Youth on the Move Cambodia
Baseline Survey Results

BACKGROUND

Current statistics indicate that approximately 60% of Cambodia's total population is under 30, and project that youth (those aged 15-29) will make up a least a quarter of the population until 2020 and beyond. Faced with a dearth of employment prospects in their local communities, many of those Cambodian youth must choose between underemployment and the risky path of migration to seek work in urban areas or abroad. (National Institute of Statistics 2015; KAPE 2015)

Coupled with this challenging economic reality is the low quality of education in Cambodia, where a recent World Bank assessment revealed very low levels of reading proficiency (World Bank, 2012). Upper secondary school (Grade 10-12) completion rates, as reported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, hover around 20% nationwide (MoEYS Education Statistics and Indicators, 2015), and a recent report on the Bac II Examination, the national graduation exam, revealed that, when restrictions were put in place to prevent cheating, only 26% percent of test takers were able to achieve passing scores (The Guardian, 2014).

THE YOUTH ON THE MOVE (YOTM) PROJECT

Youth on the Move is World Education's regional initiative aiming to reduce the vulnerability of youth who are potential migrants as well as migrant youth to trafficking, exploitation, and abuse through improved learning

outcomes, life skills, and knowledge about safe migration. YOTM Cambodia currently focuses on Prey Veng province, a major source area for trafficking and child labor. Prey Veng suffers from severe food insecurity and has among the lowest education achievement rates and highest migration rates of the entire country. In its latest phase, project activities have focused on revitalizing the student council and club system in lower secondary schools, a time when data shows that students are particularly susceptible to pressures to dropout, in an effort to empower youth and to enhance the perceived relevance of the public education system. Three intervention areas aim to: improve learning outcomes through peer-led and teacher-led workshops, courses and remediation; provide access to school for vulnerable students through scholarships and home visits; and,

YOUTH ON THE MOVE CAMBODIA

GOAL: reduce the vulnerability of migrant youth to trafficking, exploitation and abuse

Intervention Area 1
Learning, life skills and enhanced school relevance

Intervention Area 2
Access to education for vulnerable students

Intervention Area 3
Capacity Building, Systems Strengthening, Advocacy and Dissemination

build the capacity of local institutions through teacher trainings, student council exchanges, and the development of resources on student council development.

THE YOTM BASELINE SURVEY

This baseline survey was conducted as a basis of comparison for future mid-line and end-line survey results, as part of the YOTM project monitoring and evaluation plan. The surveys are intended to explore the extent to which the project achieves our expected long term impact: *Improved learning outcomes, life skills, knowledge about safe migration, school engagement and perceptions of school relevance among students at target schools in migration-prone areas.*

Twenty-four lower primary school students from Prey Veng province were interviewed before the beginning of project activities in their schools. The baseline survey assessed the likelihood of students to drop out of school and migrate, as well as their perceptions of the quality and relevance of the education provided by their schools, their own level of engagement and voice in school affairs, and knowledge about safe migration.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed quantitative/qualitative research method was applied, using questionnaires for structured interviews. The survey was conducted at four school locations in Prey Veng province, in rural Cambodia. In total, a sample of 24 in-school youth, six from each of the four participating schools were surveyed. The questionnaire was comprised of six portions, including *General Characteristics*; *Drop Out, Attendance, and Migration*; *Student*

Participation/Youth Voice, *Academic Achievement*, *Perceptions of School*, and *Knowledge about Safe Migration*. Participants were randomly selected and interviewed by two YOTM staff using the structured questionnaire. Ethical considerations and the child protection policy were strictly applied, and participants were given the option of declining to participate in the interview. Identifying information was not recorded with participants' responses to protect their privacy and the confidentiality of their responses.

After the surveys were conducted all forms were cleaned, coded, and entered into a spreadsheet designed for the survey. The data were analyzed into basic frequencies and cross tabulated to identify the relationships between variables of interest.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

General Characteristics

The surveyed youth were all enrolled at four lower secondary schools in Prey Veng, and represented all three grades (7-9), and an age range of twelve to seventeen (see Chart 1 and Table 1). More than half of the survey
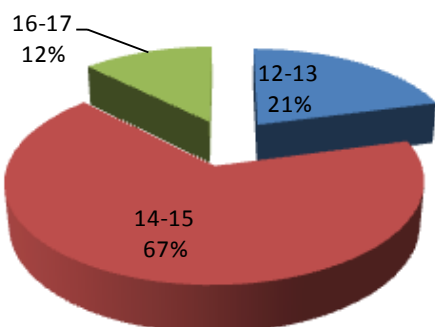

