

Reading and Promoting Habit of Reading at Primary School in Cambodia

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**By: Kall Kann
Country Director
RtR-Cambodia Office**



Abstract

- ✧ Overview of Cambodia social, and historical of educational development before and after the country gained independence from France.
- ✧ The implications from war, genocide and changed of social regimes.
- ✧ Rebuild education system and structure during the 1980s, and its achievement afterward.
- ✧ Reading culture, practiced and challenging of individual, families, school and society.
- ✧ Ways forward and initiatives, programs and campaigns initiated to promote love of reading and habit of reading, and to inspire life-long learning in Cambodia..

Country Context

- ⊕ Cambodia is a constitutional monarchy country.
- ⊕ The country experienced its first full year of peace in 1998, after 30 years of social unrest.
- ⊕ Estimated of total population 13.8 million; 51.4% female.
- ⊕ 80.5% of population living in the rural and remote areas
- ⊕ GDP per capita rose from around US\$ 290 in early 1990s to about US\$ 909 in 2011
- ⊕ Poverty incidence declined from over 47% in 1993 to 30 % in 2007, and followed by further decline to 26% in 2010. Below poverty = income less than US\$ 0.54/day

Cambodia Education Context

- The Cambodian Language, Khmer is part of the Mon-Khmer.
- The traditional non-formal education in Cambodia begun in early 17th century
- Two decades after French occupation in 1863, the traditional was gradually replaced by a Westernized educational model.
- ⌘ In 1953, Cambodia gained full independence from French which opportunity for improving and developing education.
- ⌘ Elementary and secondary education was expanded to various parts of the country, vocational institutions, teacher-training centers and universities were established.
- ⌘ Drastic expansion led to unaffordable in term of quality, poorly equipped classrooms, and teachers 'train.

Cambodia Education Context, cont

✚ Education went from bad to worse as results of outbreak of civil war in early 1970.

- ✚ More 1/3 of the schools have been closed or irregularly function.
- ✚ Hundred schools were leveled by bombs
- ✚ Others were used as barracks, ammunitions warehouses, prisons.
- ✚ Teachers fled their posts, moving to the city, forced to join the army or resistance forces.

1975-1979

In April 1975, after taking over the power the Khmer Rouge deliberately destroyed the foundations of a modern education by

- Ordering schools nationwide to be closed, classrooms were abandoned
- Books were left to rot or were used to roll cigarettes.
- Doctors, lawyers, teachers, professors, higher education students were targeted as enemies, subjected to suspicion and harsh treatment, forced to work in labor camps, and worst, execution.
- Estimated between 75 and 80 percent of Cambodian educators were either killed, died of overwork, or fled the country.
- Education institutional infrastructure and facilities, and other learning teaching resources were destructed or almost no longer existed.

After 1979

After the collapsed of the Khmer Rouge regime

- ➔ Educational system in Cambodia had to restart from scratch.
- ➔ Illiteracy had climbed to more than 40%, most young people under the age of 14 lacked any basic education. .
- ➔ Education rehabilitation and development began from encouraging survivors to collect whatever they can and utilize what they have to rebuild education system.
- ➔ Almost no teachers survive, thus, those with almost any level of education were encouraged to teach.
- ➔ In addition to human resources, lacking of education facilities much more serious than anyone can imagine.
- ➔ Education rehabilitation and development suffered from continuous civil war in the country and international embargo.

Structure of education system

- ✧ Education system changed from time to time
 - 1950-1975 the educational structure was 6:4:3
 - before 1985 it was 4:3:3.
 - before 1996 the structure was 5:3:3; and
 - afterward was 6:3:3

Age	Grade	Edu- level	Age	Grade	Edu- level	Age	Grade	Edu-level	Age	Edu-level
3	Low	Pre- school	6	1	Primary school	12	7	Lower secondary	18	High education , or vocational training, university
4	Medium		7	2		13	8		19	
5	High		8	3		14	9		20	
			9	4		15	10	Upper secondary	21	
			10	5		16	11		22	
			11	6		17	12		23	

- ✧ Since 1996, the minimum instruction time for primary education is 850 hours per school year.

