Towards Reading for All

Early Grade Reading Assistance in Cambodia

Education Sector Support Scale Up Action Program 2008 - 12

- Funded through the Education for All Fast Track Initiative Catalytic Fund. (now Global Partnership for Education)

- The World Bank is the supervising entity for the Cambodia program funding TF 092097

Objectives of the ESSSUAP

- Expand Pre School and Primary Education Services to reach the most vulnerable groups
- Enhance professional and administrative institutional capacity building for education at central, provincial, district and school levels.
- Funding: US$57.4 Million from the Global Partnership for Education
- ESSSUAP Supports the implementation of the Cambodia Education Strategic Plan 2009 – 13.

Early Grade Reading a Key Priority

- Cambodia Education Strategic Plan 2009 – 13 is committed to:

Education for All, All for Education, Education and Learning for All.

- To support this, Cambodia offers free Basic Education for Grades 1 – 9
- Ability to read is fundamental to completing Basic Education successfully.

Introduction to the Early Grade Reading Program February 2010

- MoEYS decided to pilot the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) tool in Grades 1- 6

- MoEYS invited Dr. Helen Abadzi, GPE Secretariat Language Specialist to advise on introduction of EGRA program for Cambodia.

February 2010



The Basic EGRA Instrument

- The EGRA instrument is adapted for use in each language.
- Applied in 50 countries in 70 Languages. Always follows the same basic overall format.
- The Instrument is divided into tasks which are based on the phases of reading skill development identified by Seymour et al in 2003.

a) Identification of sounds in words as read to the student by an assessor

b) Listening to a passage read by an assessor and then answering questions about the content

c) Identifying the name or sound of a letter presented at random by the assessor

d) Identification of syllables

e) Ability to read familiar words

f) Ability to read a passage fluently and then answer questions on it

g) Dictation. Translate sound to print and spell correctly

First steps

- Field visits with Dr. Abadzi found poor reading skills at Grades 1 – 6.

- Considering the complexity of the Khmer script the main recommendation was that Cambodia should return to teaching vowel and consonant combinations rather than whole word recognition
- The first step was to conduct a base line reading test based on the EGRA Instrument

Overview of the Cambodia EGRA Test Structure

EGRA Cambodia Section	Variables of Interest	Measures	Number of Items
1.Knowledge of Alphabet	Letter knowledge	Total number of letters read correctly in one minute	100 letters
2.Understanding letter sounds	Syllable knowledge	Percentage of tasks completed correctly at a rate of 1 word per minute	10
3.Find the odd sound out	Phonemic awareness*	Percentage of tasks complete correctly	10
4.Reading the simple words	Familiar word fluency	Total number of words read correctly in one minute	50 words
5.Reading with understanding	Oral reading fluency Reading comprehension	Total number of correct words read in connected text in one minute Percentage of comprehension questions answered correctly, timed 15 second per minute	60 words 5
6.Listening comprehension	Listening comprehension	Percentage of questions answered correctly. not timed	5
7.Dictation	Dictation	Percentage of correct marks. Timed at 5 minutes and 15 seconds	8
8.Reading with understanding a more difficult text	Oral reading fluency with harder text Comprehension of harder text	Number of correct words read in connected text in one minute. Percentage of comprehension question answered correctly	129 words 5

The Sample Frame

- The sample frame was created by an International Education statistics specialist, Dr. Jeffery Marshall.
- It was based on the sample frame used for national assessments at Grade 3, 6 and 9 with weightings for urban and rural schools.
- The sample frame makes it possible for the results to be a statistically correct national sample

Sampling Process.

- 2.400 students (400 per grade from grades 1- 6) selected at random from 40 schools in 18 out of 24 Provinces.
- Many of the 800 new primary Grade 1 and Grade 2 students were included in the total of 2400 sampled in 2012 but wherever possible the same students were selected for the 2012 test as those who had taken the 2010 test.
- Therefore while the number of 2400 students remained the same for 2010 and 2012, some of the individual students did not
- Teacher enumerators (testers) were mostly the same for 2010 and 2012 test administrations. However despite attempts to measure the same students in both tests, there were some changes in the students and enumerators themselves.
- Students responses were timed and to ensure correct analysis of the results, answers were coded separately as shown below;
- a) Students with a correct answer within the time limit = 1
- b) Student with correct answer outside the time limit = 9
- c) Students who could not answer = 0

First National EGRA Test Results

- March 2010 Baseline Test

2,400 children in Grades 1 – 6 (400 per Grade) in 40 schools in 18 / 24 Provinces given a basic Grade 1 reading test.

