buildings.

## **6.5 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.5.1 Conclusions**

The policy environment is generally in place to promote inclusive education of vulnerable and marginalised children. The challenges are with policy implementation. This includes lack of resources and commitment of duty bearers to implement policies. Key gaps include an inadequate teaching monitoring system, low commitment of teachers and education officials at all level, a shortage of teachers and irregular teaching (1-3 days a week, 2-3 hours a day).

The most vulnerable children identified in the study were children that are from very poor families, have families that migrate for work, have a disability and other vulnerabilities such as illness,

divorce, domestic violence or are orphaned. These categories were identified by all respondents with a significant emphasis on very poor families and the challenges resulting from migration for work. Clearly, poverty is a significant factor in children not being able to attend school and learn. Poverty results in children needing to work, poor nutrition, bad health, lack of money for school supplies, or for extra classes, transportation and other school costs.

Children with disabilities are seen as vulnerable, but present significant challenges to include in the public school. The only children with disabilities that were identified as participating in school were children with minor physical disabilities. Children with more severe disabilities, children with intellectual disabilities were not expected to be able to participate in school by the teachers, parents or community leaders. The reason cited was lack of resources including teacher capacity, teaching resources or adaptation equipment and building accessibility. Additionally, there is little clear data on the numbers of children with different types of disabilities in the target area.

Girls have been historically seen as more vulnerable, but according to respondents have achieved gender parity in access to primary education. This however drops significantly at the secondary and higher levels. Differences also exist in urban and rural areas. The researchers think this parity is fragile and given limited resources boys' education will still be prioritised.

Vulnerable and marginalised children are identified through mappings, ID Poor System and through community knowledge. A systematic mapping is supposed to occur at the beginning of the school year, however many of these mappings need to be updated.

A variety of barriers at the social and community level prevent children from attending school and learning. These include lack of family income and resources as well as barriers such as parental and child attitudes toward the value of education. Migration has a significant impact on children's access to education as well.

Stigma and discrimination is reported to be reduced or non-existent, however, it is likely that the dominate groups do not understand the discrimination that vulnerable or marginalised children experience.

School level barriers include limited number of schools, inadequate buildings, limited teacher training and commitment (low attendance by teachers), lack of specialised skills and resource materials for children with special needs. Additionally school facilities are not routinely accessible and face challenges with adequate toilets, accessible rooms, and lack of water.

Study participants identify programs that remove financial barriers as successful to helping vulnerable children especially poor children to participate in school.

Children in Plan's sponsorship program had some barriers to education removed as a result of the support for Plan. This was identified as a good practice model by the respondents. Other good practice models included programs to improve and maintenance the school facilities. This was usually a part of the implementation of Child Friendly School Policy.

Children in Plan's Sponsorship program were children living in very poor families, but the families showed a high commitment to sending the children to school. Families and children both reported the desire for further education, but economic barriers were a concern for children to be able to get

additional education. Additionally children sometimes still lacked transportation, adequate school supplies and money for additional classes.

Child participation is mainly through the Children's Councils. Some examples of vulnerable children participating including one child with a disability, but participation of vulnerable and marginalised children on the Children's Councils was not routine. Children were able to impact change in the schools as a result of the Children's Council.

## **6.5.2 Recommendations**

### **6.5.2.1 Policies and Legal Instruments to Support Access to Education, Learning and Participation**

#### ***General Vulnerable and Marginalised Children (including children in sponsorship)***

MOEYS in cooperation with UN agencies and NGO partners should develop clear indicators for most marginalised children accessing education and learning as key priority;

MOEYS should include the most marginalised children into the existing Education Management Information System (EMIS) as a cross cutting themes to collect further disaggregated data on vulnerable and marginalised children;

The RGC should fully fund programs to remove barriers to school attendance as outline in the National Standards for the Protection, Care and Support of OVC; and scholarship for vulnerable and most marginalised children in schooling or vocational trainings;

MOEYS should advocate with the RGC for increased teacher salaries or other benefits to promote better school attendance and higher quality teaching by teachers;

RGC, with support of NGOS, UN agencies should further assess the education needs of children migrating with their parents to ensure that gaps in education are removed. This could include education programs at work sites or mechanisms to include children in school part-time; and

MoEYS should review the children's council statute to provide more clear guidance to schools to include the most marginalised children in children's councils and also the school decision making process based on the national guideline on child participation of CNCC and set clear indicator of most marginalised children participation in schools and sub-national levels.