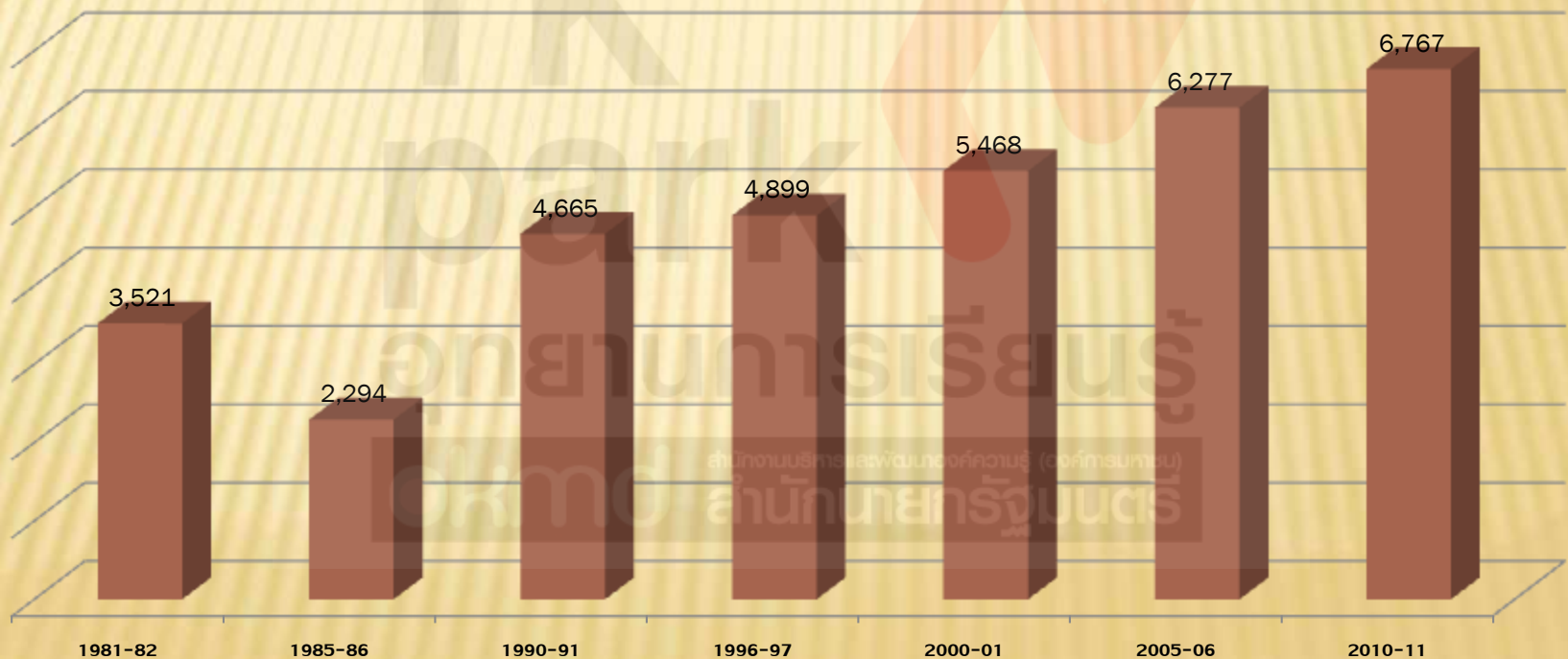
Education achievements and Challenges at primary level

Achievements



To date, Cambodian education has made significantly achievement. Facilities and teachers were deployed across the nation, particularly in the rural areas.

