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Student Learning Outcome Review

Pathways to Success:
**Enhancing Learning in
Primary Education**



អង្គការភាពជាដៃគូអប់រំ | NGO Education
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND DISCLAIMER

NGO Education Partnership (NEP) is a membership organization that fosters a robust Civil Society network. NEP facilitates and coordinates dialogue and cooperation among key stakeholders to enhance the quality and accessibility of education in Cambodia. With over 70 members, NEP promotes active collaboration between non-governmental organizations operating in the education sector and works to represent their perspectives and voices to the government and development partners. The goal is to ensure equal and prompt access to high-quality education for all people in Cambodia. This objective is pursued through active participation in educational policy discussions and formulation and advocacy initiatives.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The low learning outcomes in Cambodia's education sector stem from a complex interplay of factors across schools, teachers, students, and communities. School factors include overcrowded classrooms, low parental engagement, poor learnership and management of school management, limited functioning of school management committee members, student-teacher ratios significantly higher than regional averages (45-60 students per class), and a lack of essential resources and infrastructure. Teacher quality is compromised by low qualification, with 13% of regional teacher training center staff lacking bachelor's degrees. Teachers face limited and inadequate access to professional development, and nearly half of secondary educators lack subject-specific. Digital competency gaps, exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, hinder effective online learning. In addition, limited parental engagement, financial constraints, and socio-cultural barriers, including poverty and traditional gender norms, further limit student engagement and progression and further impede student progress. Student well-being, including learning disabilities and emotional issues, also plays a crucial role. Low enrollment and quality in Early Childhood Education (ECE) negatively impact primary school readiness, contributing to overall low learning outcomes.

To address these challenges, the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS) recommended to prioritize to increase education budget allocation, targeting 4% of GDP to improve infrastructure, teacher training, and equity-focused initiatives. Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems will enhance accountability and policy impact. Additionally, expanding early childhood education and fostering collaboration among government, NGOs, and donors are essential for sustainable improvements. Strategic investments and partnerships can create an equitable, high-quality education system, ensuring all Cambodian children have the opportunity to succeed.

This brief outline actionable solutions to address these systemic issues and achieve long-term educational reform.

INTRODUCTION

The Royal Government of Cambodia have made significant progress in strategy development. In 2015, The RGC adopted the Agenda for the SDGs 2016-2030 with United Nations member states and localized the SDGs in Cambodian context through the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs). SDG4: Quality Education "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all." The MOEYS has achieved significant accomplishment in implementing the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) including increased enrolments for primary education school-age children (99.6% FY2023-2024)¹ and focusing on improving education quality services, autonomy, responsiveness, teacher professionalism, accountability, and leadership in the past decade.

School year 2023-2024, the repetition rate was 5.8% (decreased 0.1%) compared to 2022-2023, in which there were 7.3% boy (0.2% decrease) and 4.1% girl students. 2023-2024, the primary school dropout rate was 5.4% (boy 5.2% and girl 5.7%). Moreover, the repetition rate is also considered as a reason contributing to slow learners. Primary school students perform relatively poorly in both mathematics and reading. According to the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 report, 19% of Cambodian children achieved proficiency in mathematics, significantly below the regional average of 35%. Similarly, Cambodia lags in reading proficiency, with only 11% of children reaching proficiency, well below the regional average of 29%.

¹ 2022-2023 Annual Congress report, MOEYS, April 2024

LOW LEARNING OUTCOME ROOT CAUSES

School Factor

It plays an important role in student learning outcomes.

Overcrowded classrooms can significantly hinder individual attention from teachers, making it challenging for students to grasp concepts effectively. In Cambodia, classrooms often contain 45-60 students, which is extremely high compared to other ASEAN countries.² This high student-teacher ratio is a concern, as it reflects an inefficient distribution of teachers.

Moreover, the lack of essential resources, such as textbooks, technology, and learning materials, further limits students' ability to engage with the curriculum. Poor infrastructure, including inadequate lighting, ventilation, and seating, creates an uncomfortable learning environment that can distract students and reduce their focus.