#### ***Children with disabilities***

The RGC should further define categories of disabilities and to prioritise adding children with intellectual disabilities in policy design and implementation; and

Promote teacher training on the Inclusive Education Training Modules as strong mechanisms to implement the RGCs education priorities; this should include low resource solutions to working with the most marginalised children.

### **6.5.2.2 Community and Social Level Recommendations to Support Access to Education, Learning and Participation**

#### ***General Vulnerable and Marginalised Children (including children in sponsorship)***

NGOs, UN agencies should promote and support the RGC and local partners to work together to standardize mechanisms for identification of children out of school, and mechanisms to encourage children to attend school including updating mappings annually and follow-ups by volunteers or school authorities and school support committees;

RGC, NGOs and other key stakeholders should promote efforts to improve family livelihoods, income generation such as promoting access to markets and other measures to stabilize family incomes so families can support children to go to school, learn and participate;

MoEYS, UN and NGOs should promote increased collaboration between the school authorities, school support committees and local authorities to find local resources and solutions to remove barriers to education, learning and participation for vulnerable and marginalised children. This could occur by continuing to work with and strengthen the School Support Committees and partnerships with the Commune Committees for Women and Children;

NGOs, UN agencies, and MOEYS should coordinate the Government and NGO agencies to promote removal of financial barriers of most marginalised children to attending school by continuing to provide scholarships for regular school cost and extra classes, support bicycles or other transportation, school uniforms, supplies and financial costs for school.

MOEYS, NGOs, UN agencies should promote development of learning opportunities for non-formal education and vocational training skills (that respond to market needs) at the community level to provide increased opportunities for children not in school and for children in school to improve; and

RGC should promote programs that address family issues identified as making children vulnerable such as lack of food, health crisis or domestic violence that prevent children from attending school.

Plan should increase the education program related to school feeding or scholarship to children mainly to sponsored children.

#### ***Children with disabilities***

MoEYS and donors should promote efforts of implementing partners to promote parent awareness of the rights of vulnerable and marginalised children to education, the benefits of education to children (long-term) particularly children with disabilities; and

#### ***Gender***

RGC, Plan and NGOs should continue efforts to raise awareness in the community about girl participation and education and develop strategic plan to promote girl participation and education base on national policy and also international standards.

#### ***Children in Plan's Sponsorship Program***

Plan should continue efforts to promote girls in Plan's sponsorship's participation in school particularly in the transition from primary to secondary school;

Plan should promote efforts to improve and stabilize family livelihoods of children in sponsorship promote families better being able to support children to go to school, learn and participate;

Plan should promote efforts in the community for non-formal education and additional learning opportunities for children in sponsorship;

Plan should network with other organisations to promote longer term scholarships for children in sponsorship to get vocational training or other higher education; and

Plan should identify opportunities and promote further participation of children in sponsorship on decision making bodies such as the Commune Council, the School Support Committees.

### **6.5.2.3 School Level Recommendations to Support Access to Education, Learning and Participation**

#### ***General Vulnerable and Marginalised Children***

RGC, NGOs UN Agencies should continue to support efforts to improve school facilities. This was a particular concern of parents, children and teachers. All advocated strongly for improved school facilities, such as better building (including accessible), parking, toilets, water, and breakfast at school; and

MoEYS should continue to work with partners and schools to continue build the skills of the Children's Councils and set targets for inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised children on the councils; additionally find other opportunities for children's participation outside of school such as on the Commune Councils for Women and Children;

#### ***Children with Disabilities***

Model projects should be developed by MOEYS, and NGO partners that model programs that include for inclusive classes in public primary schools paired with improved facilities and provision of special education teacher training;

At the local level teachers should be provided with training on inclusive education. This could include simple methods that are not resource intensive on how to manage and teach children with special needs such as room placement, or other low resource methods;

MOEYS with support of NGOs should promote use of Individual Education Plans for Children that are practical and achievable for each student; and

Teachers, Children's Councils should increase efforts to include children with disabilities on Children's Councils to increase opportunities for participation in decision making.