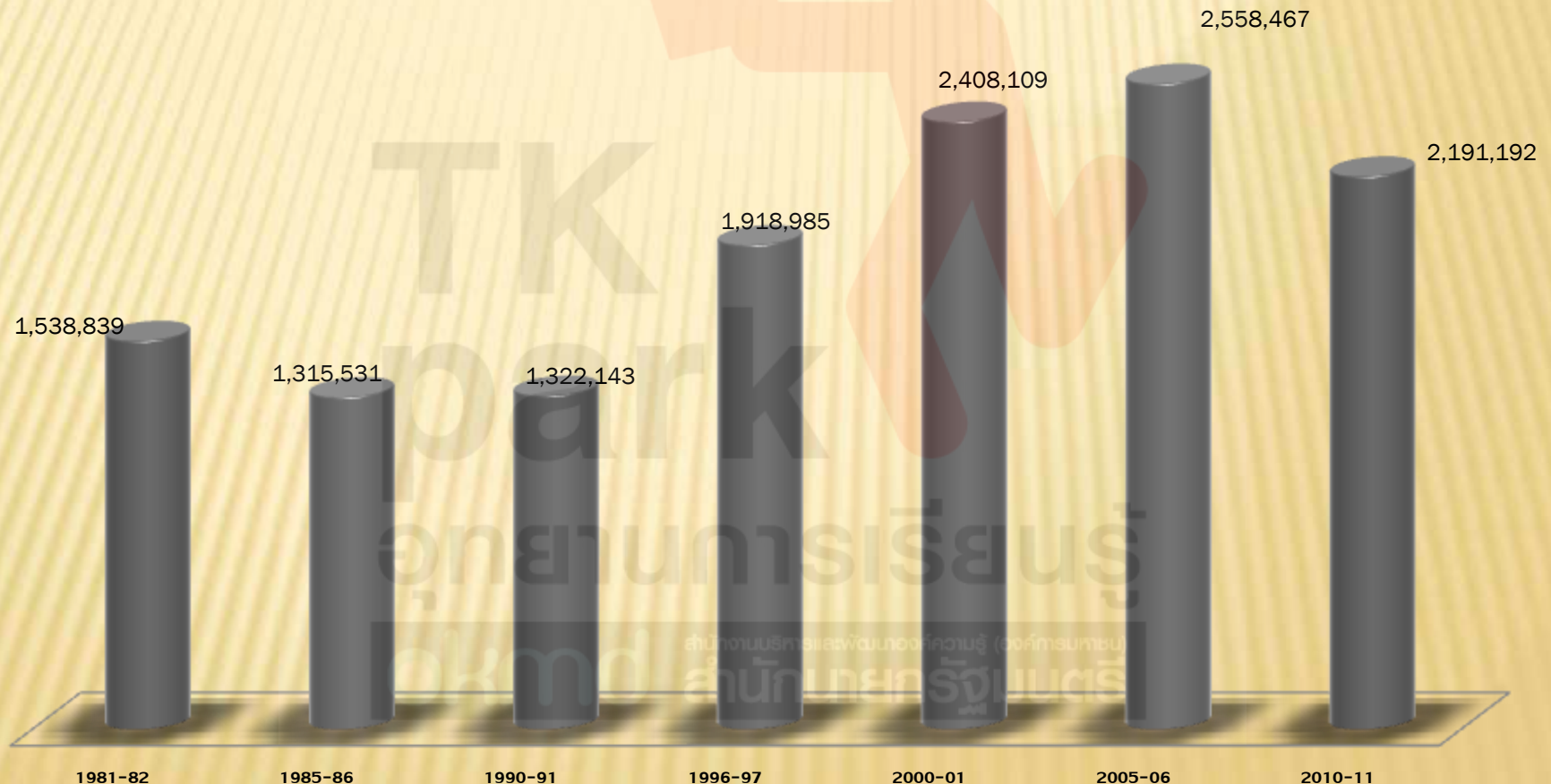
Number of primary schools' established between academic year





Students' net enrollment rate (NER) has increased from 83.6% in 2000-01 academic-years to 95.8% in 2010.

