On 07th – 08th November 2016, NEP organized a P-ESWG Learning Event at Kratie Province. The objective was to bring together all Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Secretaries of P-ESWG from all 25 provinces and capital cities to learn from each other, share challenges and lessons learnt, and identify collective solutions for future implementation. The Learning Event includes one-day visit to primary schools that received support from NEP members.

Participants were inspired by the lessons learnt from the Philippines international learning exchange. They have learnt a lot about Philippines education systems from Kindergarten to Senior High school (K-12) in which the kindergarten is compulsory for all children and we could compare system to Cambodian education system. The group could also learn best practices on how Philippines Education Networks influence the government and education policy at all levels (National and Sub-national levels).

More interestingly, sharing the link between P-ESWG in working with P-JTWG was very interesting to all participants especially the new elected chairs, vice-chairs and secretaries. They see clearly the connection of support from each role to strengthen P-ESWG in all provinces and to ensure two-way communication at Sub-national and National level. The Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Secretaries also understand the role of Education Management Advisor (EMA) placement with Provincial Office of Education. Sharing the good cooperation between P-ESWG and P-JTWG in Kratie was most inspired by the participants where they can replicate this in their province.

The visit to schools allowed the participants to interact with school directors,

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school support committee members and teachers to understand and value the support from NGOs in term of school development plans, how to improve school environment for children etc.

A reflection session has been organized with all participants for the NEP’s focal points to ensure that what they have learned from the learning event could be replicated/adapted to their provinces and how NEP could support them in the coming years. The learning event was ended with collective spirit of all participants.

GLOBAL EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT LAUNCH

On November 10th, NEP participated in the launch of the Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report at the Cambodiana Hotel. The GEM Report provides important insights and recommendations for moving forward in implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), explains the current state of affairs on its key targets, and provides suggestions on how to measure and monitor progress.

In her opening remarks, Anne Lemaistre, UNESCO Representative in Cambodia, shared that education is the heart of all the Sustainable Development Goals and that the education system must do more than just transfer knowledge; it must give people vital skills to build a sustainable world, promote economic development founded upon inclusive growth, and enable lifelong learning for all. Inequalities in education must be addressed, and increased attention must be given to the intersections between gender and poverty, considering that at the present time, only 1% of the poorest rural females have completed upper secondary education.

In addition, climate change must be mainstreamed into education curricula, to ensure that all are equipped with the knowledge necessary to work together to find solutions to the global environmental crisis.

His Excellency Minister, Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, affirmed the importance of inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning. He explained that conventional education is no longer adequate to meet the needs of Cambodia’s economic development, and vocational and skills training must be improved to meet emerging labor market demands, including ICT and entrepreneurship. Soft skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and civics education must be promoted to enable people to perform work well and create innovative and joint plans of action to face the challenges and opportunities of the future. He affirmed that all children - those out of school, children with disabilities, indigenous persons - must have access to quality education. He emphasized the urgent need to eliminate hunger, promote climate
change resilience, build the capacities of teachers, and promote gender equality in the education system.

Mr. Chin Chanveasna, Executive Director of NGO Education Partnership, shared the important role of civil society in taking SDG4 forward. He expressed that CSOs play a key role to complement and expand reach of government services and provide unique insights into local knowledge, needs, and effective, context-based strategies. In addition, CSOs give a voice to the poorest and most marginalized people with extensive networks of access to communities in need, and serve as agents of accountability to push for effective implementation. Importantly, CSOs will play a key role in monitoring progress through data collection and reporting. Key recommendations from NEP’s regional and national consultations were shared, including:

- Take measures to ensure free education for at least 9 years as enshrined in the Education Labor Law of 2007, including a robust strategy to reduce and eliminate informal schools fees with a mechanism to track household expenditure on school

- Ensure adequate funding is allocated to achieve SDG4, and increase government expenditure to the education sector to at least 20%

- To ensure effective learning outcomes, devise a mechanism to feed back student learning assessment results to improve teaching pedagogy and training

- Ensure the implementation of full-day teaching

- Improve comprehensive data collection on children with disabilities to identify specific needs and ensure their ability to access quality education, both physically and through learning in the classroom appropriate to the type and level of disability.

