



## USAID Interventions Target Cambodian, Indian, Tajik and Timor Leste School Dropouts

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November 2, 2010 -- Creative Associates International's Education, Mobilization Communication division (EMC) has been awarded a ground-breaking contract by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to improve the effectiveness of school dropout prevention programming in four target countries: Cambodia, India, Tajikistan and Timor Leste.

Working with partners, including government Ministries of Education, and national and international NGOs, Creative will lead the three-year School Dropout Prevention Pilot (SDPP) program with the goal of providing evidence-based guidance to USAID and countries in the Asia and Middle East region on dropout prevention by piloting and testing the effectiveness of dropout prevention interventions in the four target countries. Using a web-based platform, Creative will build a community of practice, sharing information and feedback on intervention design, research methodologies, and results. Creative will also produce practical and accessible guidance and models for designing, implementing and assessing drop-out prevention programs in primary and secondary school.

School dropout has become recognized as a major educational challenge in developing countries, as more children enroll in school, but fail to complete it, swelling the ranks of uneducated and unemployable youth. Reducing dropout is key to improving access to basic education, particularly in countries with relatively high enrollment rates where most school-age children who do not attend school have previously been enrolled in school. Creative's President & CEO, Charito Kruvant said, "Ensuring that students stay in school is vital to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and provides a foundation for giving children the power to realize positive change in their lives."

Although basic education enrollment rates in the four countries have experienced notable increases over the past decade, low primary school survival rates and primary-to-secondary transition rates point to significant dropout problems. In Cambodia, only 62 percent of students reach Grade 5. While India has achieved 96 percent gross enrollment, 46 percent of students are estimated to

dropout by grade 8. Tajikistan enjoys high primary enrollment (97 percent) but girls suffer disproportionately from dropout—61 percent of girls fail to continue past grade 9 compared to 39 percent of boys. Timor Leste, with a growing youth population, has the lowest primary and secondary enrollment rates in the region.

SDPP will advance knowledge on dropout prevention programs through an applied research approach. In a three-stage process, it will identify best practices in dropout prevention in the U.S. and developing countries, conduct situational analyses of student dropout trends and issues in Cambodia, India, Tajikistan and Timor Leste, and—based on this information—will design, implement and evaluate interventions to keep at-risk students in school. Using randomized control trials and combining quantitative and qualitative methods, it will rigorously assess the effectiveness and replicability of the pilot project interventions to provide state-of-the-art information on what dropout prevention strategies work.

"In each of the target countries, the drop-out phenomenon differs among grades, students and locales. SDPP provides a unique opportunity to fully understand the problem and it causes, and to work with ministries, schools, students and parents to craft the most appropriate solutions and empirically measure their impact," said the Principal Investigator and Project Director Karen Tietjen. "Its aim is to increase the knowledge base and provide credible data as a basis for dialogue and consensus on the best ways to mitigate drop-out."

SDPP is a task order under the USAID Assistance to Basic Education (ABE-BE) Indefinite Quantity Contract. Creative is among the foremost implementers of USAID basic education programs throughout the world. Along with its partners for SDPP, Creative is committed to delivering quality education to the most vulnerable populations.

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