

5TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE TRANSFORMING EDUCATION PARADIGM

“EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: SAME SCHOOL, SAME TEACHER,
SAME LEARNING OUTCOME”

SUMMARY REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2024

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OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATION FROM CONFERENCE

Cambodia has achieved a commendable milestone in primary education, with a net enrollment rate of 99.6% (99.7% for boys and 99.6% for girls). However, significant challenges persist in ensuring educational quality and equity. According to the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2022, only 12% of students in Cambodia demonstrate proficiency in mathematics, and 8% in reading, figures that fall considerably below OECD averages. Moreover, the enrollment rate for students with disabilities remains alarmingly low, at approximately 50%, underscoring substantial gaps in inclusivity and access.

Several factors contribute to these disparities, including the quality of teaching, the school management, the engagement of parents and communities, and monitoring of the policy implementation. As a coalition operating for over 20 years, the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) has been instrumental in supporting the government's policy implementation and addressing critical gaps. In response to these pressing challenges, NEP convened its 5th National Conference to identify and discuss potential solutions for improving learning outcomes and literacy rates among Cambodian students.

Focusing on advancing quality, inclusive, and equitable education, the conference served as a platform for multi-sectoral dialogue involving policymakers, education practitioners, civil society, and development partners. The event emphasized the importance of continued monitoring and reporting on the implementation of education policies and the need for collaborative efforts to address systemic issues. Participants in the 5th National Conference proposed targeted recommendations across several priority areas to enhance educational outcomes and equity, building on shared goals to accelerate progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) and foster a transformative education system in Cambodia.

EXPANDING ACCESS FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Enhance community awareness and communication on inclusive education.
- Increase funding for inclusive education, including teaching and learning materials.
- Develop and implement a monitoring and evaluation framework for inclusive education policies.
- Ensure school infrastructure accommodates children with disabilities.
- Establish clear criteria for identifying specific types of disabilities.
- Build the capacity of teachers to provide inclusive and special education.
- Leverage existing resources and improve community engagement.
- Strengthen collaboration among relevant stakeholders.

ENHANCING ACCESS TO QUALITY MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION

- Provide refresher training courses for multilingual teachers (at least twice a year).
- Print one textbook for each subject.
- Develop a multilingual education curriculum that meets the needs of indigenous students.
- Increase scholarships for indigenous students.
- Offer more opportunities for qualified indigenous students to become teachers.
- Extend school hours by two additional hours for multilingual education.
- Build the capacity of Department of Education staff in multilingual education to support teachers.
- Construct more dormitories at secondary schools.
- Increase scholarship and school feeding programs for indigenous students.

ADDRESSING GENDER PARITY IN EDUCATION

- Collaborate with teachers to mainstream gender issues in education.
- Build the capacity of teachers through practical training and reflection on gender mainstreaming.
- Encourage teacher trainers to utilize and strengthen student-centered approaches and gender mainstreaming.
- Motivate teacher trainees to apply what they learn in school.
- Strengthen collaboration among relevant stakeholders.
- Consider developing laws on gender, including quotas for women in leadership roles.
- Conduct more research on gender issues in education.

SUPPORTING TEACHERS TO PERFORM EFFECTIVELY

- Schools and teachers need to understand the backgrounds of their students. Improved teacher performance requires participation from school directors, management committees, parents, and the community.
- Regular reflection (monitoring and evaluation) based on student learning outcomes is crucial for improving teachers' practices.
- Strengthen pre-service and in-service training for teachers, particularly in Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGMA).
- Continue efforts to identify and encourage promising students to become teachers, support their training, and retain them in the profession.
- Reform teacher training centers and colleges.
- Transform teacher training from a 12+2 to a 12+4 and Bachelor+1 model for primary and lower secondary school teachers.

STRENGTHENING SCHOOL GOVERNANCE TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

- Ongoing support and training for school directors and management teams, including regular mentorship to enhance leadership skills.
- Encourage schools to adopt standardized preparation models according to their capabilities, and propose budget packages to the Ministry of Education to enable effective preparation for future challenges.
- Include commune leaders in school management committees to better identify specific needs and align them with local budgeting for educational services.
- Allocate funds in provinces like Kampong Chhnang, Prey Veng, and Svay Rieng to purchase supplementary books for students, ensuring no school lacks essential learning materials.
- Maintain advisory roles at the school level to enhance support for school management.
- Foster community awareness of school needs and encourage collaboration to escalate these needs to the district level.

ENSURING SAFE SCHOOLS RESILIENT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

- The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS) should consider adjusting school vacation schedules to avoid learning loss due to heat, extending the vacation in April.
- School infrastructure must address specific disasters faced in the areas.
- Capacity building for schools, students, and communities regarding Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), focusing on preparedness, adaptation, and response.
- Establish and disseminate early warning systems, training schools, students, and communities on their use.
- Engage communities in DRR at the school level and integrate school DRR into the commune, district, and provincial plans.
- Build capacity in DRR for sub-national staff across all relevant stakeholders.

SUPPORTING DISTRICT OFFICES IN EDUCATION ADMINISTRATION

- Develop a legal framework and guidelines in accordance with Sub-Decree No. 213 ANKr.BK dated July 28, 2023, regarding the transfer of functions in the education, youth, and sports sectors to municipal, district, and khan administrations.
- Disseminate and train on the guidelines to enhance implementation effectiveness at municipal, district, and khan levels.
- Provide technical support to municipal and district administrations on leadership, management, and organization within the education sector.
- Conduct in-depth studies of the framework for transferred functions in education, youth, and sports.
- Investigate and implement guidelines and legal frameworks effectively.
- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of relevant entities, including municipal and district administrations, the Provincial Office of Education, Youth, and Sports, and others.
- Consult with technical experts, such as the District Office of Education, Youth, and Sports, regarding support working groups.

SUPPORTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS OF STUDENTS

- Continue and expand scholarship and school feeding programs in disadvantaged areas.
- Provide vocational training for parents with some support.
- Develop a ten-year Social Protection Policy Framework for 2025-2035.

ENHANCING LIFELONG LEARNING (LLL)

- Learning City: A Learning City empowers the community and promotes LLL for all. It supports Sustainable Development Goal #4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote LLL opportunities for all by 2030. The conference emphasized that LLL is for everyone, and a Learning City serves as a platform to promote LLL at the community level.
- Although Cambodia is in the early stages of establishing a Learning City, the country aims to create a framework that provides equal access for all individuals to participate in LLL programs anytime, anywhere. The goal is to enable people to learn joyfully and improve their quality of life, focusing on the learning needs of the community by shifting from a school-based to a learner-centered curriculum with increased flexibility.
- The work completed so far includes developing an 'implementation framework' for cities interested in establishing a Learning City. The cities identified for phase 1 discussions include Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampot, Kep, Sihanouk Ville, and Preah Vihear.
- Utilizing LLL Policies: The future establishment of a Learning City would support school directors, teachers, and others in enhancing their knowledge and skills to meet the current needs of students and communities. LLL is vital for helping learners acquire additional skills—such as financial literacy, communication, and digital literacy—alongside traditional reading and writing.
- To establish a Learning City, the following activities are needed:
 - Organize meetings with relevant city departments, such as the Departments of Environment and Education, to discuss how to create a Learning City.
 - Develop a work plan or action plan determining the necessary number of schools, libraries, and other facilities based on the city's total population.
 - Prepare and submit an application to UNESCO with the relevant departments. Following this, UNESCO will send a delegation to evaluate the city.