

Cambodia



Executive summary

Civil Society Spotlight Report on Cambodia's Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4

Country and Education Context

Cambodia has experienced exceptional economic growth: Between 1995 and 2017, the average growth rate was 7.7 per cent, and the GDP quadrupled from USD 302 in 2000 to USD 1,384 in 2017. This makes Cambodia the 6th fastest-growing economy in the world, and enabled it to attain lower middle-income status in 2016. Moreover, the number of people living in absolute poverty (less than USD 1.15 per day) declined from 53 per cent in 2014 to 21 per cent in 2011. Nonetheless, the number of people who live on less than USD 2.30 per person per day actually grew from 4.6 million in 2004 to 8.1 million in 2011 (Zachau, 2014).


The right to education for all is enshrined in Article 65 of the 1993 National Constitution of Cambodia and in the 2007 Cambodia Education Law. The pre-primary school until high school is a general education system that is formally free to access for all children. The agenda of the Ministry of Education Youth Sport (MoEYS) is outlined in the past Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and beyond.

A great improvement was seen in the primary enrolment with the rate of 97.8 per cent for the school year 2017/2018. However, completion rates in primary education have not kept up with this trend, and have actually decreased from 84.1 per cent in 2014/2015 to 79.1 per cent in 2017/2018 (MoEYS, 2016).

Since a strong education sector is crucial to achieving Cambodia's development objectives, the MoEYS has been a leader in this process. As one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that constitute the UN 2030 Agenda, SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and has been localised by the MoEYS. The Ministry has made great efforts to address the "unfinished business" remaining from Millennium Development Goal 2, as well as focus on the new agenda's emphasis on equity, inclusion, lifelong learning, and quality education for all.

Objectives

The overall objective of this report is to capture the current status of government preparation and policy formulation on education in the

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES	
	
TOTAL POPULATION:	16.005 million (UNESCO, 2017)
POPULATION AGED 14 YEARS AND YOUNGER:	5.006 million (31.27%) (UNESCO, 2017)
GNI PER CAPITA:	US\$ 1,230 (World Bank, 2017)
INCOME GROUP:	Lower Middle Income Status (World Bank, 2018)
HDI VALUE AND RANK:	0.582, 146 out of 189 (UNDP, 2017)
POVERTY HEADCOUNT RATIO AT NATIONAL POVERTY LINES (% OF POPULATION):	17.7% (World Bank, 2012)
OUT OF SCHOOL:	184,824 children- 92,309 female and 92,515 male (UNESCO, 2017) 119,327 ADOLESCENTS- 62,728 FEMALE AND 56,599 MALE (UNESCO, 2015)
LITERACY RATE (15-24 YEARS):	92.21%: FEMALE 92.57%: MALE 91.86%(UNESCO, 2015)
LITERACY RATE (15 YEARS AND OLDER):	80.53% FEMALE 75.03%: MALE 86.53% (UNESCO, 2017)
EDUCATION EXPENDITURE:	2.3% of the GDP and 18.30% of the total government expenditure (Education Congress Report, 2017)

context of SDG 4, and to review the progress of education achievements, challenges, and ways forward. A specific focus is placed on education financing, inclusive education, teacher quality and training, teacher deployment and non-formal education, as well as the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in SDG 4 monitoring and implementation.

This report aims to contribute to SDG 4 monitoring as part of the upcoming 2019 High-Level Political Forum to be convened by the United Nations' General Assembly. Moreover, it has been produced to shine a light on key concerns raised by NGO Education Partnership's (NEP) members, with the intention of generating further discussion on collaborative solutions.

Government Localisation and Implementation of SDG 4

To achieve the 2030 Agenda, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has been tasked with translating global targets into contextually-relevant national targets aligned with its own sector priorities, systems, capacities, and resources. This implies both an assessment of the extent to which national reform processes already align with the ambitions articulated in the Agenda, as well as exploring how the current vision of the education sector reform could be expanded to further embrace specific measures to ensure quality education for all.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 demands renewed focus on quality, equity, inclusion, and gender equality. Implementation of its targets requires system-wide, multi-sectoral change reaching from the national level to the classroom. It entails rigorous data and monitoring systems to ensure that evidence-based planning is inclusive of the most vulnerable groups, and continuous assessment to ensure the needs of all learners are being met.

MoEYS led a task force of senior education officials, key line ministries, development partners, and civil society representatives to formulate the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goal 4 (CSDG4) Education 2030 Roadmap outlining localised priorities and strategies to achieve the SDG 4 targets. The process included numerous consultations with key education stakeholders at the national and provincial levels.

Cambodia is one of 10 countries receiving support from the UNESCO Capacity Development for Education on the localisation of SDG 4. The country thus receives guidance on implementation modalities and recommendations for coordinating, financing and monitoring the Agenda (UNESCO, 2018). The Roadmap sets the strategic priorities for CSDG4 implementation, while the ESP 2019-2023 and its corresponding annual operational plans will elaborate specific implementation arrangements. MoEYS is also formulating the National Strategies for Development of Education Statistics which will map out the data required for monitoring CSDG4 implementation and tracking progress more systematically.