Number of primary school students'enrolled by academic-year



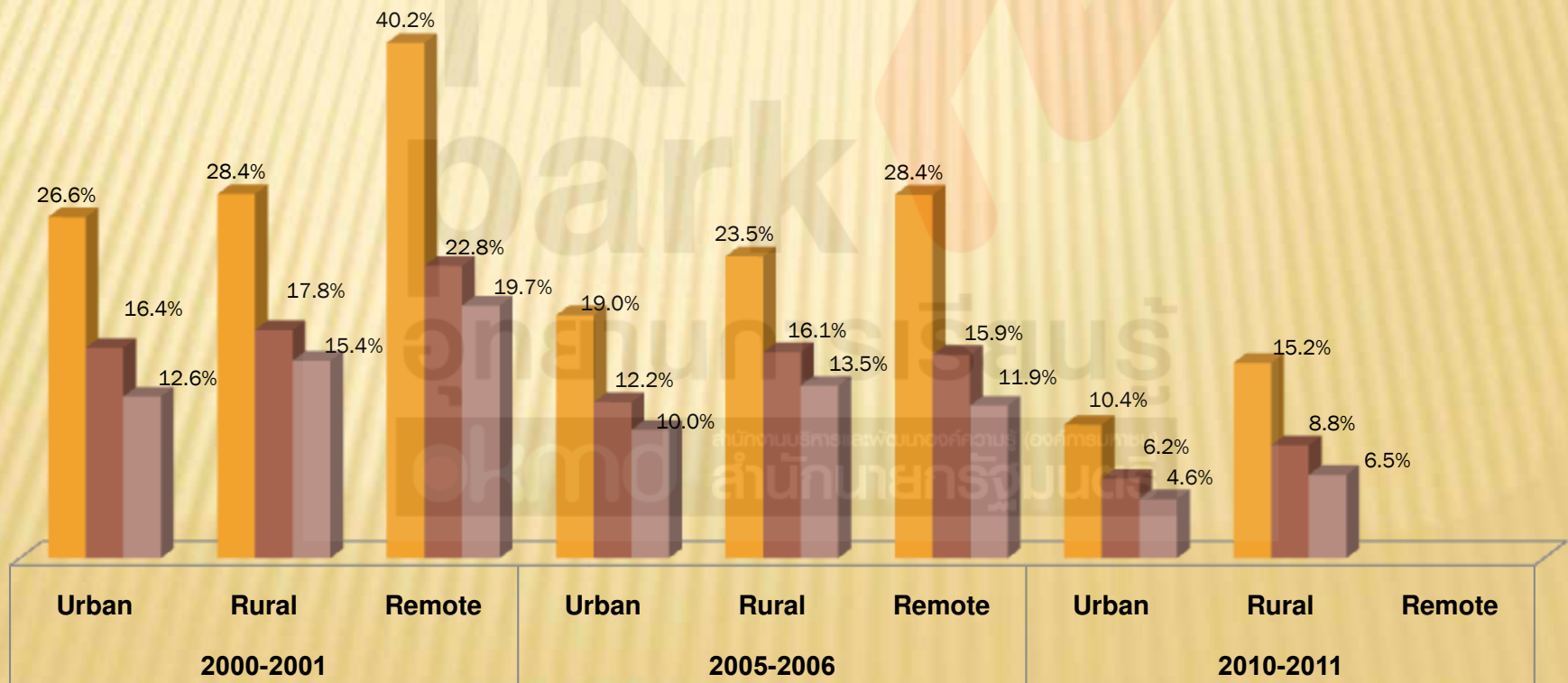
Challenges

- ⌚ Despite years of rebuilding, the education remain facing
 - 😞 lack of facilities and large classroom size
 - 😞 shortages of qualified teachers and textbooks
 - 😞 limited or not access to additional reading materials, and
 - 😞 high repetition and dropout rate
- ❄ Education quality is concern at all levels. The challenges to improve root at
 - 👉 low qualification and poorly trained teachers,
 - 👉 low investment in the government national budget,
 - 👉 the implementation of half-time school attendance system.
 - 👉 actual learning for students in urban areas is around 650-750 hours, rural-remote area range between 450-650 hours per annum