#### ***Gender***

Schools should ensure separate toilet areas for girls;

#### ***Children in Plan's Sponsorship Program***

Plan and its partners should work closely with children in sponsorship to encourage families and support children to participate on Children's Councils; and

Plan should promote efforts to ensure girls are safe coming to and from school.





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## **Annex A DRAFT Key Informant Interview Guides**

### **Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School**

#### **MoEYS, PoEYS, DoEYS**

**Record:** Use recording sheet to collect basic relevant info (province, district, village, name, age, etc.) and attached to detailed notes.

**Explain about the research.** Trying to understand the barriers to Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School, and make recommendations to Plan for implementation in current and future programmes. Want to understand the gaps in laws and policies, social and community barriers, and the school factors.

#### **Identification of vulnerable<sup>14</sup> and marginalised<sup>15</sup> children**

**Who** are the **vulnerable and marginalised children** of primary school age (in Cambodia, in your province or district?)

Are there any **statistics** on the **numbers and types** of vulnerable and marginalised children participating in school? If so can we get them? Or **not** participating in school? *What types of disabilities to children have that are able attend school? What types of disabilities do children have that are not able to attend school?*

What is the **educations systems mechanisms** (and real actions) to **identify** vulnerable and marginalised children and include them in education? (CCWC? District Training and Monitoring Team? Other?)

What are the any **specific programs** (if any) to promote better inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised children in school? Either NGOs or by Government (how long active, success, challenges)

#### **Access to Education, Learning Opportunities**

What are the **advantages and benefits** for vulnerable and marginalised children to be able to **learn and participate** in school?

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<sup>14</sup> NOVCTF (MOSAVY) have defined vulnerable children as orphans, children with chronically ill parents, children living outside of family care such as an institution or on the street; children in poor households, abused and exploited (sex, labour), children in conflict with the law, children addicted to drugs or children of drug users; children with disabilities; children affected by HIV/AIDs; other children the community defines as vulnerable; marginalise children include girls, children from religious and ethnic minorities and children disabilities.

<sup>15</sup> Marginalised children are children with disabilities, girls, children from indigenous communities or others that are socially excluded

What are the **barriers** in access to education and learning (attending and participating in school) for vulnerable and marginalised children?

**What about children with disabilities?** What are the barriers to attendance and learning?

What are barriers to **girls** attending and learning in school?

What are the barriers to **children from poor families** attending school?

What are barriers for **other vulnerable or marginalised** children?

**Probes to use if not brought up already:**

- What are the **gaps in laws and policies** for promoting vulnerable and marginalised children's access to school and learning?
  - Disability Policy? Does the policy meet the needs of children with disabilities? Are their categories of disabilities not included (for example intellectual – does this present a challenge?)
  - Child Friendly School Policy? Has the policies implementation been successful at promoting inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised children? (if yes how, if not why not?)
  - Inclusive Education Teacher Training module: Any specific issues with availability and training of teachers to meet the needs of vulnerable and marginalised children?
  - Any other policies or lack of that present challenges for vulnerable children's access to education
    - Any specific gaps in policy for girls? Indigenous people? Other groups?
- What are the **barriers caused by community attitudes?**
  - Any discrimination or community attitudes that prevents girls, children with disabilities, indigenous people attending school?
  - Any barriers at the family level?
    - Families need children to work, do not value the importance of education, etc.)
    - Costs?
  - Other barriers
- What about any **factors at the school?** (*national level overall, provincial and district specific to their province or district*)
  - School attendance is important but does attendance in school result in learning for vulnerable and marginalised children? What are the **barriers to 'real' learning?**
  - **Physical, accessibility and infrastructure issues?** Are buildings **accessible**? **Safe** for girls, have adequate resources, water, sanitation, any other issues?
  - Do vulnerable and marginalised children have the **support services** they need for their learning?
    - Are there any support services such as for children with special needs, **communication and language, teaching aids?** What are the gaps?

### **Participation**

Do vulnerable and marginalised children **participate in activities** in the school (and community) such as **children's clubs, or other school events?** How often? Can you give examples?

Are there any **vulnerable and marginalised** children in **leadership positions**? Have there been any **special efforts** shown to address **barriers to participation**?

