

LASER PULSE

Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research (LASER)
Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

MULTI-COUNTRY STUDY ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION (MCSIE)

Cambodia Trip Report
April 2023

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About LASER PULSE (Place in Acknowledgements section)

LASER (Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a \$70M program funded through USAID's Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub, that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,400+ researchers and development practitioners in 84 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges, and funds and strengthens capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

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ACRONYMS

ACR	All Children Reading
CDPO	Cambodian Disabled People's Organization
DPO	Disabled Persons' Organization
IDP	Inclusive Development Partners
IPEA	Inclusive Primary Education Activity
MCSIE	Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SED	Special Education Department
UDL	Universal Design for Learning
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

BACKGROUND

The Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) is a four-year, \$3.285 million evaluation of three U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) inclusive education activities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal, investigating what works to improve the quality of education for learners with disabilities. The activities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal represent USAID's most concerted effort to date to build systems to ensure students with disabilities have access to quality education. MCSIE will leverage this unique opportunity to derive lessons learned on what works to advance teaching and learning outcomes sustainably for children with disabilities in varying contexts. USAID and its partners will use this information to inform adaptations to its activities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal and also to plan for new inclusive education programming globally.

From February 26–March 5, 2023, Hayley Niad of Inclusive Development Partners (IDP) traveled to Cambodia to support dissemination activities regarding the endline findings related to the evaluation of All Children Reading Cambodia (ACR-Cambodia).

TRAVEL OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this trip included:

1. To prepare for the endline dissemination meeting held on March 3.
2. To co-facilitate the dissemination meeting on March 3.
3. To raise awareness of MCSIE Cambodia findings with other stakeholders as appropriate.

TRIP SUMMARY

The following is a summary of trip outcomes based upon the initial objectives.

1. To prepare for the endline dissemination workshop held on March 3

Prior to traveling and during the first days of the trip, Ms. Niad worked with Mean Vibol Ratanak and his Cambodian Disabled People's Organization (CDPO) team to prepare for the dissemination meeting. This included logistical preparations such as finalizing the guest list, sharing invitations via email and phone, translating relevant resources for distribution (the Cambodia endline and Areas of Intervention Mapping reports), and communicating with the hotel venue. It also included technical preparations such as finalizing the agenda, drafting the panel discussion questions, and running-through presentation content in PowerPoint format. Due to CDPO's expertise coordinating events with diverse stakeholders in country, CDPO primarily led the dissemination event's preparation.

Ms. Niad also met with the Inclusive Primary Education Activity (IPEA) team, the current follow-on project to ACR-Cambodia with largely the same staff, to provide an overview of the event and work with the inclusive education staff to finalize their presentation. This allowed IDP and IPEA to ensure their shared aims aligned while developing key concepts for the meeting.

2. To co-facilitate the dissemination meeting on March 3

Ms. Niad successfully co-facilitated the dissemination meeting on March 3 with CDPO. Approximately 100 stakeholders were in attendance including representatives from the disabled persons' organization (DPO) sector, the education sector including government and school leadership, the non-governmental organization (NGO) sector, and the USAID/Cambodia Mission's education department. At the dissemination meeting, the team presented attendees with findings from MCSIE's evaluation of the ACR-Cambodia project and led a group discussion on key issues related to inclusive education in Cambodia. Select observations from the session's discussion include:

- Stakeholders in Cambodia have different levels of knowledge and expertise related to inclusive education. For example, some DPOs have limited knowledge about inclusive education, a theme that also arose during the MCSIE Cambodia evaluation. On the other hand, some NGO representatives have worked in the field of inclusive education in Cambodia for decades, and their work has increased in scale as inclusive education receives more national and international attention.
- The Special Education Division (SED) appears hesitant to change or improve practices to keep pace with the emerging research. During the dissemination meeting discussion, multiple statements from a key SED representative indicated SED's intention to continue using segregated and integrated classrooms as an alternative to piloting more inclusive approaches. Additionally, the representative expressed that SED would continue using screening and identification tools (such as the Washington Group Short-Set of questions, a census-level tool not intended for diagnostics) to identify individual students with disabilities. Also, after watching Ms. Niad's presentation that questioned whether an unscalable and unreliable screening process is a prerequisite for inclusive education, the audience asked the SED representative about his plans for screening and identification moving forward. The SED representative repeated that he would continue using and expanding screening activities. Still, his answer did not address how he would ensure reliability and accuracy of these practices in light of the MCSIE findings related to the ACR-Cambodia screening and identification model.
- NGO stakeholders have great interest in learning more about how to position Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as an instructional approach that supports inclusion; UDL is a core focus area for IPEA, the current follow-on project to ACR-Cambodia. During the meeting, Ms. Niad provided attendees with a brief introduction to the concept of UDL, including clarifying that UDL is a tool to support inclusive education but not a substitute for additional supports a learner with a disability may need. However, it was well-noted that more time and dedicated training would be required to elaborate on these concepts further to affect real change.