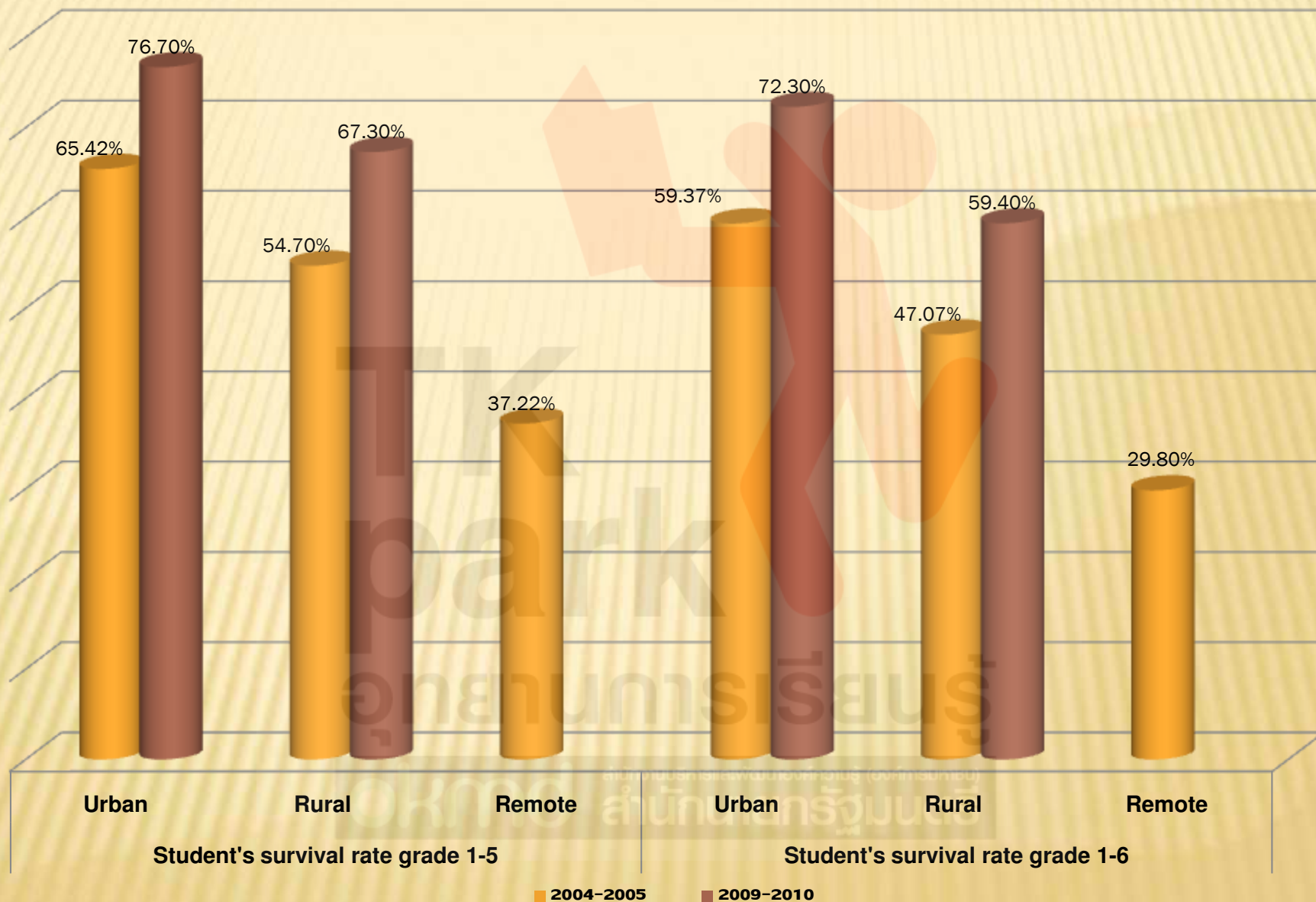
- 👉 teachers are not highly qualified,
- 4.19% possesses only primary education,
 - 53.68% possess lower secondary education,
 - 40.88% possess upper secondary certificates, and only
 - 1.2% possesses tertiary education.