Additionally, insufficiently trained teachers may struggle to deliver effective lessons or manage classroom behaviour, which can further impact student learning outcomes. A negative school culture, characterized by bullying or a lack of support, can also affect students' emotional well-being and their ability to concentrate on academics.

These combined factors create a challenging educational environment that can severely impede the academic progress of primary students in Cambodia and other similar contexts. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach, including better resource allocation, teacher training, and infrastructure improvements, to create a more conducive learning environment for all students.

School governance and resource allocation play a crucial role in shaping student learning outcomes. When there is a lack of transparency, accountability, effective leadership, and thorough inspections, it can create an inappropriate environment that negatively impacts both student's and teacher's performance. Poor budget management and inefficient resources allocation can divert funds away from essential needs, leading to the shortage in teaching and learning materials, infrastructure developing and improvement, and professional development of qualified education staff. These issues directly affect student's learning experiences and outcomes. A lack of transparency and accountability makes it difficult to hold schools responsible for their performance reducing the trust of parents and community in education system. This lack of trust can discourage investment in education from these stakeholders. Addressing these governance and resource allocation challenges is essential to creating a supportive and effective learning environment for all students.

Rural Disparities, Mr. Rithy PRUM, Senior Technical Specialist for Education from World Vision International Cambodia highlighted the issues of rural disparities in education. He stated "School location is significant affects student learning outcomes. The quality of education in remote schools faces substantial challenges due to the lack of resources. Additionally, some schools are forced to combine classes, and school management committee can also lead to low learning outcome"³.

Teacher Factor

Low Qualification and Limited Training: Upgrading the qualifications of teacher educators as a recognized measure to improve quality of teacher education, and is ongoing effort will require further investments to meet the standards for providing quality education. 13% of all staff at

² Cambodia Economic Update, June 2024, CAMBODIA'S EXPORT REVIVAL AND TRADE SHIFTS SPECIAL FOCUS Strengthening Cambodia's Education System for Future Growth, World Bank

³ NGO Education Partnership online talkshow, EduNetTalk #48 (5) [Facebook](#), 2024

Regional Teacher Training Centers, which prepare lower secondary teachers lack a bachelor's degree. The pandemic significantly impacted teachers and educational staff, forcing them to adapt to new teaching methods, shifting from in-person to online platforms, often with limited digital tools and training.

Despite these challenges, teachers adopted innovative approaches to delivering quality, inclusive and equitable education. The lessons learned from this period should inform strategies and policies to build the resilience of the education system and minimize future disruptions. This includes leveraging digital technology and strengthening digital competencies of teachers and education staff.⁴

Inadequate Professional Development: Teacher quality and professional development are crucial for effective instruction and improving student learning outcome. However, inadequate training, lack of ongoing support for professional development, and limited access to resources can hinder teacher's ability to deliver quality education. Although the educational level of teachers has improved in the last decade, many teachers still need to upgrade their qualifications to meet the standards outlined in Teacher Policy and Teacher Policy Action Plan. MoEYS data in 2021-2022, almost one quarter of primary education teachers had an education level below upper secondary, while nearly half of all secondary education teachers had yet to obtain a bachelor's degree with a specialization in subjects they teach.

Once teachers enter the profession, moreover, there are few opportunities for professional development to upgrade their knowledge and pedagogical skills. Teacher educators at teacher training institutions play a critical role in preparing a high-quality, motivated teaching workforce. Yet, the capacity of Teacher Education Institutions to provide quality teacher education in accordance with the current Teacher Education Provider Standards is limited. At Provincial Teacher Training Centers that offer teacher training programs for primary education teachers, 50% of staff lack a bachelor's degree.

According to consultation with education stakeholders at provincial level, while teaching curriculums are in place and updated, teacher rarely receive coaching and mentoring on new teaching techniques. They also have limited opportunities to join sharing sessions or connect with other teachers to exchange knowledge. As a result, they continue to use outdated methodologies. Additionally, the quality of contracted teachers also affects student learning outcome. The contracted teachers often receive only short training, which is insufficient to support them in provide quality teaching to their students.