Table 1: Demographics of surveyed youth			
		Frequency	% of total (n=24)
Age			
	12-13	5	21%
	14-15	16	67%
	16-17	3	13%
Gender			
	F	10	42%
	M	14	58%
Grade			
	7	7	29%
	8	9	38%
	9	8	33%
Number of siblings:			
	1	1	4%
	2	8	33%
	3	7	29%
	4	6	25%
	5	2	8%
Participant resides with…			
	Parents	17	71%
	Mother	3	13%
	Grandparent(s)	2	8%
	Other Family (Uncle)	1	4%
	Alone	1	4%

Chart 1: Age Range of Surveyed Youth

16-17 12%
12-13 21%
14-15 67%

participants were male (n=14, or 58%). The majority reported that they lived with both parents, and the mean number of siblings reported by the survey participants was three (see Table 1).
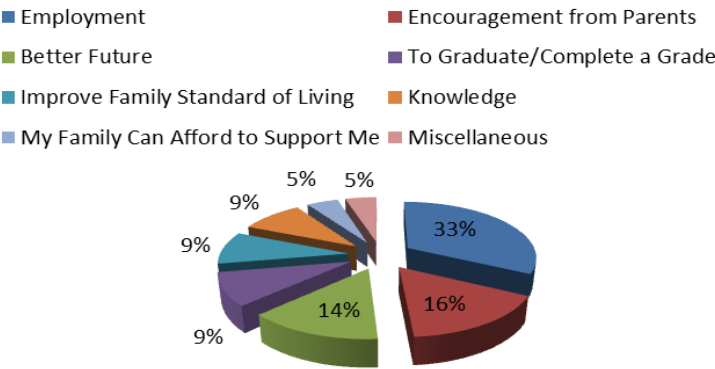
FINDINGS

Drop Out, Attendance, and Plans to Migrate

Among the survey respondents, all reported that things were going very well or moderately well in school, and none said that they had plans to drop out. When asked why they were planning on completing lower secondary school, about a third of respondents mentioned some form of employment prospects in their answer, whether to obtain a job, to find a better job, or to become a doctor or a teacher (the two professions specifically mentioned by respondents). Other popular answers include mention of encouragement to stay in school from parents, and desire for a better future.

Only three of the respondents, 12.5% of the sample, said that they had been absent from school for more than 20 days over the last 12 months, and two, 8.3% of the sample, said that they were considering migrating; those two mentioned Korea and Phnom Penh as specific locations that they were considering.

Table 2: Attendance, perceptions about performance/attendance in school, and plans to migrate

How are things going in your studies/ education?		
Very well	Moderately well	Not well
13	11	0
How likely is it that you will continue to study to finish lower secondary school?		
I have no plans to drop out.	Somewhat likely	Not likely
24	0	0
Have you been absent from school for more than 20 days over the last 12 months? (not including school holidays)		
Yes	No	
3	21	
Do you have plans to migrate?		
Yes	No	
2	22	

Chart 2: Reasons for Continuing Studies

Legend:
- Employment
- Encouragement from Parents
- Better Future
- To Graduate/Complete a Grade
- Improve Family Standard of Living
- Knowledge
- My Family Can Afford to Support Me
- Miscellaneous

33%, 16%, 14%, 9%, 9%, 9%, 5%, 5%

Student Participation/Youth Voice

When asked questions related to the level of student voice and leadership activities in their schools, including student councils and clubs, the respondents generally said that those opportunities were minimal, or non-existent. A third of the respondents reported that they were "not very free" to express opinions in school, and that student voices were "not at all" listened to concerning the operation of the school. Only five of the participants (20.8%) said that they were aware of the presence of a student council in their school, although two of those respondents had heard of, but never actually witnessed the activities of, the student council, and none of the respondents reported that the student council had any impact on themselves or their schools, or that they had ever participated in student council activities. Likewise, two respondents (8.3%) said that they had heard of student clubs at their school but never witnessed their activities directly, and no respondents reported that student clubs had impacted themselves or their schools, or that they had participated in any student club activities.