### **Recommendations**

What are the **recommendations** to promote equal opportunity to vulnerable and marginalised children in accessing, learning and participation?

- Laws and Policies improvements?
- Community and Family Barriers improvements?
- School or facility improvements needed?

Any last important information we should know to help Plan in its effort to improve access to education for vulnerable and marginalised children?

## **Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School**

### **Key Informant Key Themes NGOs (NEP, KAPE, CNCC, Disability Action Council, Other Provincial NGOs)**

**Explain about the research.** *Trying to understand the barriers to Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School, and make recommendations to Plan for implementation in current and future programmes. Want to understand the gaps in laws and policies, social and community barriers, and the school factors.*

#### **Organizational Priorities**

Can you tell me about the priorities of your organisation related to promoting vulnerable and marginalised children's access to, learning and participation in school?

#### **Identification of vulnerable<sup>16</sup> and marginalised<sup>17</sup> children**

- Who are the vulnerable and marginalised children in this area?
- How are vulnerable and marginalised children identified? (by government and by NGOs)
- What if any are the specific programmes (government or NGOs) targeting inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised children in learning? (targeted to any specific how long active, how are they going, success, challenges with the strategies)?

#### **Access to Education: Attending, Learning and Participation in decisions that affect the child**

- **Benefits:** What are the advantages and benefits for vulnerable and marginalised children to be able to learn and participate in school?
- **Political and system Barriers**
  - What are the gaps laws and policies related to vulnerable and marginalised children? Any specific gaps for children disabilities? (Disability Policy), any specific gaps for girls? Indigenous people? Other groups?
  - Any specific issues with availability and training of teachers to meet the needs of vulnerable and marginalised children?
- **Social and Community Barriers**
  - What are the issues with Stigma and Discrimination for vulnerable and marginalised children? (any specific for girls, children with disabilities, or other groups?)
  - How to parents or families cause barriers for vulnerable and marginalised children
    - (need children to work, care for children/grandparents, do not value the importance of education, etc.)

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<sup>16</sup> NOVCTF (MOSAVY) have defined vulnerable children as orphans, children with chronically ill parents, children living outside of family care such as an institution or on the street; children in poor households, abused and exploited (sex, labour), children in conflict with the law, children addicted to drugs or children of drug users; children with disabilities; children affected by HIV/AIDs; other children the community defines as vulnerable; marginalise children include girls, children from religious and ethnic minorities and children disabilities.

<sup>17</sup> Marginalised children are children with disabilities, girls, children from indigenous communities or others that are socially excluded

- **School Barriers**

- What about barriers at the school?
- Physical accessibility and infrastructure issues? Are buildings accessible? Safe for girls, have adequate resources?
- Do vulnerable and marginalised children have the support services for their learning? Communication barriers - Children with special needs, language for children from indigenous groups or deaf children, needed teaching aids?

**Participation**

Do vulnerable and marginalised children participate in activities in the school (and community) such as children's clubs, or other school events that promote decision-making ? How often? Can you give examples? Are there any vulnerable and marginalised children in leadership positions? What are the barriers to participation? Have there any special efforts been made to address barriers to participation?

**Recommendations** What are the recommendations for future interventions to promote and provide equal opportunities to vulnerable and marginalised children in accessing education, learning and participation?



## **Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School**

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide District Consultative Committee on Women and Children, School Support Committee, Principals and Teachers**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for joining our group today. I am here on behalf of Plan International to learn more about vulnerable and marginalised children's access to, learning and participation in school. Our focus is to learn from you about the successes and challenges you have had and get any ideas you have for improvements.

The information we gather will be used to help us review our work and develop future priorities. Your participation in this group is voluntary and at any time if you do not want to answer a question or you want to stop participating it is ok to leave. Our discussion should take about 1 hour. I have some specific topics to discuss. I will bring up the topic and I would like for everyone to share their ideas. It does not need to be formal or in any particular order.

We would like for everyone to be able to talk, so sometimes I might have to share with you it is time to move to the next person or topic. My job is to make sure we can talk about all topics in the time we have! All opinions and ideas are important so we want to make sure everyone has the time to talk.