Grade1-3 student' repitition rate by geographical araes and academic-year

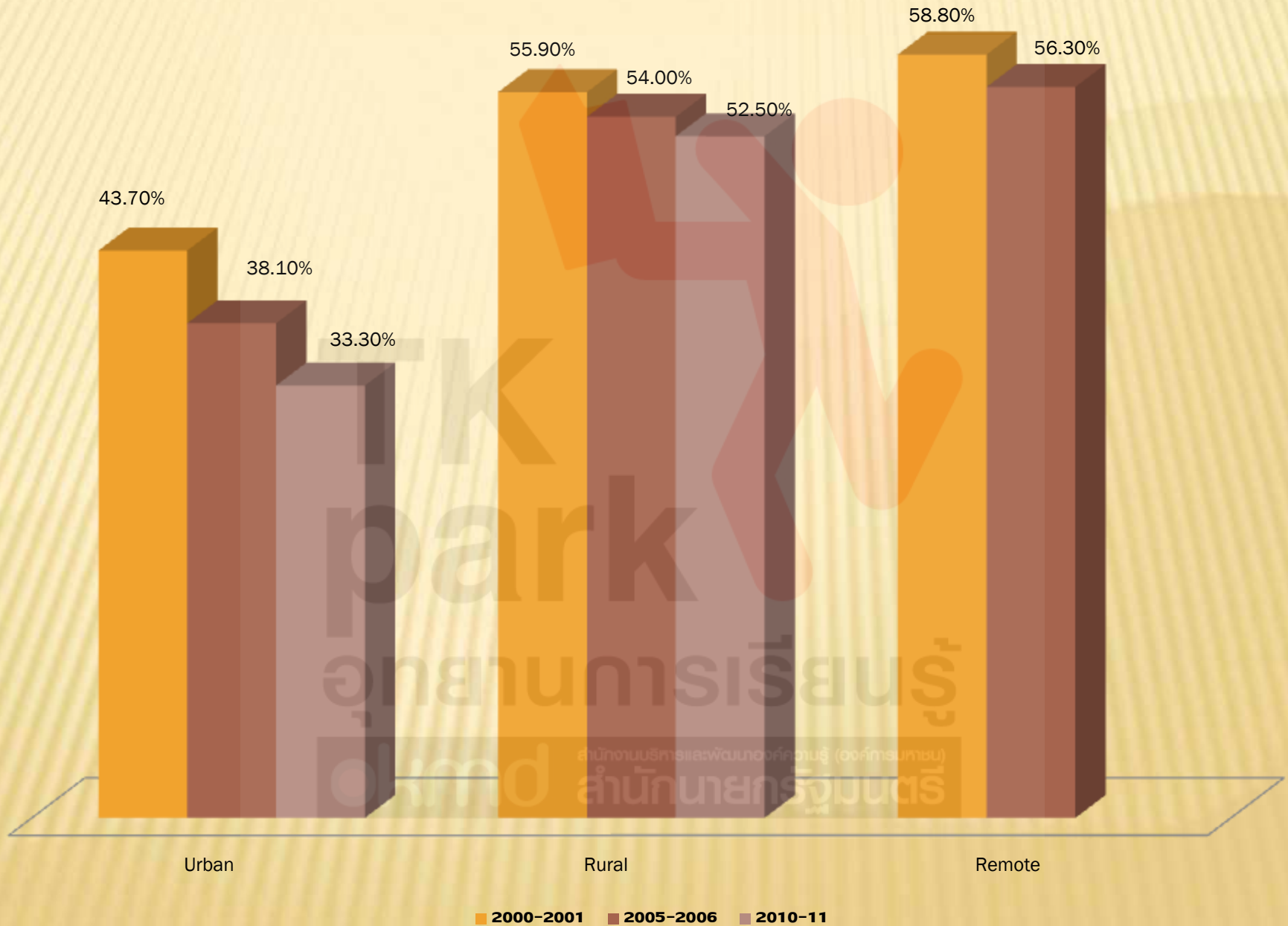
Grade 1 Grade 2 Grade 3



Primary school students' survival rate



Pupil teacher ratio by geographical areas



Reading habit

The legacy from war and genocide regime

- ❄ Before and during the French rule the knowledge was passed on by oral tradition from one generation to another.
- ❄ From early 1950s to 1970s, writers, publishers and printing industrial begin to emerge, pool of readers and publishing market was gradually increased.
- ❄ War (1970-75) and genocide (1975-97) has destructed this positive social emergence.
- ❄ Under genocide regime, they killed most intellectual people.
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Culture of reading in society

Reading culture in society was prevented and discouraged by:

- ⊕ People do not read just because they are illiterate or lack of basic skills that enable them to read.
- ⊕ Lack of role model, and money to purchase reading materials
- ⊕ Parents in rural remote areas did not see greater benefit from having better education, beyond know how to read and write.
- ⊕ Majority of population still believe reading is working not for pleasure or exploring, reading causes headache etc write.
- ⊕ Limited or non-appropriate reading skills, age published in local language; and no assessment on population's reading need and interests.
- ⊕ Government do not has strategy, initiate or establish any regular activities to promote national reading culture. No national reading day for reading promotion in the society.

Culture of reading within education system

Despite the effort of MoEYS and DPs, culture of reading within education system is facing several major barriers:

- ✗ Reading addition reading materials is not mandatory or encourage by the education system or curriculum designed for primary school.
- ✗ The entire primary education system still using passive learning culture/ method (teacher center).
- ✗ Little training focusing on the teaching and learning of literacy