Academic Achievement

As noted above, all of the survey respondents were enrolled in school at the time of the interview. When asked what progress they were making in school, all respondents reported that they were progressing, or progressing very well. When asked what they had done in school that year that had been useful or not useful, a large portion of survey respondents were unable to name an activity that had been useful (5 respondents, or 20.8%) or not useful (13 respondents, or 54.2%). Among

Table 3: Perceptions of student voice in school				
To what degree to you feel free and have opportunities to express your opinions at school?				
	Very free	A little bit free	Not very free	
	4 (16.7%)	12 (50%)	8 (33.3%)	
To what degree do you think students have influence on the running of the school/To what degree are students' voices and opinions heard and listened to?				
	Very much	A little	Not at all	
	4	15	8	

Table 4: Student councils, clubs, and leadership opportunities				
Are you aware of a student council at your school?				
	Yes	I've heard that it exists, but never witnessed it myself.	No	
	3 (12.5%)	2 (8.3%)	19 (4.2%)	
Have you ever participated in student council activities?				
	Yes	No		
	0 (0%)	24 (100%)		
Has the student council had any impact on you or your school?				
	Yes	No		
	0 (0%)	24 (100%)		
Are there any student clubs at your school?				
	Yes	I've heard of them, but never seen them.	No	
	0 (0%)	2 (8.3%)	22 (91.7%)	
Have you ever participated in any student club activities?				
	Yes	No		
	0 (0%)	24 (0%)		
Have the student clubs had any impact on you or your school?				
	Yes	No		
	0 (0%)	24 (100%)		
To what degree do you think students have opportunities to share their voices to mobilize the community, and have their opinions heard and listened to?				
	Very much	A little	Not at all	
	3 (12.5%)	11 (45.8%)	10 (41.7%)	

the most popular responses to the question asking for respondents to list useful activities they had participated in at school over the last year were cleaning/rubbish disposal (11 respond-

Table 5: Perceptions of personal progress in school

How to you feel about the progress you are making in your studies?		
I'm progressing very well.	I'm progressing.	I'm not progressing.
8	16	0

ents, or 45.8%) and planting (3 respondents, or 12.5%). The most popular responses to the question of what activities they had participated in that were not useful included disruptions in the classroom (6 respondents, or 25%), and did not study well (2, or 8.3%).

Table 6: In-school activities perceived as useful and not useful

What did you learn and do in school this year that was useful?		
Cleaning/Rubbish disposal	11	45.8%
Planting	3	12.5%
Discipline/Appropriate behavior	2	8.3%
Making paper flowers	2	8.3%
Friendship/Helping friends	2	8.3%
Homework	1	4.2%
Morals	1	4.2%
Don't Know/No answer	5	20.8%
What did you learn and do in school this year that was not useful?		
Disruptions in the classroom	6 (25%)	25%
Did not study well	2 (8.3%)	8.3%
Not enough ICT practice	1 (4.2%)	4.2%
Students littering	1 (4.2%)	4.2%
Hurt my leg	1 (4.2%)	4.2%
Don't know/No answer	13 (54.2%)	54.2%

Perceptions of School

When asked to rank the usefulness of the learning that they were receiving in school on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all useful and 5 is very useful, the most popular rating was a 3 (10 respondents, or 41.7%), and no respondents ranked their learning as very useful. Similarly, when asked how satisfied they were overall with their schools the most popular response

Table 7: Student rating of schools

Respondents' ranking of the usefulness of the learning they are getting in school from 1-5, where 1=not at all useful and 5=very useful.				
5	4	3	2	1
0	3	10	7	4
0%	12.5%	41.7%	29.2%	16.7%
Respondents' ranking of their satisfaction with their school from 1-5, where 1=not at all satisfied and 5=very satisfied.				
5	4	3	2	1
2	6	12	3	1
8.3%	25%	50%	12.5%	4.2%

was a 3, indicating moderate satisfaction (refer to Table 7: Student rating of schools, for more detail). As illus-

Table 8: Survey Question: Do you have any suggestions for how to improve your school?

	Clean	9	37.5%
	Improve discipline	3	12.5%
	Attendance management	3	12.5%
	Improved teaching	2	8.3%
	Access to ICT	1	4.2%
	Students rate teachers	1	4.2%
	More student effort at studying	1	4.2%
	Students help each other	1	4.2%
	Teach on schedule	1	4.2%
	Library	1	4.2%
	Plant trees	1	4.2%
	No answer/nothing	8	33.3%

trated in Table 8, the most popular suggestions for how to improve schools included cleaning (9 respondents, or 37.5%) and improved discipline and attendance management (3 respondents, or 12.5%, each). One third of respondents (8) did not have a recommendation for how to improve their schools.

In response to the question "What is needed to prevent dropout at your school?" nearby half of the respondents (11, or 45.8%) included involvement of parents and encouragement from the school in their reply. One third of respondents (8) did not have a recommendation for how to reduce dropout from their schools.

Table 9: Survey Question: What is needed to prevent dropout at your school?

