



REPORT

EDUCATION CHAMPION LEADER MEETING

NGO Education Partnership
05 June 2025



Education Champion – Leaders Meeting

Tackling the Implementation Gap to Transform Education

Report

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Sunway Hotel, Phnom Penh

I. Introduction

The second Education Champion Leader Meeting (ECLM) of 2025 was held on 5 June in Phnom Penh, organized by the NGO Education Partnership (NEP). The meeting gathered 71 participants, including 26 women and 2 persons with disabilities, representing Provincial Education Sector Working Groups (P-ESWGs) and seven Thematic Working Groups (TWGs).

The objective of the meeting was to provide a platform for sharing updates, discussing key challenges in the education sector, and identifying opportunities for joint action. Held under the theme “Tackling the Implementation Gap to Transform Education,” the meeting focused on promoting inclusive and quality education, and strengthening collaboration between sub-national and national stakeholders.

The program included policy presentations from government representatives, working group updates, open discussions, and a gallery walk to showcase thematic insights and practices from different provinces.

II. Agenda Items Discussed and Key Outcomes

1. Open remarks & objective by Mr. Mark Desmaele, Advisor to the NEP Board

Mr. Mark Desmaele opened the Education Champion Leaders Meeting with a powerful and reflective speech focused on reframing how we understand student disengagement from school. He challenged the traditional use of the term “drop-out” and introduced the more accurate and responsible term “push-out,” emphasizing that children often leave school not by choice, but due to systemic failures.

Through real-life examples, he illustrated how overcrowded classrooms, irrelevant curricula, untrained teachers, and unwelcoming environments contribute to pushing students out of the education system. He stressed that by shifting our language, we shift responsibility—from blaming children and families to holding systems and institutions accountable.

Mark called on all participants to carry this mindset throughout the meeting, urging them to focus not on fixing the students, but on fixing the structures that fail to support them. He concluded with a call to action: to make schools joyful, inclusive, and relevant spaces where all children want to stay and thrive. This message set the tone for a day of critical reflection, shared responsibility, and renewed commitment to meaningful education reform.



2. Reflections on Previous Action Points

Presented by Ms. Leng Sreynich (NEP)

At the start of the meeting, participants revisited key action points from the previous ECLM held in February 2025. The following updates and reflections were shared:

Provincial Joint Technical Working Group (P-JTWG):

Participants were reminded that during the last meeting, it was noted that many P-JTWGs were not functioning actively. To help address this, P-ESWGs were encouraged to support the P-JTWGs, particularly in developing plans and addressing challenges related to planning and budget coordination. At that time, P-JTWGs were asked to draft an initial plan and bring it to their respective P-ESWGs for review. In this meeting, provincial representatives were invited to update on any progress made since then.

Education Sector Working Group (ESWG):

It was noted that the ESWG is a national-level platform led by development partners and currently chaired by UNICEF. NEP holds five seats in this working group, with five NEP member organizations participating regularly. The ESWG meets every two months, and in the last meeting, there was an update from the Department of Teacher Education Development on the Strategic Plan for Teacher Education Reform 2024–2030, presented by H.E. Khuon Vichheka, Director General of DGTED, and Mr. Ngor Penglong, Deputy Director General. Based on that, NEP invited Mr. Penglong to present the plan during this ECLM to ensure members are informed and have the opportunity to ask questions directly.

Policy Brief on Low Learning Outcomes:

Since the February meeting, NEP has collected input from members on the issue of low student learning outcomes. The policy brief has now been finalized and is ready to be shared with members and partners for future use in advocacy efforts. In this meeting, members were asked to reflect on their ongoing or planned activities that align with the recommendations in the brief and to share relevant practices that can contribute to broader improvements.

Working Group Collaboration:

In the previous meeting, thematic working groups shared updates and discussed potential areas for joint action. While some ideas were proposed, implementation has yet to take place. In this meeting, NEP encouraged members to engage in deeper discussion and identify concrete next steps for collaborative work.

Joint Research:

Working groups had previously selected research topics relevant to their thematic areas. However, due to funding constraints, the research activities have not yet been implemented. The need for collaboration and resource mobilization to move forward with joint research remains a priority.



3. Strategic Presentation: Teacher Education Reform 2024–2028 presented by Mr. Ngor Penglong, Deputy Director General, MoEYS

Mr. Ngor Penglong offered a comprehensive presentation on Cambodia’s updated Strategic Plan for Teacher Education Reform, an ambitious five-year roadmap developed in alignment with the Education Strategic Plan (ESP).