- ✗ Lack of student access to a wide variety of interesting and stimulating reading materials, appropriate to the different age ranges and reading abilities.
- ✗ Student/teacher ratio is high and lack of reading facilitation skill by the teachers results of hindrance of reading promotion in and outside classroom.

Moving forward to promote habit of reading

Program #1 “Mainstreaming reading culture in education system”

Program’s objectives:

- more children’s access to variety and quality reading materials.
- improve children’s reading skills, enjoy reading and gradually gain the habit of reading.
- engage teachers, education officials and communities to create enabling environment and support children reading.
- integrate reading activities in education system and building existing education’s structure to ensure the functioning and long-term sustainability of the programs.

Program's activities:

Establish Classroom Library



CLs provide children with easy access to books and reading throughout the school day; and motivating teachers to use additional learning- teaching materials beyond a single textbook.

CLs consist of small collections of 100-250 books appropriate to reading level of particular grade.

Establish Concrete Library

Concrete library was established in a designated room (unused classroom) of the school or new built standalone library building.



Concrete library established at school's unused classroom.

New built standalone library building



Concrete
library
completed
establish



Students
reading
activities in
the library



Establish library minimum standard for primary school

The standard endorsed in early 2011, and has significant role in helping head teacher/teachers to continue develop their library, allocate and mobilize resource, assign librarian and library period.



Capacity building provided to librarian.

Program #2 “Community participation and awareness raising”

Program’s objectives:

- raise parents’ and communities’ awareness on the importance and the added value of education.
- engage and increase participation of parents and community to create enabling reading environment for children.