We would like to use the responses we gather to help Plan understand how they can better promote access to, learning and participation of vulnerable children in school. If it is ok, we would like to quote some of the things you tell us in our report. However, even though we might quote some of your comments, we will not use your names. Is this ok?

*Record: A recording sheet will be provided to collect basic info (province, district, village, name, age, etc.)*

*Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation defined **vulnerable children** as orphans, children with chronically ill parents, children living outside of family care such as an institution or on the street; children in poor households, abused and exploited (sex, labour), children in conflict with the law, children addicted to drugs or children of drug users; children with disabilities; children affected by HIV/AIDs; other children the community defines as vulnerable; **Marginalised children** are children with disabilities, girls, children from indigenous communities or others that are socially excluded*

#### **Key areas to explore:**

##### **Identification of vulnerable and marginalized children**

- Who are the vulnerable and marginalised children in your community?
  - Children with disabilities, children in poor families, girls, others?
  - Which groups of vulnerable children are in school/not in school?
- How do you identify the vulnerable and marginalised children in the district/commune/school?

- Have there been any mappings of vulnerable children in your district/commune/school? If so, who were the most vulnerable children?
- What are the strategies to include children in school, learning and decision making?
- What are the advantages and benefits for vulnerable and marginalised children to be able to learn and participate in school?

### ***Access to Education, Learning Opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised children***

- What are the **barriers** to vulnerable and marginalised Children **attending** school? Any specific barriers for *children with disabilities, children in poor families or girls, or any other vulnerable group* (any they mentioned earlier especially)
  - What are the barriers ***within families to children attending school?***
    - Families need children to work?
    - Children need to provide care for family members (grandparents or younger children)?
    - Families do not think education is important?
    - Transportation issues?
    - No money for school supplies, etc.?
  - What are the any barriers to ***school attendance related to school facilities***
    - Physical accessibility and infrastructure issues?
    - Are buildings accessible?
    - Safe for girls
  - What are barriers caused by ***stigma and discrimination for vulnerable and marginalised children that prevent children from attending school?***
    - Discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, indigenous people, children in poor families?
  - What are the barriers by ***laws and policies*** that prevent or do not support children's attendance in school?
    - Commune Safety Policy, Policy on Children with Disabilities, other?
- **Learning** The topic is about vulnerable and marginalised children's learning. So we have talked about children attending school, but now I want to ask about a topic that is a little bit different. Attending school is important but we want to now talking about learning in school
  - If children are in school are they ***able to learn?***
  - What are the barriers to vulnerable and marginalised children's ***learning?***
    - Adequate resources for children with disabilities such as teachers, specialised materials, etc.
    - Communication or Language skills (for indigenous people, or deaf children)
    - Other support services for children for children with disabilities
    - Safety systems for girls?
    - Other barriers to learning?
  - What are the learning opportunities for children outside of school? Describe them.

### ***Participation***

The next topic is about child participation. With this we mean do children have the opportunity to participate in activities related to decision making that impacts their lives?

- What kind of activities do vulnerable and marginalised children participate in the school and community?
  - Children's clubs, CCWC meetings, other school events that promote decision-making? How often? Can you give examples?
- Are there any vulnerable and marginalised children in leadership positions in the clubs?
- What are the barriers to participation? Have there any special efforts been made to address barriers to participation?

### **Recommendations**

What are the recommendations for future interventions to promote and provide equal opportunities to vulnerable and marginalised children in accessing **education, learning and participation**?

## **Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School**

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide**

#### **Parents of vulnerable children**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for joining our group today. I am here on behalf of Plan International to learn more about vulnerable and marginalised children's access to, learning and participation in school. Our focus is to learn from you about the successes your community has had and any ideas you have for improvements.

The information we gather will be used to help us review our work and develop future priorities. Your participation in this group is voluntary and at any time if you do not want to answer a question or you want to stop participating it is ok to leave. Our discussion should take about 1 hour. I have some specific topics to discuss. I will bring up the topic and I would like for everyone to share their ideas. It does not need to be formal or in any particular order.

We would like for everyone to be able to talk, so sometimes I might have to share with you it is time to move to the next person or topic. My job is to make sure we can talk about all topics in the time we have! All opinions and ideas are important so we want to make sure everyone has the time to talk.