Highlights included:

- Documentation Process: The reform strategy was informed by an in-depth review of the current teacher landscape, including gaps in teacher supply and training inequities. It maps out an action plan, budget, and M&E framework, with mid-term reviews built in to ensure adaptive management.
- Four Strategic Priorities:
 1. Enhancing the teacher professional training curriculum.
 2. Increasing the number of qualified teachers.
 3. Strengthening the capacity of teacher training institutes.
 4. Encouraging specialization in key areas like literacy (EGRA) and ICT.
- New Qualification Standards: Transition from 12+2 to 12+4 (Bachelor’s +1 year) for both primary and secondary teachers, with all teachers expected to hold at least a bachelor’s degree by 2030 (excluding kindergarten for now).
- Planned Infrastructure: Establishment of two new teacher training institutions in Kampong Cham and Kandal, with two more planned in Prey Veng and Takeo.

The Q&A session illuminated the shift from short-term capacity building to more comprehensive teacher education, reinforcing that well-qualified teachers are foundational to improved learning outcomes.

4. Provincial Education Sector Working Group (P-ESWG) Updates moderated by Mr. Seng Sothea (NEP)

The session featured presentations from four Provincial Education Sector Working Groups (P-ESWGs): Battambang, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, and Ratanakiri. Each province shared updates on their coordination efforts, joint actions, and pressing challenges in strengthening education governance and implementation at the sub-national level.

Battambang P-ESWG (BEST)

Key Update:

- Held regular coordination meetings to review and finalize the BEST 2025 annual plan.
- Conducted an election to renew leadership positions within the P-ESWG.
- Supported members in reporting to PoE and resource sharing.

Joint Action:

- Organized a study visit to Bospor Primary School to observe model school practices.



- Collaborated with forumZFD to provide capacity-building training on non-violent communication, active listening, and addressing discrimination for BEST members. Strengthened communication and collaboration among 32 member NGOs.

Challenge:

- The P-JTWG is not functioning regularly, limiting the ability to escalate and resolve local education issues in a timely manner.

Siem Reap P-ESWG (SEST)

Key Update:

- Engaged 21–22 NGOs actively in coordination efforts.
- Participated in national and provincial platforms including JTWG review meetings.
- Supported members in submitting Annual Operational Plans (AOPs) and quarterly progress reports.
- Conducted two AMIS trainings to enhance data management skills.

Joint Action:

- Represented CSO voices at the 2024 Education Conference hosted by PoEYS.
- Strengthened alignment of indicators and reporting with government systems.

Challenge:

- Inconsistent communication and collaboration between NGOs, schools, and PoEYS.
- Lack of a centralized mechanism for information sharing and joint planning.
- Limited staff capacity affecting member participation and engagement.
- Identified three pressing issues: student dropout, food safety, and the impact of extra classes on learning time.

Kampong Thom

Key Update:

- Restructure the management of team where it was inactive since 2018.
- Improved coordination through regular meetings and planning.
- Raised local education concerns, such as inadequate supplementary learning materials and insufficient support for slow learners.

Joint Action:

- Initiated a dialogue with the Provincial Government.



- Planned a campaign to mobilize resources to raise money for student supplementary books (EGRA, EGMA reading package) and increase learning resource access.

Challenge:

- Education issues identified at the community level are not being systematically raised or addressed in P-JTWG discussions.
- Continued need for stronger advocacy to integrate CSO concerns into provincial planning.
- Lack of literacy and math supplementary books (EGRA and EGMA reading package) for Grades 1–3.
- Birth certificate access: while agreements were reached with commune/district offices, implementation at scale remains an obstacle.
- Teacher absence during maternity leave: called for a substitute teacher mechanism to ensure uninterrupted learning.

Ratanakiri (RTK)

Key Update:

- Coordinated effectively with the P-JTWG and MoEYS.
- Provided CSO input to sub-national and national dialogues, including topics on NFE, MLE, school infrastructure, and libraries.
- Partnered with MoEYS's Special Education Department for Jarai Indigenous textbook development.

Joint Action:

- Co-organized the Provincial Partnership Dialogue (PPD) on 25 May 2025.
- Led the 16-Day Campaign in Vernsai (December 2024).
- Jointly submitted Q1 report to MoEYS.