- Results showed that on average Grade 1 children could read 4 words per minute, Grade 2, could read 16 words per minute and Grade 3 children could read 34 words per minute.
- The highest words per minute were in Grade 6 at 53 Words per minute.
- Children from poor social backgrounds had lower reading skills than those with more support.

March 2010



Key Difficulties

- Written Khmer is one of the most complex languages
- Lack of suitable text books
- High levels of illiterate parents do not encourage reading at home
- Majority of Schools do not have libraries or a selection of story books to encourage reading for pleasure

Addressing the issue

- March 2010 the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport announced that the teaching of reading should be a national priority.
- Work began to create a new draft Grade 1 Khmer Language book

June 2010



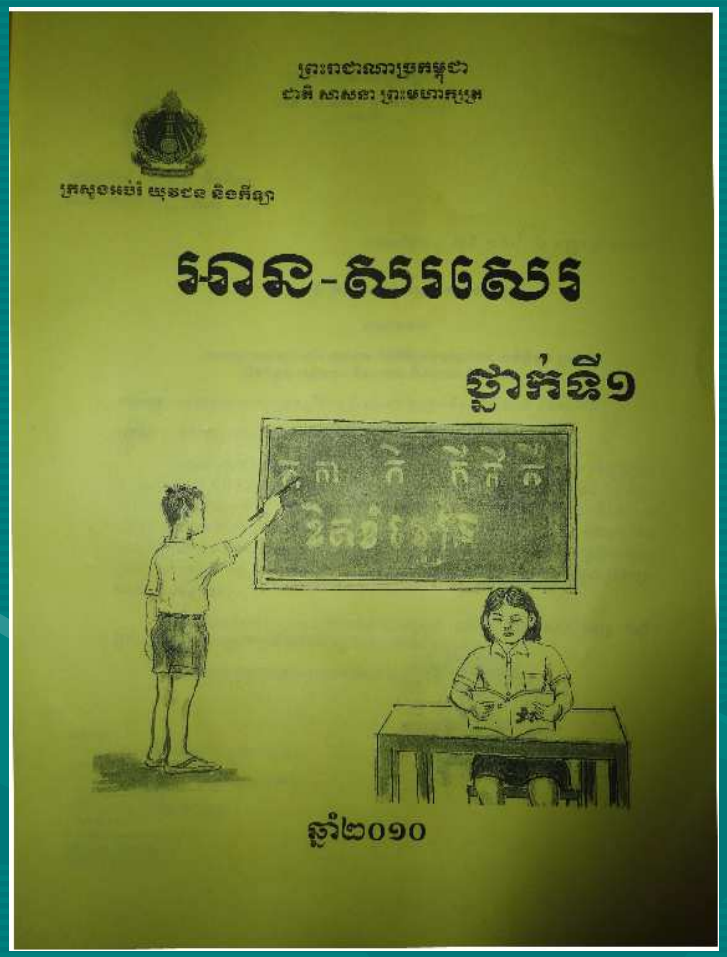


Achievements to date

- June 2010: new text book created, based on use of phonetic letter combinations
- August 2010: selected 20 rural and urban target schools and 20 control schools in 5 Provinces across the country to pilot the new method using the draft text books.

September 2010: MoEYS staff gave 3 day intensive training to all school directors (101people) and all Grade 1 teachers (340 people) in the target schools on use of the pilot text book. (no cascade) This was followed up with monitoring visits

June 2010


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Key Factors in the New Approach

- Each of the 11,000 Grade 1 students in the target schools and their teachers received their own copy of the pilot text book.
- A realistic implementation plan was agreed with the teachers, support groups of parents/ community members and development partners.
- Progress was measured against clear targets and this helped the teachers and parents / community members to give constructive feedback on the pilot.
- Children were encouraged to read at home. Reading aloud to parents who could not read was strongly encouraged.