We would like to use the responses we gather to help Plan understand how they can better promote access to, learning and participation of vulnerable children in school. If it is ok, we would like to quote some of the things you tell us in our report. However, even though we might quote some of your comments, we will not use your names. Is this ok?

*Record: A recording sheet will be provided to collect basic info (province, district, village, name, age, etc.)*

*Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation defined **vulnerable children** as orphans, children with chronically ill parents, children living outside of family care such as an institution or on*

*the street; children in poor households, abused and exploited (sex, labour), children in conflict with the law, children addicted to drugs or children of drug users; children with disabilities; children affected by HIV/AIDs; other children the community defines as vulnerable; **Marginalised children** are children with disabilities, girls, children from indigenous communities or others that are socially excluded*

### **Identification of vulnerable and marginalized children**

- Who are the vulnerable and marginalised children in your community?
  - Children with disabilities, children in poor families, girls, others?
  - Which groups of vulnerable children are not in school?
- What are the advantages and benefits for vulnerable and marginalised children to go to school?

### **Access to Education, Learning Opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised children**

- What are the barriers to vulnerable and marginalised children attending school?
  - Within **families**?
    - Families need children to work?
    - Children need to provide care for family members (grandparents or younger children)?
    - Families do not think education is important?
    - Transportation issues?
    - No money for school supplies, etc.?
  - Related to **school facilities**?
    - Physical accessibility and infrastructure issues?
    - Are buildings accessible?
    - Safe for girls?
  - Related to **stigma and discrimination**?
    - Discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, indigenous people, children in poor families?
- What barriers related to communications of vulnerable children with others?
  - Are there any barriers in **laws and policies** that prevent or do not support children's attendance in school?
    - Commune Safety Policy, Policy on Children with Disabilities, other?
- What is being done in the community to help children attend school. (parent groups, NGOs, etc.)

### **Learning**

The topic is about vulnerable and marginalised children's learning. So we have talked about children attending school, but now I want to ask about a topic that is a little bit different. Attending school is important but we want to now talking about learning in school

- If children are in school are they **able to learn**?
- What are the barriers to vulnerable and marginalised children's **learning**?

- Adequate resources for children with disabilities such as teachers, specialised materials, etc.
- Language skills (for indigenous people, or deaf children)
- Other support services for children for children with disabilities
- Safety systems for girls?
- Other barriers to learning?
- What are the learning opportunities for children outside of school? Describe them.

### ***Participation***

The next topic is about child participation. With this we mean do children have the opportunity to participate in activities related to decision making that impacts their lives?

- What kind of activities do vulnerable and marginalised children participate in the school and community that promote decision-making?
  - Children's clubs, CCWC meetings, other school events that promote decision-making? How often? Can you give examples?
- What are the barriers to children participating in these groups?

### ***Recommendations***

What are the recommendations for future interventions to promote and provide equal opportunities to vulnerable and marginalised children in accessing ***education, learning and participation***?

# Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School

## Children's Council Members

### Risk Mapping and Spider Tool (30 minutes)

**Resources Needed:** A recording sheet to collect basic info (location, school, age, grade etc.), and large poster paper and marking pens

#### **Instructions:**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for joining our group today. I am here on behalf of Plan International. We are doing a study to understand the barriers for vulnerable children to participate in school; to learn and join in activities like Children's Councils. So we want to ask your opinions.

The information we gather will be used to help Plan to improve its services and to develop future programs. Your participation in this group is voluntary and at any time if you do not want to answer a question or you want to stop participating it is ok to leave. Our discussion should take about 30 minutes.

We would like to use the responses we gather to help Plan understand how to better develop its programs to help children participate in school, learnings and child clubs or other decision making groups. If it is ok, we would like to quote some of the things you tell us in our report. However, even though we might quote some of your comments, we will not use your names. Is this ok?

We will do two short activities. The first is a School Risk Mapping.

#### **School Risk Mapping: (NEED LARGE SHEETS OF PAPER and MARKERS)**

Ask the group members to draw their school compound. Then ask them to identify any barriers to then to identify the happy and unhappy places (strengths and barriers) for vulnerable children to attend or participate (could be things like steps, no special teachers, no bathrooms, etc.)