3. To raise awareness of MCSIE Cambodia findings with other stakeholders as appropriate

Two noteworthy meetings took place that helped to raise awareness of MCSIE findings beyond the workshop itself:

- On Wednesday, March 1, Ms. Niad, Mr. Ratanak from CDPO, Sereisatya Ros from USAID, and Mr. Ieng from the Inclusive Primary Education Activity (IPEA) met with key leaders from the Phnom Penh Teacher Education College. The meeting allowed Ms. Niad to share some of the high-level findings from the MCSIE Cambodia evaluation related to teacher preparation for inclusive education, including the importance of training all faculty on inclusive education instead of siloing the content to specific courses. She also shared the benefits that UDL can offer

teachers if inclusive teaching approaches are infused throughout teacher preparation activities. The four representatives of the Teacher Education College unanimously expressed great interest in expanding their teacher-preparation efforts related to inclusion but acknowledged the desire for further technical assistance to enable this to take place.

- On Thursday, March 2, Ms. Niad visited the IPEA office to share findings from the MCSIE Cambodia evaluation with approximately 12 members of the IPEA technical team, including the early-grade learning and the inclusive education teams. The focus of this visit was to elaborate on the MCSIE Cambodia findings related to teacher training and instructional design. For example, Ms. Niad explained how the existing ACR-Cambodia teachers' guides implicitly aligned with UDL principles and where that linkage could be further reinforced. Ms. Niad also shared the strengths that MCSIE identified related to the student books ACR-Cambodia produced, including representation of diverse gender, disability, and cultural identities among characters referenced in the text and via images. Furthermore, this discussion included unpacking the key terms related to disability and inclusive education and expanding on the importance of developing a shared understanding of these concepts among the project team.

NEXT STEPS

This trip marked the unofficial end of IDP's key work with MCSIE Cambodia, and IDP will undertake the following actions:

- Finalize case study briefers on USAID-approved topics for Cambodia.
- Contribute to developing articles on MCSIE findings (general and Cambodia-specific) to submit for publication in journals and other public forums to raise awareness and disseminate findings.
- Participate in any further dissemination activities (e.g., virtual workshops) at the request of USAID/Washington or USAID/Cambodia.

MEETINGS/WORK SESSIONS

The below table highlights meetings that took place during the March 2023 visit.

DATE	PERSONS/ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED	DESCRIPTION
Tuesday, February 28	CDPO: Mean Vibol Ratanak	Working session on logistical and technical planning for Friday event
Wednesday, March 1	IPEA: Bryn Tucknott (Chief of Party), Kosal Sean and IE team (three additional members) CDPO: Mean Vibol Ratanak	Planning for RTI presentation for Friday event and identifying key messages to embed throughout delivery
Thursday, March 2	Phnom Penh Teacher Education College: four representatives including head and deputy head, department chairs USAID: Sereisatya Ros IPEA: Sok Ieng Chan CDPO: Mean Vibol Ratanak	Presentation of MCSIE training findings to TEC with emphasis on opportunities for embedding UDL strategies across pre-service teacher training curricula

DATE	PERSONS/ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED	DESCRIPTION
Thursday, March 2	IPEA: Nguon, Rattana, Sophan, Kosal, Chetra, Sonthara, Banung, IE team (four members)	Deep dive presentation and mini-training on MCSIE findings with focus on recommendations directly applicable to current IPEA activities
Friday, March 3	Approximately 100 attendees from USAID, DPOs, government, NGOs, and schools	Presentation of MCSIE Cambodia Endline and Areas of Intervention Mapping findings and discussion activities