Challenge:

- Internal structural instability due to movement of focal points and the need to re-select committee members.
- Lack of coordinated resource mobilization to accelerate textbook development and distribution.

5. Dissemination and Discussion: Low Learning Outcome Policy Brief by Mr. Yoeng Kimheng (NEP)

This session aims to make members understand the key findings and recommendation of the policy paper on low student learning outcome, to collect best practice and example from members/organization project/implementation, and to identification the key issue to produce next. Mr. Kimheng presented a brief overview of policy options/recommendation of the Low Student Learning Outcome policy paper. After that there were 6 small groups discussion to discuss example/their best practice/implementation. Each group discussed



best practice/successful implementation of projects/activities. After the discussion group representatives presented their discussion result with 1 key issue to produce next.

6. Greenspots Call for Action presented by Mr. Seng Sothea (NEP)

NEP re-introduced the Greenspots: Climate-Resilient Schools aims to empower schools in Cambodia to withstand the increasing impacts of climate change, ensuring continuous, quality education.

The Urgent Need

Cambodia's schools face severe climate challenges. The country recorded its highest temperature of 42°C in 2023, and projections indicate an increase in hot days from 47 to 60 between 1995-2014 and 2020-2039. One in four Cambodian children are exposed to extreme heat. Additionally, schools struggle with flooding or a lack of clean water during dry seasons and often lack resources to act. Despite 2.1% of Cambodia's GDP being spent on climate change initiatives in 2023, only 0.1% was allocated to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS).

Greenspots addresses these challenges through three core pillars:

- Enhancing Infrastructure
- STEM Education and Teacher Training
- Parent and Community Involvement

A key intervention is planting Miyawaki forests (tiny forests) within school grounds. These dense, native, and biodiverse forests grow quickly, becoming self-sustaining in just 2-3 years. They offer significant cooling (1.3°C to 6°C reduction), serve as outdoor STEM laboratories, boost local biodiversity, and contribute to overall school climate resilience. Our first 4x60m Miyawaki forest, featuring 700 trees of 18 different species, has already been planted in Kampot.

Specific planned actions address unique provincial challenges:

- Kampot: upgrading school roofs, improving drainage to prevent flooding, and planting Miyawaki mini forests to combat heat stress and limited shade.
- Kampong Thom: Plans include installing electric fans and rooftop water mist systems for cooling, building rainwater harvesting systems, repairing damaged bridges for flood access, constructing solid waste incinerators, improving drainage, building playgrounds, and planting Miyawaki forests to address various issues like overheating, water scarcity, and waste management.
- Oddar Meanchey: NEP plan to install roof insulation to reduce classroom temperatures and build rainwater harvesting systems, along with planting Miyawaki mini forests.



7. Gallery Walk and Thematic Working Group Posters facilitated by Ms. Leng Sreynich (NEP)

The afternoon featured a gallery walk where participants visited posters from each thematic working group. The groups highlighted their key issues, recent activities, and next steps. This session allowed for open dialogue and peer learning.

Network on Early Childhood Care and Development (NECCD)

- Advocacy Issues: Low enrollment of 3-year-olds (~13%), unsafe food practices in schools, limited teacher quality.
- Progress: Co-funding between projects and communities.
- Key Stakeholders: MoEYS, MoH, MoI, NGOs, private sector, foundations.
- Recommendations:
 - Increase number of trained teachers and build sufficient infrastructure.
 - Strengthen food safety monitoring in kindergartens.
 - Improve quality of extra classes and promote learning through play.
 - Provide more teaching materials and in-service teacher support.

Non-Formal Education & Lifelong Learning (NFE/LLL)

- Advocacy Issues: Weak CLC functionality, limited multilingual education, lack of awareness.
- Progress: Support to CLC and LLL centers; collaboration with TVET; youth literacy and life skills programs.
- Key Stakeholders: MoEYS, MLVT, PoE/DoE, CSOs, training institutes, communities, TVET centers.
- Recommendations:
 - Increase district support and budget for NFE.
 - Strengthen soft and hard skills training.
 - Promote regular engagement and visibility of CLCs.

