Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) organized its Education Congress for the school year 2015-2016 and set new objectives for 2016-2017 at the Institute of Technology of Cambodia from 21st to 23rd March 2017. This congress was presided over by H.E Madam Men Sam An, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Assembly–Senate Relations and Inspection. Approximately 1,500 people participated including MoEYS, POE, teachers, as well as representatives of Development Partners and around 70 representatives of NEP’s NGO international and local members.

After welcome and reporting remark by H.E Dr. HANG Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, in her opening speech, H.E Madam Men Sam An gave a warming appreciation to leaders of MoEYS, POE, teachers, as well as representatives of Development Partners and around 70 representatives of NEP’s NGO international and local members.

After opening session, ESWG Chair, Ms. Debora Comini expressed her appreciation for education sector strategies and harmonized reform. She stressed on two Government’s policy priorities that were recently adopted for the Mid-Term Review of the Education Strategic Plan which include 1) to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all 2) and to ensure effective leadership and management of education staff at all levels. Development Partner representatives also raised some progresses that has been made in the education sector as well as challenges including financing gap on some key reform priorities, such as the implementation of the Teacher Policy Action Plan, curriculum and textbook development and school inspection, quality improvements, gender disparity, late entry to school for early childhood, dropout, out-of-school, school-based
management and New Generation school model.

Over a three-day period, the Congress addressed key challenges and other recommendations in relation to the seven sub-sectors of the Education Strategic Plan. Some areas of progress include:

1) The implementation of the policy on ensuring equity of receiving education services through promotion and expansion of early childhood education programme for fully access in primary and secondary schools at least in 9 years.
2) The implementation of the policy on improving the quality and efficiency of educational services at higher education level with strong focus on training and capacity building in engineering, industry, agriculture, science and technology.
3) Capacity development for education units and officials for decentralization implementation through useful use of all national and sub-national level budgets.
4) Ongoing improvement the National Plan of Action for Youth Development through focus and give opportunities to develop and link to family, communities and society development.
5) Mobilizing support for sport activities through the development of schools and communities sporting, and
6) Improving the effectiveness of financial assistance and cooperation.

For the coming year, MoEYS has set out the following key measures and strategies:

1) Ongoing improvement quality and implementation programmes related to the seven sub-sectors,
2) Implement the Teacher Policy Action Plan,
3) Review and evaluate education programmes, textbooks and learning environment
4) Strengthen school inspections
5) Strengthen learning evaluation to improve the quality of education such as national, region and international examinations,
6) Higher education reforms.

The closing of the Congress was presided over by Samdach Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia in the afternoon of March 23rd, 2017. In his reporting remark, H.E Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, made an official announcement that from April 2017 onwards the government will provide at least nine hundred fifty thousand riels as the salary of school teachers. In his speech, Samdach Hun Sen raised on economic growth linked to human resource development and promised to increase teacher’s salary. He also gave 5 recommendations including:

1) Ongoing the implementation with proactively on lifelong learning policy, especially for early childhood, provide sanitation and clean environment, scholarships, foreign languages, art and soft skills for students and youth.
2) Ongoing improvement of leadership, management for education officials, financial management, strengthen teachers’ capacity, school directors and inspections.
3) Be proactive in youth policy implementation including youth capacity development, skills and social affairs.
4) Ongoing and focus on public and school sporting with effectiveness in order to meet an international standard for 32nd SEAGAME 2023 which Cambodia will host and
5) Strengthen efficiency of budget implementation for the right priorities and needs.
Regional Seminar on Education Reform in ASEAN

In cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Senate and the National Assembly, the Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia (PIC) organized a regional seminar on Education Reform in ASEAN on 10th February 2017 at the Senate of Cambodia. The regional seminar aimed to share case study of education reform from different countries in ASEAN including Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Cambodia. The event gathered stakeholders over 200 participants included Senators, Members of Parliament, MoEYS representative, academic, Development Partners, and NGOs who are working in the field of education.

NEP was invited to the panel discussion on the role of partners in education reform together with Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, UNESCO, and JICA. Mr. Chin Chaneasna, Executive Director of NEP had presented the role of civil society organizations in education reform. He highlighted the most important roles of CSOs which have increased from 120 to 144, and NEP provided the capacity development to its members on advocacy, finance principle, Quickbooks system, strategic communication skills, monitoring and evaluation, using soft skills in Non-Formal Education (NFE) and social audit forum facilitation skills. NEP also promoted the collaboration through the international learning exchange visit to Philippines, organized quarterly membership and Annual General Meeting (AGM) of its memberships. To build up the coalition voice, NEP has facilitated in sub-national campaigns and annual events in order to achieve the expected plan and ensured the functioning of 25 Provincial Education Sector Working Groups (P-ESWGs).

