

# FIRST READ

SUPPORTING FAMILIES  
WITH YOUNG CHILDREN  
TO LEARN TOGETHER



Save the Children

PRUDENCE  
FOUNDATION



## THE PROBLEM

Learning begins long before a child ever walks through the door of their first classroom. The most critical brain development occurs from conception to age three. It is influenced by the mother and child's nutrition and health, as well as by interactions with parents and the world around them. Better parenting skills and stimulation are linked to higher school attendance, lower rates of grade repetition, improved learning outcomes, better test scores, and higher grade completion.

Although primary education in Cambodia is accessible to 98.4% of children, the lack of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) programmes remains a critical issue, leading to poor education outcomes and school retention rates. Access to ECCD services is about 28% for boys and girls at the age of four, falling as low as about 20% for children aged three years old or under (Education Congress Report 2015-2016). However,

access to quality to quality ECCD is even lower, with only 11% of ECCD services deemed as meeting quality standards by the government.

Since pre-primary school opportunities are limited, a viable strategy is to support parents to provide better stimulation, care and learning to their children. Learning starts from birth, and home-based ECCD enhances the role of parents and caregivers as children's first - and most important - teachers. It builds parents' confidence and gives them the knowledge, skills and experience needed to help their children develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and cognitively.

## OUR RESPONSE

Building on its previous achievements, First Read is working in 614 villages in Kampong Cham, Thbong Khmum, Prey Veng and Kratie provinces to help deprived and marginalized children aged 0 - 3 and 3 - 6 years old learn and develop. First Read works

with Provincial and District Offices of Education, schools, Commune Committees for Women and Children (CCWC), parents, and local NGOs to support home-based ECCD services. We train lead parents on early stimulation for child development, child health and nutrition, as well as children's cognitive, social and emotional development. Lead parents are supporting their children's development and providing peer-to-peer support to other parents. We form teachers and CCWC members



on home-based ECCD to build the capacity of lead parents.

The project develops quality books and learning aids for children and their parents. Books are gifted to families, who are encouraged to use the First Read books at the parenting sessions to improve their child's development and master early stimulation techniques.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Save the Children will directly support 30,500 children aged from 0-6 years, including 15,325 girls. We will also reach 30,917 adults, including parents, Provincial Office of Education staff, teachers, members of CCWC, writers, publishers and illustrators.

## **PARTNERS**

The First Read project uniquely brings together stakeholders and expertise from the government, civil society organizations and the private sector to support families and children to learn together. Save the Children works together with Ministry of

Education, Youth and Sport, Save the Children UK, Prudence Foundation and Prudential Cambodia to support child development. We also work with the Pre-School Teacher Training Centre, Sipar, local publishers, writers and illustrators. Wathnakpheap will support project

implementation and monitoring at the commune level, contributing to overall programme quality, data collection and local capacity building.

## **TIMEFRAME**

1 March 2016 - 28 February 2019





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