Youth Development, Secondary and Higher Education

- Advocacy Issues: School dropouts, migration, lack of mental health support, digital risks, limited access to internships and skills training.
- Progress: Support to job access, soft skills, and mentorship programs.
- Key Stakeholders: MoEYS, NEA, NGOs, TVET institutions, local businesses, schools, universities.
- Recommendations:
 - Develop joint proposals and campaigns (e.g., career fairs, online awareness).
 - NEP to lead engagement with MoLVT and relevant stakeholders.



- Promote role models and sustainable income pathways for youth.

Primary Education Working Group (PE)

- Advocacy Agenda: School governance and community engagement, school infrastructure, teacher quality and quantity.
- Progress: Model schools, school M&E, EGRA/EGMA, infrastructure support, decentralization to district level.
- Stakeholders: MoEYS, PoE, district offices, school leadership, community, development partners.
- Recommendations: Strengthen school leadership, develop policy on parental involvement, improve teacher intake, enforce inclusive education, and continue research.

Working Group on Education and Disability (WGED)

- Advocacy Agenda: Inadequate infrastructure and learning materials, limited teacher knowledge on inclusive education, incomplete data on children with disabilities.
- Progress: Integration of inclusive education (IE), increased inclusive classrooms, use of UDL, IE checklist, national IE forum.
- Stakeholders: MoEYS, IE network, local authorities, PoEs, NGOs, school management.
- Recommendations: Conduct research on IE needs, improve teacher training, and allocate school budgets for infrastructure and resources to support children with disabilities.

School Reform Working Group

- Advocacy Agenda: Lack of long-term school development plans and standard implementation.
- Recommendations:
 - Develop and implement school development plans with budget transparency.
 - Strengthen school management committees (SMCs).
 - Enforce policies on leadership, school health, clean water, and hygiene standards.

Teacher Capacity Development (TCD)

- Advocacy Agenda: Teachers not applying training, lack of materials, many teachers untrained.
- Progress: Policy on TPAP, examples of effective teaching, improved learning outcomes.
- Stakeholders: MoEYS, schools, NGOs, donors, communities.
- Recommendations: Advocate nationally for teacher support, continue PD with coaching and mentoring, ensure access to teaching materials and basic needs.

8. Open Discussion and Member Satisfactory Survey on Policy Bank



- **Collaborative Actions and Sharing by Mr. Long Samnang on How to Use Policy Bank:** Mr. Long Samnang shared his positive experience using the NEP Policy Bank, noting that it provides easy access to key documents without overwhelming users with excessive information. Compared to other platforms, such as the MoEYS website, the NEP Policy Bank allows for quick reference, making it especially helpful when engaging with donors or explaining current CSO and NGO efforts. He encouraged all members to regularly use the platform and to contribute relevant reports, research, and policy documents to keep it up to date and valuable for all users.
- **Member Satisfactory Survey on Policy Bank:** Mr. Kimheng led the survey by asking the members to complete the survey on policy bank. As a result, 41 (49% female) individuals participated in the survey:
 - **Access and Usage:** A significant majority of respondents, 85%, reported having accessed the NEP Policy Bank; 15% had never accessed it. Among users, usage frequency varied: 14.3% reported frequent use, 42.9% occasional use, 31.4% rare use, 20% had accessed it only once, and 8.6% did not provide data on usage.
 - **Types of Documents Sought:** Many referenced accessing MoEYS's policies, action plans, thematic reports, educational research, and resources. Several respondents indicated they used all types of available.
 - **User Experience:** 39% of respondents found the site very easy to use, 49% somewhat easy, and 12% were neutral.
 - **Regarding document relevance to their work:** 34% respondents found the documents very relevant, 59% somewhat relevant, and 7% remained neutral.
 - **Content quality:** 22% of respondents rated the documents as excellent, 61% rated them good, 15% rated them fair, and 2% did not specify.
 - **Regarding the helpfulness of the categorization system:** 61% respondents found it helpful, 29% found it somewhat helpful, and 10% did not comment or were neutral.
 - **Contribution to the Policy Bank:** 12% of respondents reported submitting documents to the Policy Bank, while 88% did not. The primary reasons for not submitting included lack of awareness of the submission process, not having suitable documents, or being unsure about how to submit. These barriers suggest the need for clearer communication and user support regarding contributions.
 - **Suggestions for Improvement:** members provided several suggestions: 1. Offer training or orientation on document submission; 2. Strengthen the review and approval process to address copyright, intellectual property, and relevance concerns; 3. Enhance Khmer-English navigation and user interface compatibility. Include more research and resources from MoEYS and NGOs, such as teacher assessments and policy laws; 4. Improve the clarity of document naming and categorization; and 5. Introduce user accounts or logins to manage document uploads securely.



