

MALAYSIA – THE SMART SCHOOL PROJECT

Project Name: The Smart School Project

Country: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam

Nominated By: Government of Malaysia

Sector: Education

Sponsor/Donor: Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department

Implementing Agency: Malaysian Technical Cooperation

Project Status: Completed

Project Period: 2002-2008

1. Background and Overview of Project or Initiative

The "Smart Schools" project aimed at extending assistance for developing competencies in information technology in the global knowledge-based economy for Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam. An initiative of the Government of Malaysia through the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department, the project is in line with the Government's aspiration to achieve Millennium Development Goal 8, specifically, Target 18. This target focuses on making available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications, to other developing countries in cooperation with the private sector. The Multimedia Development Corporation, a Government company, implemented this project through collaboration with the private sector.

This initiative is also Malaysia's contribution to the Work Plan of the Initiative for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Integration (IAI). The IAI, launched at the Fourth ASEAN Informal Summit in 2000, seeks to narrow the development gaps among ASEAN member countries and expedite greater regional economic integration, promote equitable economic development and help to alleviate poverty in Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam.

2. Project Objectives

The project had the following objectives:

- to develop nation-building in line with the E-ASEAN initiative;
- to promote the selected schools as experimental test beds making the educational transition from a traditional model to the smart-school model in tandem with the knowledge-based economy;
- to promote the selected schools as community centres for the diffusion of information and communication technology (ICT) to neighbouring communities and as models for the recipient country's educational enhancement; and
- to provide a platform for the establishment of global linkages at the school level via the use of ICT and multimedia tools.

3. Project Approach

The first phase of the project was implemented between 2002 and 2003 in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar. Five schools and 21 teachers in these countries underwent the educational transition from a traditional model to the smart-school model in tandem with the knowledge-based economy. Twenty-one teachers were trained in Malaysia during the first phase. The training exposed the teachers to ways to use ICT effectively in teaching methods

depending on the subject, specialized topics, year group and level of students, and teachers' competencies. It also enabled teachers to produce lesson plans that incorporate technology-enhanced teaching and learning materials and activities as well as to plan the management of the classroom environment to maximize the potential of their ICT-enriched lessons.

The second phase was implemented in Cambodia and Viet Nam. The approach to this phase adopted the implementation features from phase one, which included the transformation of a classroom to a smart-school laboratory with 21 personal computers (PCs), a network server and other relevant peripherals. Two schools from Cambodia and Viet Nam, respectively, were involved in the second phase of the project, which began in 2006 and was completed in 2008.

4. Project Outcomes and Benefits

The "Smart Schools" project has allowed the children from these four Southeast Asian countries to experience ICT in education as well as access to ICT facilities and resources used for teaching and learning activities, supported by innovative content and teachers with innovative skills. As experienced in Malaysia, the initiative contributes to a lower number of disciplinary cases. The engaging teaching and learning activities also contribute to school retention. This in return will increase the ICT awareness of these children and educators.

The project was also designed to enable the surrounding community to reap the advantages of the Smart-School facilities and resources, where public usage of the facilities was highly encouraged under the schools' supervision. The initiative has reached community members, especially those who have limited or no access to computing facilities, with the opportunity for life-long learning. Through this initiative, the underserved communities now regard ICT as an important tool that can change and enhance

their lives and the lives of the younger generations through the accelerated acquisition of information.

Specific outcomes include the following:

- The project provided the opportunity to the teachers and students alike to accelerate their acquisition of knowledge. In addition, the students were exposed to an innovative and engaging approach to teaching and learning that would encourage school retention and reduced the numbers of school leavers.
- An estimated 5,000 students and 100 teachers in Cambodia, 4,000 students and 200 teachers in Myanmar, 3,500 students and 150 teachers in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and 3,000 students and 120 teachers in Viet Nam received direct access to the ICT facilities and resources provided through the Smart-Schools initiative. This not only benefits the students and teachers but also the community at large, especially their immediate families as they, too, could access the Internet and computing facilities.
- The initiative has led to schools assuming responsibilities in expanding the project, as is apparent in Preahyukunthor High School in Cambodia. There, the trainees who underwent the training in Malaysia prepared a proposal to obtain funding for the in-house training for other teachers to share their experiences and newfound knowledge on accelerating innovative ideas in teaching and learning through the smart-school concept. Small-scale knowledge-sharing sessions have already been conducted in all the schools, affecting teachers from within the school as well as neighbouring schools.

5. Sustainability and Innovation

With respect to sustainability, an implementation plan has been structured to assist the schools in ensuring that the technical and innovative teaching skills that they had recently acquired are being disseminated to other teachers. This ultimately ensures that the professional development of the teachers is shared, sustained and enriched.

The innovative approach taken by this initiative is shown in the provision of a holistic, end-to-end solution and services aimed at providing capacity-building and skills transfers for human development in the global economy.

The project encapsulates:

- a conducive, ICT-enabled environment – a classroom redesigned to accommodate ICT integration into education;
- innovative tools – provision of the Self-learn Tools that enable teachers and students to control their own teaching and learning environments;
- a skills-enhancing programme – 8-week professional development training in Malaysia for the selected teachers from the schools involved; and
- support structure – a dedicated help desk and maintenance support for the ICT peripherals as well as the innovative tools provided to the schools for any problems encountered by the students or teachers.

6. Replicability

The “Smart Schools Project” is replicable provided that Governments make a strong commitment to establishing the following key components and inputs:

- **master trainers:** knowledge-sharing sessions regularly conducted for teachers in other schools to increase the pool of master trainers available;
- **engagement of local industry:** sustained availability of technical ICT support; and
- **policy support:** commitment from the Government to ensure that the infrastructure, professional development and necessary support are in place.