A new focus on learning to read





First Self Reported Results

- March 2011 teachers in provincial target pilot schools self reported results for the first quarter of the 2010/11 school year showed that **74%** of Grade 1 children in target schools could read and understand, more than 50% of the text taught to date

- This result compared with **47%** Grade 1 children in control pilot schools

Differences in the Capital

- Teachers in target pilot schools in Phnom Penh reported that **84%** could read and understand, more than 50% of the text taught to date

- This compared with **44%** in Control pilot schools in Phnom Penh

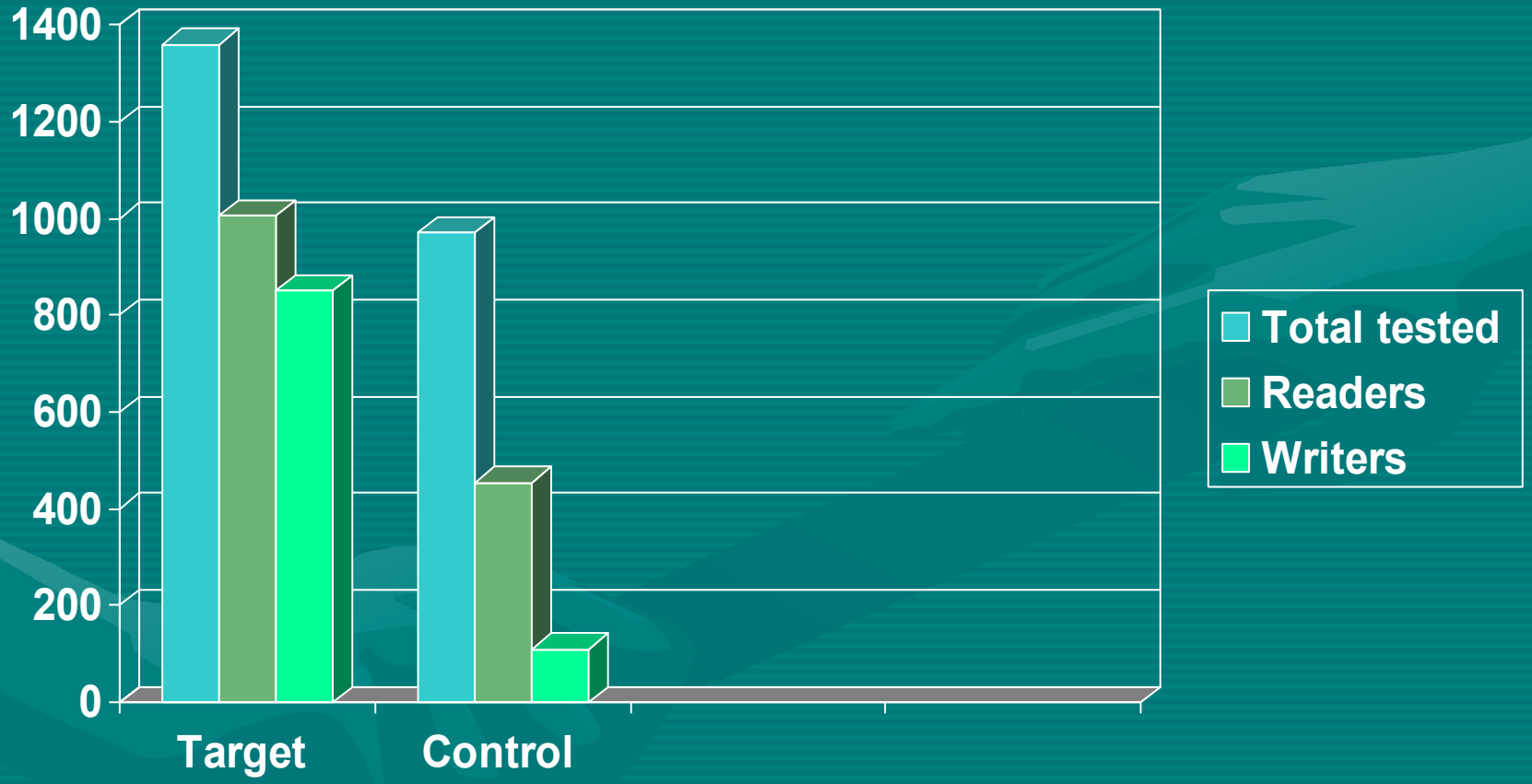




National Test in 2011

- March 2011 National Test applied randomly to every fifth child on the register in every Grade 1 target and control school in all 5 Provinces in the pilot. Test was the same for all children.
- Students had to read and write text using words and letters taught at the end of the first quarter of the 2010/11 school year
- Results of the test shown below.