Secondly, NEP has conducted research study on Teaching Hours at Primary Schools, Promoting Rights to Education, and research on Enhancing School Accountability. Through the research findings and recommendations, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) initiated a full day teaching pilot program in Siem Reap Province in collaboration with NEP and other partners to address the issue of losing teaching hours.

Thirdly, NEP is promoting the National Policy Dialogues included Education Congress, National Assembly Commission in charge of Education, Education Sector Working Group at the national and sub-national levels.

For future plan, NEP will engage CSOs in the SDG4 localization process, continue to conduct research that responds to the member’s priority work and focus on grassroots research, provide financial and technical support to Provincial Education Sector Working Groups to ensure that they can raise significant issues to the provincial office of education, continue to coordinate and strengthen existing sub-sectors and thematic groups and look for opportunity to establish additional sub-sector/thematic group as needed. Campaigns are the core work of NEP so that we will mobilize more members to participate in different campaigns.

To celebrate its 10th year anniversary, NEP presented certificate of appreciation to five active members including Community Council for Development Organization (CCDO) based in Takeo, Cambodian Childrens’ Fund (CCF) based in Phnom Penh, Chumkriel Language School (CLS) based in Kampot, Shanti Volunteer Association (SVA) based in Phnom Penh, and Green Umbrella (GU) based in Takeo. Three P-ESWGs in Preah Sihanouk, Pursat, and Kratie Provinces were also selected to receive certificate of appreciation. In addition, NEP also provided the appreciation letter to seven staffs who worked for NEP Secretariat for five years and more.
could include but not limit to CSOs have the insights into local knowledge and needs of the community and ensuring policy planning reflect contextual realities and voices of marginalized group. CSOs have experience in implementing innovative and effective education sector interventions to help provide successful approaches for integrated into national policy and reform process. CSOs supports effective policy implementation by building sub-national ownership and monitoring progress on policy commitment. In addition, some concrete examples on how CSOs contribute to the policy reforms have been shared with the participants such as the formation of thematic and sub-sector group to provide specific inputs to the government whenever needed and research findings in the areas where policy implementation gaps for more efficiency and effective.

The seminar also provided an opportunity for the countries in the region such as Malaysia, Thailand and Myanmar to share the education reform efforts by their respective government.

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**CSO’s Contributions to the SDG4 localization**

In 2016, NEP have provided awareness to the education NGOs particular NEP’s members and Provincial Education Sector Working Group (P-ESWG) across the country through the activities of consultation and dissemination at sub-national and national levels. The inputs and recommendations from education NGOs in Cambodia have been collected and NEP and its representatives participated in the formal consultation in order to provide inputs on the draft of Cambodia SDG4 localization. In addition, NEP have been invited as a member of SDG4 indicator localization working group at the national level. Therefore, NEP has a chance to bring more concrete recommendations and evidences from its member and mainstream into SDG4 localization.

On 16 February 2017, NEP was invited to present on CSOs inputs and recommendations on the Cambodia SDG4 localization during the National Launch on “Formulating the Cambodian SDG4 Education 2030 Roadmap” organized by the MoEYS and UNESCO. The current status of the collected inputs and recommendations from the CSOs have been presented to the MoEYS and Development Partners for their attention on the area of eliminate informal school fees, teacher issues, quality of learning outcome improvement, education financing, strengthen policy implementation, inspection, relevant ministries collaboration, monitoring, and evaluation system etc.

For 2017, NEP continues its commitment to expand its strategy to collect more critical inputs from the group of NGOs expertise through sub-sector or thematic working groups such as Non-Formal Education Sub-Sector Group (NFESSG), Primary Education Sub-Sector Group (PESSG), Working Group on Education & Disabilities (WGED) and Network on Early Childhood, Care and Development (NECCD) which is currently coordinated by NEP. So far two sub-sectors on NFESSG and PESSG were consulted on the relevant targets of the SDG4. At the same time, NEP organized two sub-national consultation workshops in Battambang and Kampong Cham Provinces in which 105 participants from 72 NGOs in 21 provinces participated. The consultative workshop aim to collect inputs and recommendations from NGOs on key priority policies, programs, and strategies. The national consolidation workshop is planned for May 2017 to verify and furnish members on future framework of education 2030.