Digital Competency Gaps

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought major disruption to the education sector and necessitated the transition to online teaching as a measure to ensure the continuity of learning. It led to the new challenges for both educator and students such as the Technical Tools Challenges, Digital Skills and Competency Challenges, and Attitudes of Acceptance.⁵

- Technical tools are the challenge for online learning. The lack of devices and internet facilities are generating problems for posting knowledge and understanding of a course/class. In addition, parents are also not monetarily strong in setting up digital learning systems for online classes and it makes it more difficult for marginalized groups which will definitely bring negative impact to the student learning outcomes.
- Digital skills and competency: it focuses on the challenge from the lack of digital skills and competency require implementing e-learning such as lacked the skills, and expertise

⁴CAMBODIA COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS, Building Forward Better Towards Transformative Growth and Development, United Nations in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2023

⁵Wong Sing Yun (2023) Digitalization challenges in education during COVID-19: A systematic review, Cogent Education, 10:1, 2198981, DOI: 10.1080/2331186X.2023.2198981

required for classroom. The changes in a new set of digital skills and competence have put a higher demand on work and created mental stress for both teacher and student. It required re-upskilling to effectively use the digital tools and techniques in e-learning.

- Lack of awareness of digital platforms: MOEYS and partners developed some digital platforms to improve the quality of education. The lack of awareness on those digital platforms affects educators and students' learnings. For example: Continue Professional Development, Primary Learning Program, Sala Digital, Learning Management System... etc. In case of miss out on these crucial platforms, limiting their ability to improve their teaching practice and stay current with educational need trends. Teachers, school directors and local educators might not know how to navigate, register or effectively use these platforms. In addition, this can also mean that they are unaware of those platforms that are available which limit the overall professional growth as well as understanding the benefits of personalized learning for their students. Moreover, teacher, school director, and education stakeholders may not know how to access or utilize the resources available on these platforms, struggle to integrate digital content in their lesson plans, lack of knowledge of these platforms can lead to a large waste of resources that have been created for the teachers. School directors might not be able to effectively communicate with their teachers or the district and provincial education department.
- Attitudes of acceptance: it examined the challenges for teacher and student in accepting the transition towards e-learning or online classes. The positive attitudes toward e-learning and self-learning are crucial for successful technology integration in education, through some initial resistance external factors like workload can pose challenges.

Limited Engagement of Parents and Community

Many Cambodian parents lack the education and resources to effectively support their children's learning at home. This can result in inadequate assistance with homework and learning activities, negatively impacting student learning outcomes. Parents and guardians' engagement with school is often limited, especially for parents who work far away from home or are migrants. This situation restricts their ability to communicate and be involved in monitoring their children's studying and learning outcomes.

Financial constraints: are a major barrier to enrollment and keep students continuing their studying. Many families in Cambodia are disadvantaged and live-in poverty, causing their children start schooling at a late age or study in poor conditions. These children may be forced to take on unskilled work to support their households, reducing the time and energy they can dedicate to their studies, leading to school absenteeism and drop-out.

While primary education in Cambodia is officially free, several factors hinder students' access and success in school. Many families face significant financial burdens. The costs associated with education, including extra classes, uniforms, textbooks, contributions to school utilities, /supplies, events, and transportation, can be prohibitive for low-income families.

Sociocultural barriers: Parental mindset and attitude regarding education can be significantly influence student learning outcomes. Traditional gender roles and norms can limit girls' access to education due to a lack of awareness about the importance and the benefits of schooling. Additional, home environments categorized by domestic violence, malnutrition, instability, lack of access to quality education resources, and negative community attitudes towards education can create a stressful and disruptive atmosphere. These conditions negatively impact children's ability to focus on their learning and well-being.

Student Factor

Students themselves are the most crucial factor in ensuring academic success. Self-discipline and motivation are significant contributors to good performance, including cultivating good study

habits, demonstrating personal commitment and maintaining motivation. Class attendance is also crucial for learning success. Regular and punctual attendance is essential. Absence due to illness, skipping classes or family commitments can hinder learning. Additionally, students' physical and mental well-being, including managing stress, anxiety, and maintaining a healthy lifestyle, significant impact to learning performance and outcomes.⁶