#### **Spider Tool**

The activity we want to do is called a spider tool. The spider tool is a activity that can help us asses where the Children's Council is now in different categories called Key Quality Elements and where the Children's Council wants to be in 1 year. Have any of you used the Spider Tool before?

So the Key Quality Elements we want you to help us assess are:

- 5- **Dynamic Membership in Children's Council** (girls, vulnerable children, children with disabilities are members) including discussion of why some children cannot participate
- 6- **Inclusive Leadership in Children's Council** (girls, vulnerable children, children with disabilities are in leadership positions)

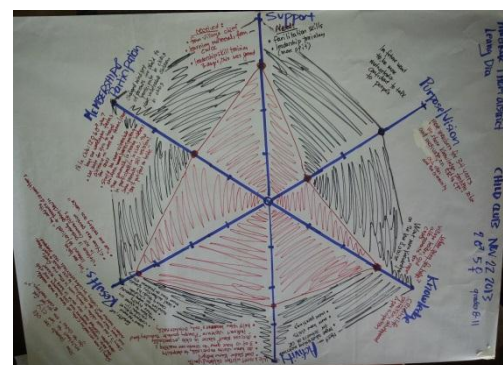


Figure 2 Sample of Spider from Past Assessment

7- ***Partnership and Influence with Decision Makers:*** (The Children's Council is well known and impacts decisions in the school, and community)

For each Key Quality Element ask the group to assess where their Children's Council is **now** and where it wants to be in **one year**. There are 4 choices – 1 is not very far along and 4 is doing very well. As we review each Key Quality Element we will describe in more detail what 1, 2, 3 4 means in more detail. (These will be further defined prior to field work).

**During the work with each element, lead a discussion about what are the barriers to improving that Key Quality Element. (Be sure to record these)**

**End with Recommendations: What activities can Plan, the school, teachers, community leaders do to get promote vulnerable children's access to education, learning and participation?**

## **Vulnerable and Marginalised Children's Access to, Learning and Participation in School**

### **H Assessment for Children in Primary School, Sponsored Children (include vulnerable children especially children with disabilities)**

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for joining our group today. I am here on behalf of Plan International. We are doing a study to understand the barriers for vulnerable children to participate in school; to learn and join in activities like Children's Councils. So we want to ask your opinions.

The information we gather will be used to help Plan to improve its services and to develop future programs. Your participation in this group is voluntary and at any time if you do not want to answer a question or you want to stop participating it is ok to leave. Our discussion should take about 30 minutes.

We would like to use the responses we gather to help Plan understand how to better develop its programs to help children participate in school, learn and other activities. If it is ok, we would like to quote some of the things you tell us in our report. However, even though we might quote some of your comments, we will not use your names. Is this ok?

We want to talk about what are the vulnerable children and the things that help children to go to school and learn and what are the things that keep children from going to school. We also want to ask your ideas of how we can improve children's school

**Resources Needed:** A recording sheet to collect basic info (location, school, age, grade etc.), and large poster paper and marking pens




#### ***Identifying vulnerable children:***

First we want to find out who are the vulnerable children in school. This can be children that are from poor families, children that have disabilities, or children that for some other reason can have problems going to school? Ask the children to use a big sheet of paper and draw the types of children that are vulnerable in their communities. (During the preparation, we will process this in detail how to do)



## H Assessment

Instructions: Draw an H similar to below. Happy is for strengths and sad is for weaknesses

	Different categories below	
	Suggestions  	

### Key areas:

**Getting an education:** Good things about getting an education – how does it help you in your life?, Weaknesses about going to school (cannot work, etc.)

**School attendance:** Think about the children that cannot attend school. Who are the children that cannot come to school? What helps children to go to school? What keeps children from going to school?

**School resources:** What are the resources that help to learn, resources that are missing in school?

**School facility:** Good things about school facility, things that need improving

**Learning activities outside of school:**

**Participation in Children's Council or other groups to influence school decisions.** Good success or Influence on school or challenges with influencing at school.

**What are other barriers to going to school, learning while in school?**

**What are the reasons to drop of schools and not attending with children's council?**

**SUGGESTIONS:** What suggestions do you have that can help you and your friends with the same status to go to school and learn? (vulnerable children)