Results of random test for the first ¼ of school year 2010/11 showing numbers of children successfully completing more than 50% of the test



Move from
Early Grade Reading Assessment to
Early Grade Reading Assistance

- May 2011: Revised the Grade 1 pilot text book based on feedback from Dr. Abadzi, teachers in the pilot, Room to Read and other development partners.
- June – July 2011: Prepared a Grade 2 pilot text book for use in the original pilot schools
- August – September 2011:Trained 1,835 Grade 2 teachers district and provincial staff in the original pilot schools
- Trained all 25,838 Grade 1 teachers, district and provincial staff in a nation wide expansion. Training carried out by District Training and Monitoring Team (DTMT) members.

Working together to improve the teaching of reading





School year 2011/ 2012

- Provided a new Grade 1 text book to every teacher and child in Grade 1 for all schools nation wide.
- New Grade 2 text books printed and distributed to every primary school in the country ready for the nation wide roll out in October 2012
- Provided additional reading assistance, based on the new method, to children in Grade 3 who could not read.
- March 2012: Carried out the same test as the base line test of March 2010 to compare the results

Overall conclusion from the analysis of EGRA test scores in 2010 and 2012

- The overall test scores for 2012 were statistically significantly higher than the scores in 2010
- The increased scores were valid for all grades in all 18 provinces and 38 districts where the tests took place
- The overall correlation statistics indicate a reasonably high internal consistency of the items in the test
- Students have been able to significantly improve their reading skills due to the pedagogical changes in teaching reading in Cambodia