Student Well-being: Learning disabilities, cognitive differences, language barriers, and emotional and behavioral issues, are challenges that can significantly impact learning outcome. Students with learning disabilities like dyslexia or ADHD may face significant challenges in the classroom. For students with cognitive differences, factors such as lower IQ or memory difficulties can make it difficult and affect their learning. Moreover, students from ethnic minorities, students who are not speakers of Khmer or have language disorders may face communication challenges with classmates and teachers. Emotional and behavioral factors, such as anxiety, depression, and attention problems, can further hinder learning. Students with weak basic classes may struggle to focus or skip classes, making it difficult to progress to higher levels. Health factors like malnutrition and untreated medical conditions can impede learning effectively. Negative thinking, such as low self-esteem and negative thinking, can also hinder motivation and engagement in learning. High rates of absenteeism due to family issues and health problems can lead to gaps in learning and poor academic outcomes. While surrounding factors like distractions, poor hygiene, peer influence, and bullying can also negatively impact student learning.

Learning loss

Pandemic Impact: MoEYS has revealed alarming new findings about learning loss experienced over 6,000 students in 230 schools during the Covid-19 pandemic. The latest National Grade 6 Learning Assessment revealed that students had fallen behind in their learning compared to the last equivalent learning assessment in 2016. The percentage of students who failed to demonstrate basic proficiency increased from 34% to 45% in Khmer language and from 49% to 74% in Mathematics. Schools were closed for 250 days during 2020 and 2021. The learning assessment results reveal that although all students experienced learning loss after these closures, the impact was not evenly distributed. Boys lost more learning and performed worse in testing. 55% of boys were assessed as not meeting basic proficiency in Khmer language in 2021, compared to 34% of girls.⁷ In Cambodia, 8% of students achieve the minimum level of proficiency in reading and 10% of students achieve the minimum level of proficiency in mathematics.⁸

A variety of factors contribute to learning loss. ***The negative punishment (discipline measures)*** such as school gate closing to prevent student late arrival, often lead to increased student absenteeism. Additionally, inadequate preparation of the study schedule including unable to complete teaching of school year curriculum can leave significant gaps in student learning and effect to their outcome.

Another significant loss of learning that affects student learning outcomes is ***teacher absenteeism*** and late arrivals disrupt the learning process and lead to ineffective teaching. Moreover, when teacher unprepared the teaching session plan and material, the quality of their teaching also reduces, and negative impacting student engagement and learning outcomes.⁹

Never go to Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Low Enrollment: ECE has a positive impact on learning results at primary education, with children who passed preschool performing better than those who didn't. ECE is critical to children's learning outcomes. Yet, many young children are still not receiving quality ECE services

⁶ The Reversal of Gender Gap in Learning: Why Boys are Falling Behind in Upper Secondary Schools, CDRI, June 2024

⁷ Learning Loss in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era: Evidence from the 2016-2021 Grade Six National Learning Assessment in Cambodia

⁸ Education in Cambodia Findings from Cambodia's experience in PISA for Development, 2018

⁹ Raised by teacher in consultation workshop at Kampong province on 26th December 2024.

in Cambodia. The children aged 6 who study grade 1 passed all types of ECE services is 79.7% for school year 2024-2025.¹⁰ However, lack of accessibility and quality preschool education significantly contributes to low student outcomes. Cambodia's gross enrollment of 3- to 5-year-old in all types of education is 43% while the age of 5 years old enrolment rate is 71.5%¹¹ was limited due to expansion of early childhood development program infrastructure didn't meet the needs; Implementation of the detailed curriculum for preschool; Early childhood care and development in the first 1,000 days has not been given attention; and the capacity of staff has not yet responded to the qualification framework.

Insufficient preschool infrastructures and quality: the number of preschools is still in shortage and its facilities limit access for many children. For example, school geography is one of the main barriers for children to attend, especially in rural areas. While both early childhood education centers, public and community preschools, have increased, the quality services require further upgrading, particularly among community preschools. Only 40% of teachers have received formal training and 41% of community preschools have met the national quality standards.¹² Preschool often lacks qualified teachers, adequate teaching and learning materials. A lack of qualified and trained teachers, mentoring and coaching will hinder the quality education of preschool.