Program’s activities:

Community contribution

The communities’ contribution concept initiated to build ownership, promote villagers’ responsibility in education development and education for their own children, maintaining the building and encouraging children to read.



Reading space (Khost) built under community fund



Community leaders participate the meeting

Community awareness raising:

The community awareness raising was designed and conducted to help parents/communities understand the importance of education, its added value, and how they could inspire and help their children to read.



Community awareness raising conducted by teachers in collaboration with community leaders



Mothers were invited to see their children school, and find out what children learn and attend awareness raising on important of education and its value added.

Program #3 “Reading promotion”

Program’s objectives:

- improve literacy level of the country population.
- promote children’s reading, enjoyment of reading, and gradually gain the habit of reading.

Program’s activities:

Set up Mobile Library:

The mobile library was initiated to contribute to the emergence of reading habit in Cambodia and reaching out to the population where limited access to books (rural and remote community), children and women living in the disadvantaged suburbs of Phnom Penh or dumping sites.

สำนักงานส่งเสริมการศึกษานอกระบบ (สอศ.)

สำนักนันทนาการและกีฬา



Mobile library team conducted storytelling for children in the remote and suburb areas of Phnom Penh





Mobile library team dropped a box full of children reading books at villagers or students' home, so neighboring children could come to read or borrow to read at home.





Storytelling session



Reading contest



Books exhibition to promote reading among children at the at orphan center, and reading activities



Establish resource center:

The resource centers were established in the central of the village, within communal office, and or public place. The resource centers establish to increase children and communities access to books, reinforce literacy skill, and awareness raising on social issues (health, gender, human rights, domestic violence, environment).



Resource center established by SIPAR in collaboration with government run hospitals

Storytelling broadcasting:

Since early 2011, Room to Read in collaboration with local FM radio station has aired twice a week children storytelling. The stories were read by librarians, children and communities.



Student conduct storytelling live at
radio station



Children listening to the storytelling
during the air time

Program #4 “Improve children reading skill”

Program’s objectives:

- improve students grade appropriate reading and writing skills.
- improve teachers understanding in development of reading and writing skills in young children, and use a variety of approaches to support students’ literacy learning in the classroom.
- motivate children reading, and develop a lifelong habit of reading.

Program’s activities:

Publishing local language books:

There are very limited reading materials for early grades reader. In response to that, since 2010, each year RtR has developed and published 25-30 new titles. Est. 200, 000 copies were printed and distributed to public primary schools.

Local language
books published by
RtR



RtR participated in
annual book fair



Capacity building provided to
young emerge writers and
illustrators

Produce supplementary teaching materials:

Lacking of learning-teaching aid remain challenges, teachers continue to rely on a single subject textbook as a sole learning material throughout the entire school year. To complement this, RtR has produced supplementary materials such as picture cards, word lists, sentence cards, workbooks/worksheets, storybooks, and support teachers to develop print rich classroom environment.



Supplementary teaching materials produced to help teachers teaching reading

Teachers' capacity building:

Although more than half of the primary school teachers are professionally trained teacher but their capacity and skill in teaching of reading remain a concern.

To fill the gaps, RtR provide in-service teacher professional development to improve teachers' skill in teaching of reading and understand the development of reading and writing skills in young children.



Capacity building provided to teachers in teaching of reading

Conclusion

Despite all arguments and challenges in this text, it is clear that the moment we persuade parents and communities to cross the threshold into a library and/or gradually understand the importance of reading, we've made a successful step towards changing their mindset from seeing library as being a simple house of books to a resources center where their children can discover a larger world, bigger ideas and profound concepts that help foster literacy, life-long learning, and habit of reading.

Whilst the entire generation of literate role models including culture of reading was eliminated, younger generation need years to begin.





**THANKS FOR YOUR
ATTENTION**