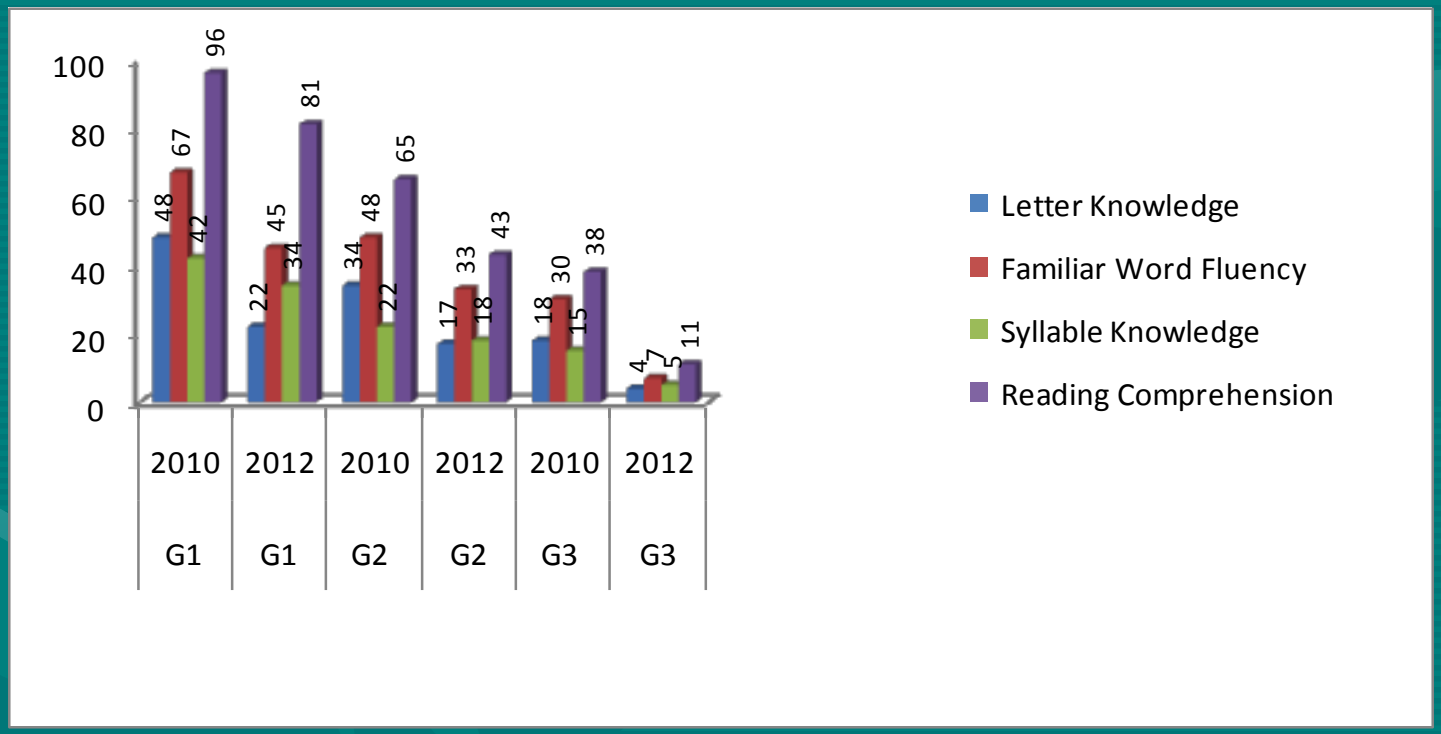
The Cambodia EGRA test

- The Test has 8 sections

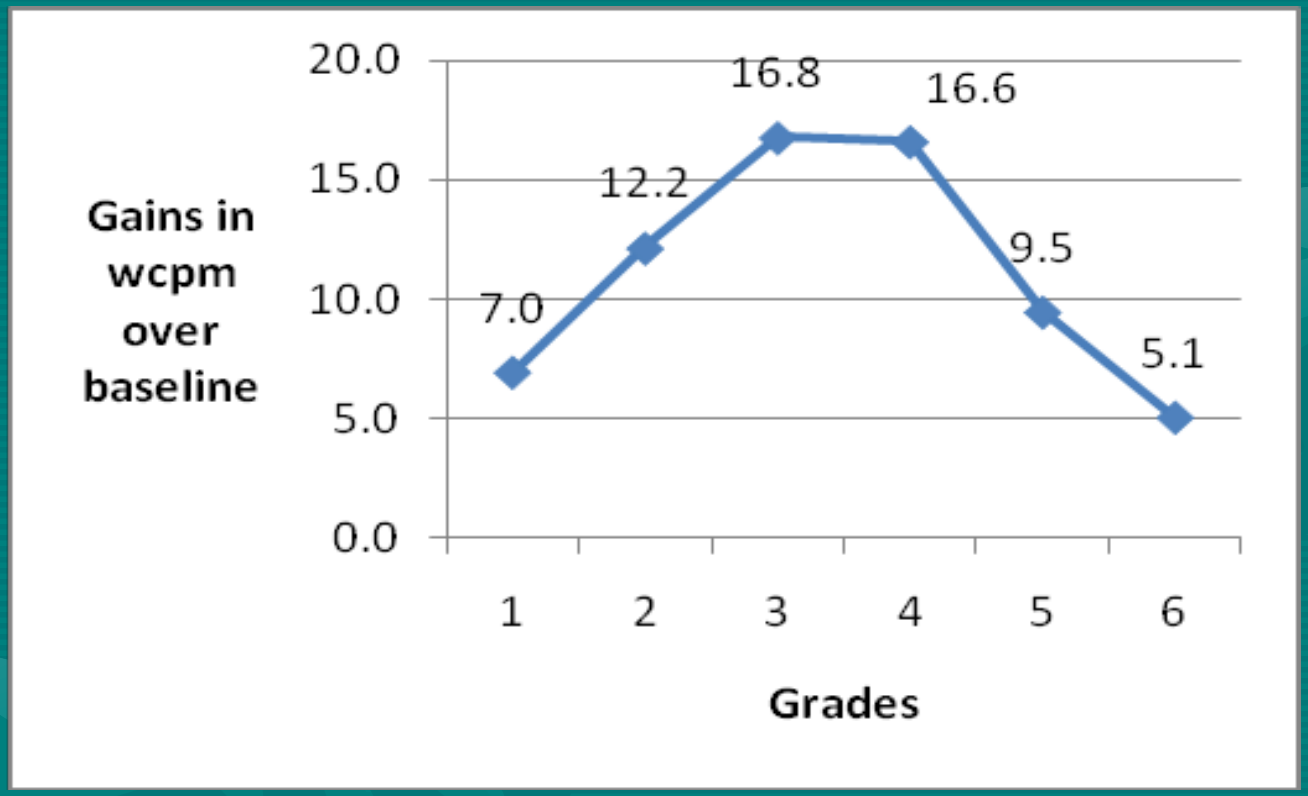
1. Knowledge of Alphabet:
2. Understanding letter sounds
3. Identify the odd sound out
4. Reading simple words
5. Reading with understanding
6. Listening comprehension
7. Dictation
8. Reading a more difficult text with understanding

The lowest performing students are those who could not complete the tasks.