Her Excellency Dr. Chankoulika BUO, MOEYS, undersecretary of state, raised in EduNetTalk #48 highlighted that "42% of children's education did not attend preschool; as a result, they were not prepared for primary school, unlike the children who attended primary school and were prepared to enter it. The weak oversight and limited local authorities support also impacts preschool operation and affects children's learning. Insufficient monitoring by school management committee, provincial and district level will contribute to the poor quality and inconsistent implementation of preschool program. Inadequate support and cooperation from local authorities hinder effective planning, implementation, and monitoring to ensure the quality of teaching and positive impact for preschool children's transition to primary school.

POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Improving learning outcomes in Cambodia's primary education demands a united front. While the challenge is complex, a strategic partnership between the RGC, donors, and NGOs holds immense potential. By pooling resources and working together, a nurturing learning environment can be created, leading to empowered students and a brighter future.

Increase National Budget of Education

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) plays the main role in improving student learning outcomes by increasing budget allocation, strengthen education policy implementation, improving teacher quality, and prioritizing equity and inclusion which can create a more equitable and effective education system that empowers all student to achieve their education goal.

The MOEYS has demonstrated a commitment to improving education outcome, especially student learning outcomes with notable progress achievement in the past decades. However, to reach the Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG4) requires further investment. The budget for education increased in recent years since the 2014 reforms. MOEYS absorbed a 3.38% share of GDP before losing its traction at 2.62% in 2022 caused by the Covid19 pandemic.

To achieve the SDG4, the RGC should investing more, more equitably and more efficiently in education, including:

- Ensuring adequate and equitable funding for education and lifelong learning: Commit to allocating at least 4-6% of GDP and/or 15-20% of total public expenditure to education to

¹⁰ 2023-2024 Annual Congress report, MOEYS, February 2025

¹¹ 2023-2024 Annual Congress report, MOEYS, February 2025

¹² CAMBODIA COMMON COUNTRY ANALYSIS, Building Forward Better Towards Transformative Growth and Development, United Nations in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2023

meet international benchmarks for sustainable education funding; and Promoting tax justice and reforms: In January 2025, the 7th Legislation of the National Assembly introduced the Revenue Collection Strategy to strengthen financial and support the RGC policies agenda. So, we strongly support the RGC to fully implement the outlined strategies in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure a more equitable tax system, increasing the education budget sustainably and addressing disparities in resource allocation.

- Enhancing efficiency and equity in investment: Implement evidence-based policies that prioritize high-impact areas in education, streamline administrative processes, and ensure transparent allocation and utilization of resources. Regular audits and optimization of financial resources are essential.
- Leveraging partnerships and innovative financing to reach all learners: Align national education plans and aid and prioritize the most marginalized by ensuring resources adhere to aid effectiveness principles. Foster innovative financing mechanisms and mobilize cross-sectoral resources through public-private partnerships, leveraging private sector expertise and commitments from governments and educational institutions to diversify funding, drive innovation, and scale successful initiatives.
- Strengthening accountability and transparency: Establish robust frameworks to ensure accountability and transparency in the allocation and utilization of education funds, enhancing capacity, trust and effectiveness in financial management.¹³

The budget allocation increasing is essential to prioritize for Early Childhood Education, Teacher Training and Development, and School Infrastructure Improvement. Ensuring all preschool children have access to quality education is fundamental for their future learning and development. Creating child-friendly school environments including well-equipped classrooms and safe school ground, can make education more enjoyable and effective. Strengthening teacher training is significant, equipping them with the necessary pedagogies' skills such as effective classroom management, utilizing student assessment test to inform their teaching to improve student performance and learning outcome.

Furthermore, equity and inclusion in education should be prioritized to target interventions and address the specific needs of marginalized groups such a complex system of institutions, rules, and norms that govern policy formulation, implementation, and monitoring. It encompasses both formal administrative and management systems and informal processes that distribute power and influence decision-making at all levels. However, weak collaboration and coordination between stakeholders can hinder the implementation of ambitious laws and policies.¹⁴

Improving the pedagogical skills and subject matter knowledge of in-service teachers:

The school should promote Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in their school so teachers can upgrade their school and in particular the promotion of use of Capacity Development Platform (online platform of MoEYS). The capacity building program should be a combination of workshops, action research, classroom observations, and one-on-one coaching and mentoring to help teachers develop and implement more effective teaching practices. The school should plan the training during the school holiday. MoEYS should issue a guideline to school to prepare such a training plan.