Finally, Mr. Chanveasna shared NEP’s strategy to facilitate civil society engagement in the SDG4 localization process going forward, including consultations with civil society on the draft Cambodia localization plan during the first half of 2017.

Additional speakers throughout the engaging workshop shared key strategies to strengthen data collection systems to track SDG4 and mobilize adequate financing to ensure SDG4 can be achieved, as well as how the Sustainable Development Goal Roadmap for Cambodia links with the MoEYS’ Strategic Plan for the Education Sector. The workshop sessions elaborated a powerful collective vision for making SDG4 achievement a reality in Cambodia by 2030.

5TH NATIONAL FORUM ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The NGO Education Partnership (NEP) in collaboration with its members Krousar Thmey, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Handicap International (HI), Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan), Save the Children (SC), Rabbit School Organization (RSO), The Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF), Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and Aide et Action (AeA), with the support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), organized the Fifth National Forum on Inclusive Education under the theme of “A Vision of Quality Inclusive Education”. The Forum was held on Thursday 8th December 2016 at Phnom Penh Hotel.

The objective of the forum was to share the gaps in service provision for children with disabilities and understand the mandate of the newly established Special Education Department of Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport in order to identify steps forward for increased collaboration. The Forum strengthened links between the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, international and national NGOs, as well as the government and developments partners for an improved and a coordinated effort to ensure that children with disabilities’ right to access quality education is met.
Mr. Keo Sarath, Chair of the Board of NEP delivered the opening remarks and thanked NEP members and non-members alike, who cooperate well to improve the status of education in Cambodia. He hopes that the Ministry will work with partner organizations to make strides towards fully implementing IE and SDG 4.

H.E Im Koch, Secretary of State of Ministry of Education Youth and Sport said that education aims to provide knowledge, skills, and to build attitudes. Knowledge refers to information you learn from books, while skills refer things like problem solving, skills to use technology, etc.

Education must be given to non-disabled and disabled children. As we know, if we separate them, it will perpetuate discrimination in society. So, we are now on the way to building a good society with good knowledge. They also need to vote, they also need to choose a leader. In a conscious way, we need to have education.

In the past, people with disabilities could not be a teacher to even work. But, we know that they are people and could be productive members of society. Now, we know that they should not get money from just asking for it, but that they can earn their own money by working. This is why we come together today, to come together for inclusive education, with good equality.

NEP members such as Handicap International, Komar Pika Foundation, Krousar Thmey, Rabbit School Organization and Kampot Provincial of Education Youth and Sport were presented the impact of Education on people with disability and some examples of how these barriers are being addressed.

Based on the challenges and experience faced NGOs working in education for children with disabilities in the survey conducted by NGO Education Partnership in cooperation with WGED members on rapid mapping of NGOs working in education for children with disabilities, lack of training, capacity, and technical skills in dealing with children with disabilities are the most reported challenges. Inadequate resources and weak collaboration are also concerns that cause difficulty in reaching the common goal to improve access to quality education for children with disabilities.

In this sense, the opportunity inherent in increased coordination among NGOs in the sector becomes clear – if all actors can identify the strengths of their specific intervention, align on key effective strategies and approaches for each intervention area, and increase the occurrence of joint projects with pooled funding and reduce duplication, many challenges raised may be minimized or solved.

Moreover, NGOs and government have to cooperate each other closely and now we have new Department of MoEYS, Special Education and the Functions and Duties of SED such as develop policy and action plan to manage and improve special education, develop infrastructure for special education, enhance and provide opportunity for persons with disability and gifted persons, monitor the process of special education, make reports on activity implementation for MoEYS leaders regularly and implement other activities that the Director General of Education assigns.