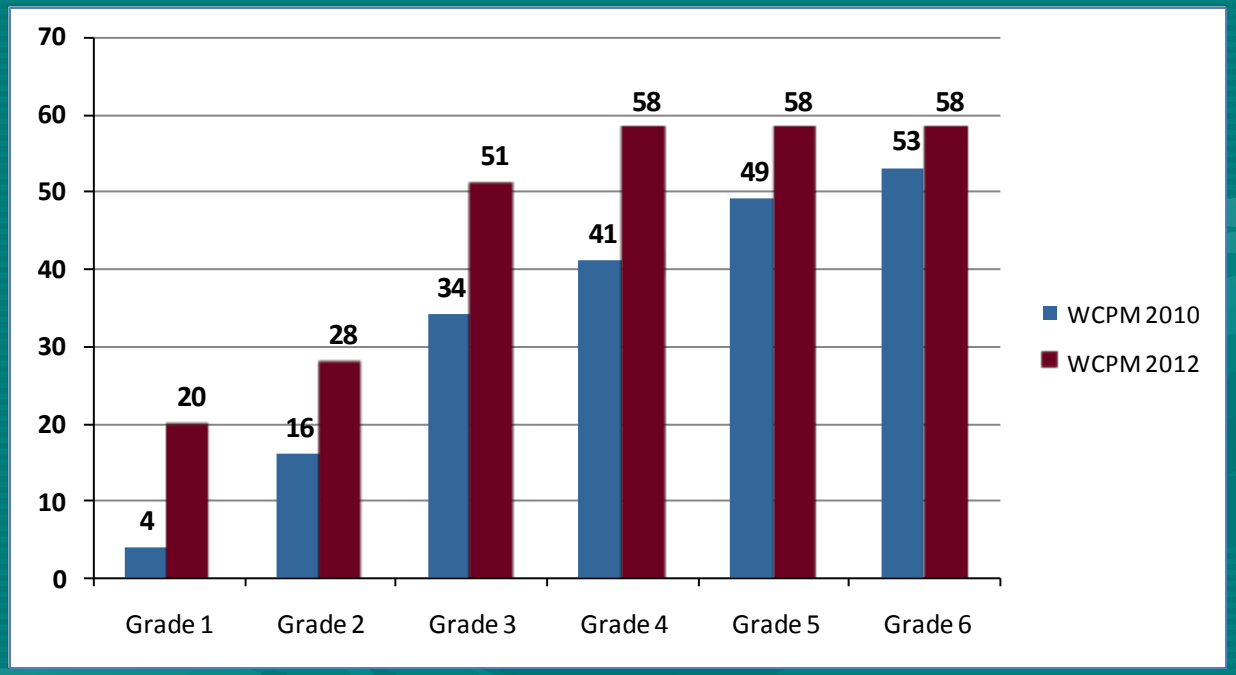
- %age of G 1 – 3 unable to complete the tasks in 2010 compared with 2012