Here is best practice from World Education who successfully implement teacher training program:

The USDA-funded McGovern Dole Food for Education project through WFP in Siem Reap implemented activities across six districts. Grade 3 teachers received Grade 3 training on Komar

¹³ 6th ASIA-PACIFIC MEETING ON EDUCATION 2030 (APMED 6), Accelerating actions: Transforming the what and how of learning for a sustainable future 10-13 September 2024 in Bangkok, Thailand Recommendations from the Asia-Pacific region

¹⁴ UNESCO. 2020. Global Education Monitoring Report 2020: Inclusion and education: All means all. Paris, UNESCO.

Rien Komar Cheh (KRKC) package, integrating new teaching approaches into their classroom. Project staff continuously observe, support, and mentor teachers as they applied these new methods.

Mrs. Sal Rany a Grade 3 teacher at Phum Kumror primary school in Siem Reap province, received a 4-day Grade 3 Training from the project. Initially, Rany struggled to adapt her teaching due to the numerous activities covered in the Teacher Guide. However, she committed to daily application of KRKC teaching approaches, learning from mistakes, self-reflection, and continuous project support. Rany also reads the Teacher Guide frequently to understand steps and processes. She shared “I always read the Teacher Guide before teaching my class”.

Rany implemented principles of teaching (I do, we do, you do) and new teaching strategies such as interactive teaching, assist slow learners, encouraging pair work, and hand clapping, to improve student participation. She shared that when followed the steps in the Teacher Guide, students learned better, changed attitude towards reading, and classroom participation. She acknowledged the Grade 3 Reading Package’s benefits for early grade learners by establishing a strong foundation for reading and writing Khmer.

Support School Management Committee (SMC)

It also a crucial to strengthen school governance while decentralizing decision-making is at local level now and empower school management committee will enhance local ownership and improve responsiveness of schools to the needs of their communities; this should be included strengthening the accountability mechanism to ensure the effective of resources and improve school performance.

School Management Committee and local authorities often face the challenges of shortage financial support. This shortage is limiting their capacity to recruit qualified teacher (especial for community school), improve school significant infrastructures as well as maintenance and repair, provide teaching and learning material to school such as textbooks, computers, school supplied, and additional support services to student, especially for disadvantage students, student with disabilities, and/or students with special needs.

School monitoring and evaluation is very important. However, local authorities and school management committees may lack the necessary skills to effectively manage school budgets, school operation, track expenditures, and ensure the transparent and efficient use of resources, identify areas for improvement, and ensure accountability while they may lack sufficient staff with the necessary skills and expertise in education management, planning, and implementation. In addition, many local officials and school administrators lack access to professional development opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills in areas such as school management, financial management, data analysis, community and stakeholder engagement

The role of SMC is to monitor the absenteeism of students, director, and teachers to address issues like teacher absenteeism and lack of preparedness that contribute to learning loss. The quarterly meeting of the SMC is essential to oversight the progress of the school on both financial and activities. The members of the SMC should also be assigned to make regular visits to the school to check. This visit can be done on rotation. Furthermore, SMC should also be responsible for the annual performance appraisal of the school’s director. The school’s director and at least one SMC member are responsible for the annual appraisal of teachers and other staff. Enhancing transparency and holding schools accountable for their performance can incentivize teachers to be more engaged and prepared, leading to more effective teaching and learning. The capacity support to SMC should be considered to equip them with clear understanding their roles and responsibilities in school governance, financial management, and monitoring school performance

Best Practice¹⁵

Lom Primary School, a remote school in Ratanak Kiri Province, is primarily composed of Jarai (about 95%). With 386 students in 2021, the school has seen rapid development thanks to the active School Management Committee (SMC).

Before the Happy Cambodian Children (HCC) Project began supporting interventions, the SMC faced challenges due to unclear roles and responsibilities, was not very active or engaged in the operation of the school, did not monitor, observe or evaluate the teachers and students' learning and had limited resources, lacked regular communication with the commune council, and parents and community members were not well-informed about the school progresses and rarely attended school-wide meetings.