	Involve parents	6	25%
	Encouragement from the school	5	20.8%
	Improved/on-schedule teaching	3	12.5%
	Educate students about the consequences of dropping out	2	8.3%
	Attendance management	2	8.3%
	Encouragement of youth	2	8.3%
	Teaching the importance of education	1	4.2%
	Financial support/gifts for teachers	1	4.2%
	Prohibit gambling in schools	1	4.2%
	Sports	1	4.2%
	Educate students about the dangers of migration	1	4.2%
	No answer	8	33.3%

Chart 3: Were survey respondents able to name at least five things they would need to do in order to migrate safely?

■ Yes ■ No

8.3%

91.7%
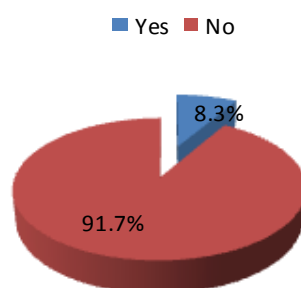
Knowledge about Safe Migration

When asked to list at least five things that they would need to do before migrating to another country in order to keep themselves safe and have a successful experience, 22 respondents (91.7%) were unable to list five (see Chart 3); the mean number of responses was just under two per respondent, and 6 respondents (25%) were not able to give an answer.

Among responses provided, nearly half of participants (11, or 45.8%) mentioned the need for some form of identification or documentation in their response. Other popular responses included notification of/seeking the advice of authorities (9 respondents, or 37.8%), and understanding your work contract/salary (6 respondents, or 25%).

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

Student reasons for staying in school

Table 10: Survey Question: Can you list at least five things you need to do before migrating to another country in order to keep yourself safe and have a successful experience?			
	Have ID/documents/copies of documents	11	45.8%
	Notify/seek the advice of authorities	9	37.5%
	Understand your work contract/salary	6	25%
	Migrate through legal channels	5	20.8%
	Be wary of cheating/trafficking/brokers	5	20.8%
	Familiarize yourself with your destination/the local language	4	16.7%
	Have a clear plan	4	16.7%
	Find acceptable living arrangement	2	8.3%
	Learning about medical care available to you	1	4.2%
	No answer/don't know	6	25%

Keeping youth in school is one strategy for accomplishing Youth on the Move's goal of reducing the vulnerability of migrant youth to trafficking, exploitation, and abuse, because attaining a higher level of education (if of sufficient quality) can provide youth with key knowledge, skills and socio-emotional competence that improve their life options. Thus, it was particularly interesting for Youth on the Move staff to learn why our respondent youth, all of whom reported that they had no plans to drop out, were choosing to remain in school. Chart 2 shows that their perception of improved employment and life prospects, as well as encouragement from parents, were common factors in the respondents' continued studies. The role of parents in preventing student dropout is again emphasized in Table 9, which displays data from responses to the question "What is needed to prevent dropout in your school?" Six participants, or 25% of the respondents, reported that parents were an important factor. Clearly, parental engagement with school and their children's education is of paramount importance for schools and education programs to consider. Also of note is that 'encouragement from the school' was the second most commonly given response about how to prevent drop out at their school (20.8%). This should again be taken into consideration by schools and education programs alike.

Student leadership/voice opportunities

Our survey results indicated a low baseline level of student engagement in leadership and voice activities within participating schools. In Table 3 it can be seen that the majority of respondents (83.3%) perceived themselves as "a little bit free" or "not very free" to express their opinions in school, with only 16.6% reporting that they felt "very free" to do so. Likewise, Table 4 shows that none of our student respondents had been impacted by student council or club activities in their schools, and most reported that they were unaware of the presence of a student council (79%) or club (91.7%) in their school. It will be most interesting to compare these results with the mid- and end-line surveys.

Role of school management in student retention

Many of our survey respondents referred to school management activities when asked what improvements they would like to see in their schools (Table 8), and what was needed to prevent dropout (Table 9), indicating the importance of sound school management in student retention. For example, Table 8 shows that the three most popular answers to the question of how to improve schools centered on cleaning (37.5%), improved discipline (12.5%), and attendance management (12.5%). Likewise, improved/on-schedule teaching was mentioned as a strategy to prevent dropout (12.5%) as was attendance management (8.3%).

Overall level of response by youth taking part in the survey

It is noticeable that a high proportion of youth either did not wish, or were not able, to respond to a number of questions on this survey. For instance, 20% did not respond to the question of what they had learned or done at school that was useful; 54% did not comment about what was not useful; and, 33% had no response to the call for suggestions about how to improve their school or prevent drop out. It is not known if such reticence is due to hesitation about providing criticism or due to deficiencies in confidence, communication or higher order analytical skills. It will be interesting to compare mid-line and end-line response levels in this regard, to note if surveyed youth become more articulate during the survey process.

SOURCES

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