Gains in words per minute

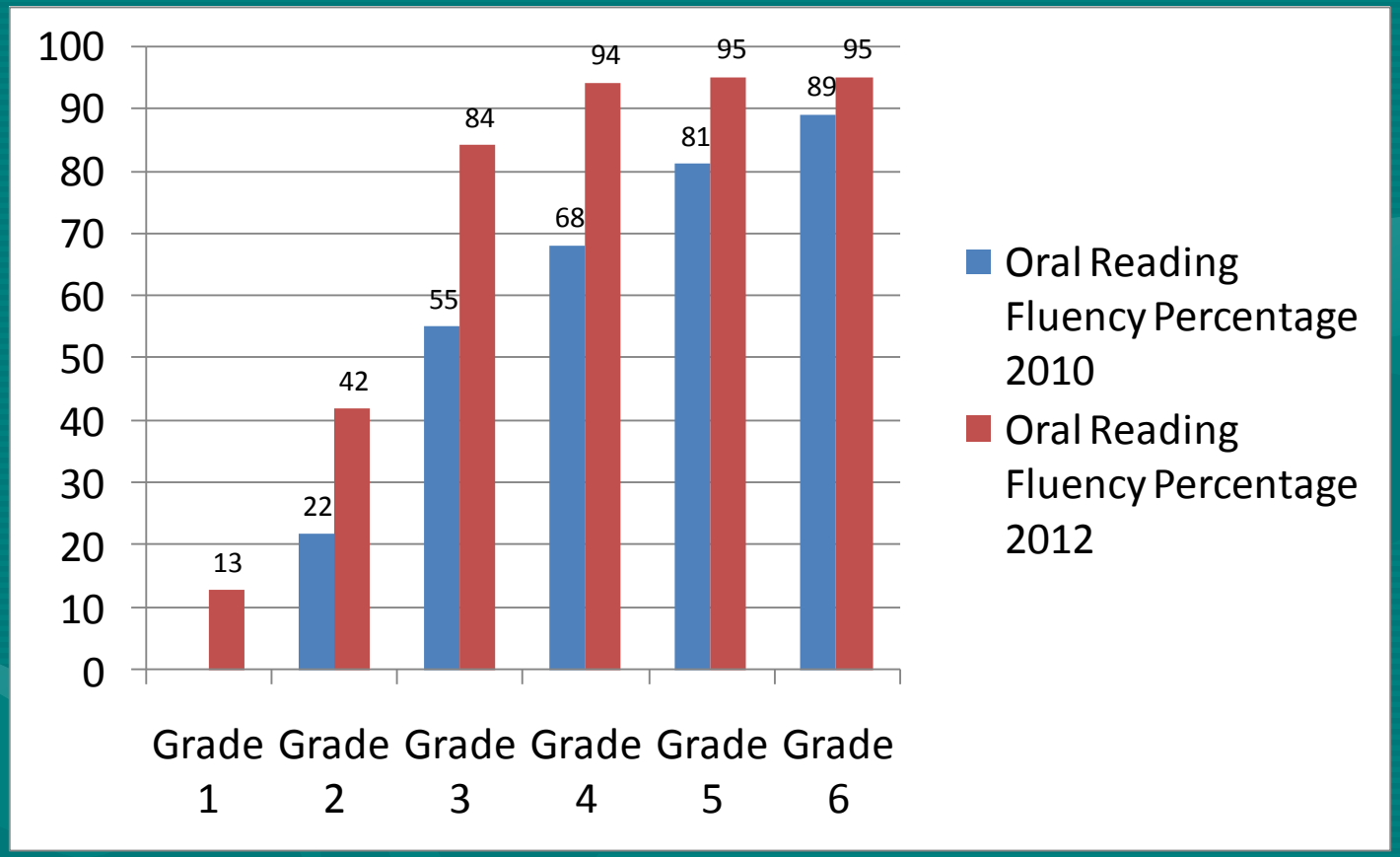


Comparison of reading fluency in words per minute



Oral Reading Fluency Connected Text

Percentage of students reading 40-60 words per minute correctly in connected text



Lessons Learned

- Moving the teaching of reading from a global method to one more in line with the structure of the Khmer Language was key to the success of the EGRA program
- Close consultation with teachers, parents and community during the preparation of the text books ensured that the new method of teaching reading would meet the needs of teachers and students
- Good working relations between MoEYS and the NGO community in preparation of the books led to valuable support from a number of NGOs. These included Room to Read, Save the Children and Plan International

Lessons Learned cont.

- Commitment from Senior Ministry Leaders and development partners to make reading a priority, had a positive impact on all grades.
- The impact of training all Grade 1 teachers nation wide and provision of one text book per teacher and one text book per child at Grade 1 has led to significant improvement of reading skills at all grades
- The District Training and Monitoring Team (DTMT) trained by the MoEYS visited the teachers frequently. Teachers found this very supportive.

Longer Term Plans

- All teachers and students in Grades 1 – 3 nation wide will have the new Khmer Language text books at Grades 1, 2 and 3. (Grades 1 +2 distributed in 2012)
- Integrate the early grade reading program into the pre service teacher training curriculum.
- Carry out annual Reading Assessments in Grades 1 – 3 to chart literacy levels and monitor progress
- Conduct regular national assessments of learning achievements/ outcomes at grades 3 & 6 to monitor the impact of the early grade reading in improving the quality of education
- Implement an Early Grade Mathematics Program

Long Term Aim

- Every child who successfully completes Grade 3 will be able to read with understanding at a level of 45 – 60 words per minute.

This will give them the ability to read for life

- Every child who successfully completes Grade 3 will be able to write commensurate with their ability to read.

- Every Child who successfully completes Grade 3 will have enough knowledge of maths for every day life.

Literacy and Learning for ALL!