Since the HCC Project began supporting the school in 2018, KAPE has focused on improving the capacity of the SMC to understanding of their roles, empowering them to take action with resources, and engage with local community. Meetings have increased due to increased interest and parental engagement. The SMC has also taken on many new initiatives including improving learning environments and transforming the school grounds into a green park.

The SMC, with HCC's support, has improved its confidence and empowered itself to set priorities, raise funds, and organize school activities that contribute to children's attendance and learning. Regular meetings, high attendance, and transparency in budgetary use have reinforced community engagement. The SMC has learned a lot from the project including improved school management and improved communication with communities, school staff, and donors. They have supported the emplacement of temporary buildings for the local children and used school grants for many activities including garden enhancement, procurement of teaching and learning aids, setting up a Child Friendly School system, food for preschool in the mornings, and scholarships. The SMC has utilized project achievements to encourage transparency in school development and engage parents and local authorities. The SMC has supported school activities, emphasized the importance of education, and informed parents about school improvements. The SMC also encourages parents to borrow learning aids and books from the library and teach at home, particularly during school closure due to the Covid19 Pandemic.

Mr. Puoy Thom is the SMC chairman and a village chief. During a recent interview, he said, *"Previously, I was not so interested in school activities because I thought that it was the responsibility of the teachers and school director. I rarely came to school unless the school director invited me to join the meeting, usually around 2 times per year only. But since the involvement of the HCC Project, I have been very happy to not only join but also lead the school activities more frequently, such as school environment improvement and building temporary classrooms, since our school is now very crowded and there are not enough classrooms. I have always participated in meetings with teachers and parents. I have become much more aware of the need to come to the school every week to support schoolwork". He continued that, "furthermore, I have often received invitations from the project to attend training workshops and meetings, since the project started in 2018. I am really happy to see these changes. I love my school and continue to support school activities especially supporting children's learning"*.

Expand and Improve Early Childhood Education

Expand ECE infrastructure and facilities: The number of preschools is still insufficient, and their facilities limit access, especially in rural areas. Increasing the number of public and community preschools, as well as improving their infrastructure and resources, can help expand access to ECE services.

Improve the quality of ECE programs: Only 40% of ECE teachers have received formal training, and 41% of community preschools have met the national quality standards. Investing in the capacity building of ECE teachers, providing them with training and resources, can help improve the quality of ECE programs and ensure children receive high-quality early learning experiences. Raise awareness and promote community engagement: Many young children are still not receiving quality ECE services due to a lack of awareness about the importance of early childhood education. Implementing awareness-raising campaigns and fostering community engagement can help increase the demand for and participation in ECE programs, especially in underserved communities.

Support Parental and Community Engagement

Promote student engagement and motivation: As we discussed on the importance of student self-discipline, motivation, and the development of good study habits for academic success, fostering a positive and supportive learning environment, recognizing student achievements, and encouraging active participation can help enhance student engagement and motivation.

Providing training, resources, and guidance to parents on how to engage with their children's education and learning activities can help strengthen home-school collaboration.

Improving communication channels between schools and parents and creating opportunities for active parental involvement in school activities and decision-making, can foster stronger partnerships. **Providing financial assistance, scholarships, and other support** mechanisms can help alleviate these barriers and enable more families to keep their children in school.

Implementing awareness-raising campaigns and community engagement initiatives can help change parental mindsets and attitudes towards the value of education.

Strengthening the Implementation of remedial classes. This approach helps bridge learning gaps and provide crucial skills for academic success:

Offering remedial classes and individualized support can help students catch up on missed content and prevent further learning loss.

There is a good lesson learned on improving student learning outcome. Ms. Sreynich, the good Grade1 teacher from Kampong Chhnang province, raises that “Strengthening remedial classes for students with low learning outcome and faced challenges can bridge learning gaps and provide crucial skills for academic success including offering personalized attention and targeted support. Collaborate with high performed students to support the low performed students and she rewards to both with additional score to motivate their effort.” Moreover, remedial classes create a supportive environment tailored to individual needs, enhancing comprehension, boosting self-esteem, and fostering a positive attitude towards learning. They help prevent grade repetition, reduce dropout rates, and ensure every student can reach their full potential.