- **Next Steps:** In response to the feedback, the following actions are recommended:
 - Develop and distribute user guidelines or tutorials on how to submit documents.
 - Establish a document review committee to ensure quality, accuracy, and relevance.
 - Continue updating and clearly categorizing resources.
 - Improve the bilingual (Khmer-English) interface to ensure full usability.
 - Promote the platform to underrepresented groups and encourage broader engagement and contributions
- In addition, Samaky Organization proposed an initiative requesting the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to use call tune messages to promote the national school enrollment campaign. This idea was inspired by a recent example where MoEYS used a call tune for Environment Day. The proposal was well received by all members and supported by NEP, which agreed to raise the request with the Ministry as a simple and effective tool for public awareness.

9. Strengthening Membership and Partnerships: by Ms. Leng Sreynich (NEP)

In this session, Sreynich shared updates on NEP's recent work and collective achievements, highlighting that these successes are the direct result of active contributions from members across the country. She emphasized that NEP's impact is made possible through the ongoing engagement, expertise, and collaboration of its members. The session aimed to reignite a sense of belonging and shared purpose among all members, reinforcing the importance of working together toward the common goal of improving education in Cambodia. Sreynich encouraged participants to remain active, informed, and involved—not only within their respective working groups but also in the broader NEP network.

Members were also encouraged to extend the spirit of collaboration by reaching out to and inviting like-minded organizations to join the NEP community, further expanding its reach and collective strength. Strengthening partnerships and maintaining active communication are key to ensuring that civil society voices continue to shape education policy and practice.

10. Closing Remarks by Mr. Khieu Chetra, NEP Executive Director

Mr. Khieu Chetra concluded the meeting by thanking all participants for their active engagement and contributions throughout the day. He emphasized the importance of continued collaboration among members, particularly in aligning efforts across working groups, schools, and provincial departments.

He highlighted that future interventions should be implemented jointly, with coordination among all stakeholders. Mr. Chetra also encouraged P-ESWGs to strengthen communication



with schools and to actively involve their members in ongoing initiatives. He called on all members to remain engaged and support each other in achieving shared education goals.

III. Next Action:

The meeting concluded with a set of practical suggestions and follow-up actions from members to further strengthen collaboration and impact:

- **Engage P-ESWGs in ECLM:** Members recommended that NEP continue to actively engage Provincial Education Sector Working Groups (P-ESWGs) in future ECLM meetings and also participate in provincial-level P-ESWG meetings where possible.
- **Orientation on NEP for New Members:** NEP was encouraged to regularly provide short presentations or orientations about NEP's role, structure, and activities, especially for new members or first-time participants.
- **Increased Government Engagement:** Members suggested inviting MoEYS representatives to future ECLM meetings and requested they stay longer to allow for more in-depth discussion and Q&A with CSOs.
- **Follow-up Advocacy Actions:**
 - Submitting the Call Tune proposal to promote the enrollment campaign.
 - Advocating for inclusive education for persons with Down syndrome and other disabilities.
 - Producing and distributing informational leaflets about autism and available services.
- **Policy Bank Contributions and Use:**
 - Upload education laws and legal documents for easier reference,
 - Encourage members to share non-copyrighted resources, including manuals and reports, to strengthen the content available.
 - Add previous research studies conducted by NEP and partners
 - Highlight the Policy Bank's value for donor communication and evidence-based advocacy.
- **Support for Research and Data:** All CSOs and NGOs were encouraged to allocate budget for research and documentation, as MoEYS increasingly relies on evidence-based recommendations.
- **Update Working Group Membership Lists:** Due to ongoing staff turnover, NEP was asked to update the contact lists for each thematic working group to ensure effective communication and coordination.



Annexes

- Annex 1: Agenda, Power point, Remarks (Link: [2ndQ 2025 ECLM Material](#))
- Annex 2: Photos (Link: https://ngoeducationpartnership-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/dir_nepcambodia_org/EiROTZ_VxS1NuloOru0G2j4BEVBEv3hAiXU1cE-DUaxjKQ?e=PeDsBH)
- Annex 3: Participant List (Link: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1px5NwJVrLNEtXp_b4leajhOTVqqkehCbISrv5pdVK00/edit?usp=sharing)