Donors/Development Partners/International Agencies

Donors, Development Partners, and International Agencies play crucial roles in supporting Cambodia's educational sector by providing vital financial and technical assistance to improve student learning outcomes. These supports are essential for ensuring sustainable improvements, quality, and achieving national education development goals.

Effective collaboration is key to maximizing impact. By supporting local organizations and leveraging online platforms for educational outreach, these entities can enhance their reach and effectiveness. Continued support for NGOs is crucial, as they often have deep-rooted community relationships and can implement programs tailored to local needs.

Fostering collaboration and information sharing among donors, development partners, international agencies, and NGOs is significant. This approach facilitates the development of evidence-based education policies, ensuring efforts align with national priorities and contribute to sustainable development. Supporting capacity building of government officials, teachers, and school directors through training, mentoring, and knowledge sharing is essential for strengthening the education system.

Conducting research and generating evidence-based data to inform education policy and practice is also important for improving education quality and equity. The national learning assessment, often overlooked, is a tool for informing and improving the education system. It provides significant data on student learning outcomes reflecting national curricular priorities. Assessment results allow policymakers to identify areas for improvement and inform resource allocation and policy adjustments. Creating monitoring and evaluation frameworks is essential for ensuring education quality and using national learning assessment as an indicator. This will improve accountability, promote education reform, and facilitate continuous improvement in the education system.

Non-Government Organizations

Non-Government Organization (NGO) plays a significant role in supporting and strengthening the Cambodian education system through various programs and activities. These include supplementary education, capacity building for government officials, teacher training, inclusive education, and improving student learning outcomes.

NGOs enhance education system change by fostering collaboration among key stakeholders such as government agencies, schools, and communities. This leads to shared goals, resource pooling, and effective program implementation. By securing diverse funding, NGOs ensure sustainability and maximize impact. Facilitating partnerships allows collective expertise to address complex educational challenges.

NGOs contribute to improving model school standards, guiding schools to enhance performance. They identify students with learning difficulties and provide interventions like remedial classes and individual support. NGOs assist schools in preparing for standardized tests, measuring progress, and developing comprehensive plans to enhance educational capacity.

Addressing the needs of vulnerable students or children from disadvantaged families is a key focus. Providing scholarships helps alleviate financial barriers, ensuring equal access to education. Fostering community dialogue promotes understanding and support for educational initiatives, increasing engagement and ownership.

NGOs provide training to school management committees to strengthen governance, inform decisions, and implement effective strategies. This support improves accountability and transparency among school management, teachers, parents, and the community, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for student learning outcomes.

Robust monitoring and evaluation system on Effective implementation of education policies: At the high level of learning, a comprehensive and structured system is required to implement policies, action plans, legislations, resources distribution, and the outcome measurement. This requires a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the progress, identifying improvement areas, and inform policies revision. Effective monitoring and evaluation can help identify the root causes of learning loss and absenteeism, and inform targeted interventions to address these issues.

The following monitoring and evaluation indicators or frameworks can be considered at school level:

1. Student learning assessments:

- Regular formative and summative assessments and standardized tests to measure student progress and identify learning gaps.
- Teachers use the data to make comparison of student learning outcomes before and after the implementation of interventions, such as remedial classes or improved school governance.
- Tracking the percentage of students meeting grade-level proficiency or minimum learning standards in core subjects like Khmer language and mathematics.

2. Attendance and retention data:

- Monitoring student attendance rates, including absences, tardiness, and dropout rates.
- Analyzing attendance patterns and trends, particularly for vulnerable or at-risk student groups.
- Use early warning systems to track the risk of drop-out students and frequent absent students.

3. Teacher performance indicators:

- Assessing teacher attendance, preparation, and engagement in the classroom through classroom observations and feedback.
- Tracking the implementation and effectiveness of teacher professional development programs in improving instructional practices.
- Monitoring the impact of enhanced school governance and accountability measures on teacher performance and accountability.

4. School-level indicators:

- Assessing the capacity and performance of school management committees in governing and supporting their schools.

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