The Ministry has faced challenges in developing the monitoring framework for CSDG4, such as the limited capacity of officials in line ministries to define indicators and targets, and the gaps in available data and difficulties calculating the baseline values. Gaps in data availability are particularly prominent with respect to global citizenship education and education for sustainable development, and the learning environment.

Interviews with both national and sub-national government of MoEYS concluded that there has been limited regional sub-national government consultation on CSDG4 thus far. Interviewees' responses indicated that knowledge about SDG4 in general is still limited among PoEs and that additional capacity building is needed. It is encouraging that MoEYS intends to further engage local government in consultations to formulate the provincial Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023.

While some indicators have the baseline data to measure, some require the collection of additional data which is costly and time intensive. Therefore, MoEYS welcomes CSOs to provide data and research reports that can be used as baseline measures for certain indicators. Various sources have expressed their concern that in the current data reporting system for the ESP, there are already difficulties in assessing the achievements against the targets, and the increased reporting requirements of CSDG4 will pose a challenge.

CSO Engagement in SDG 4 Localisation

NEP is committed to helping engage civil society organisations in SDG 4 localisation and implementation. Publishing the Incheon Declaration in Khmer, raising awareness of SDG 4, and consulting member organisations for inputs on the Roadmap are some of the steps taken towards achieving this goal.

NEP has also contributed in strengthening provincial dialogue through Provincial Education Sector Working Group (P-ESWGs), which will serve as a key driver for accountability to the 2030 Agenda. NEP facilitates sub-sector and thematic working groups to bridge CSO expertise with the relevant education policy and planning processes of the government, and has conducted targeted sensitisation and consultation with these groups to help align their knowledge and experience with the SDG 4 development process. NEP has also worked to build CSO capacity in community research and advocacy, which will help strengthen the local evidence base and CSO's ability to monitor CSDG4 implementation.

Over 70% of P-ESWGs representatives in the survey reported that they participated in NEP's consultative workshops for CSDG4. Although consultations organized by NEP, 28% of P-ESWG representatives were also invited directly by MoEYS for CSDG4 consultation. NEP has been working closely with MoEYS and development partners to channel this feedback through all stages of the CSDG4 localization and Roadmap development process.

The survey for this report revealed that the ability of P-ESWG representatives to align their organisational programmes with SDG 4 is still fairly weak. While initial steps towards sensitising CSOs towards SDG 4 are promising, additional training and support will be required to fully build the capacities of CSOs to engage in the 2030 Agenda.

Progress and Key Challenges in CSDG4 Implementation

While MoEYS has made much progress in the localisation and implementation of CSDG4, some key issues are of particular concern. The mechanisms for teacher deployment, the quality and training of teachers, the status of inclusive education for children with disabilities, and the development of the non-formal education sub-sector face challenges which will need to be addressed in order for the government to achieve the SDG 4 ambitions.

Teacher Deployment: An equal distribution of teachers throughout all schools in Cambodia is important for learners to obtain a quality education. Based on data from 124

countries, UNESCO found that in countries with a lower pupil-teacher ratio, the survival rates of students to the final grade of primary education was higher, and therefore recommends a maximum of 40 pupils per teacher (UIS, 2006).

Although there are large disparities across regions, the national average student to teacher ratio is 44:1 in primary schools. An analysis of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) enrolment data 2017-2018 reveals that six provinces had a teacher shortage at primary level (at a ratio of 50:1), 18 provinces including the capital had a surplus, and only one province had an adequate number of teachers.

Since pupil-teacher ratios have a major impact on the quality of education, MoEYS recognises the need to improve teacher deployment, and has outlined a range of strategies and actions to address the unequal distribution of teachers, including the following:

- The Human Resource Management Policy (2012) aims to improve the quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and responsiveness of educational personnel and educational institutions.
- The Teacher Policy Action Plan outlines activities to equalise the pupil-teacher ratio across provincial, district, and commune levels.
- The Mid-term Review of the ESP in 2016 acknowledged a need for focus on the rationalisation of personnel supply and ensuring equal teacher deployment between urban and rural areas.

Despite recognition of the importance of reform and a range of important policies and plans noting teacher deployment as a priority, progress has been slow in addressing this issue. The shortage of teachers in remote and disadvantaged areas as well as qualified and trained teachers remains a challenge for educational development. The current allowances and incentives have so far failed to motivate enough teachers to serve in rural and remote schools, often with poor conditions, limited access to power supply, lack of provision of piped water supply and toilets, and insufficient learning materials (Fukao, 2016). While capacity building support to local education officials has helped them provide relevant and reliable data, there has been little progress so far on the use of data for evidence-based decisions (CDPF phase 1 & 2).

Teacher Quality and Training: Teacher preparation is a crucial factor influencing student achievement, while high quality schooling depends largely on teacher quality and performance. The RGC has embarked on an ambitious reform agenda to improve teacher quality including the following actions:

- Teacher standards in Cambodia were adopted in 2010 and outline specific competencies and behaviors that teachers are expected to have and that positively impact student learning.
- The Teacher Policy Action Plan was adopted in 2015, specifying key strategies to address teacher quality.
- The Continuous Professional Development Policy adopted in 2017 outlines strategies to establish a framework for continuous professional development.
- Provincial Teacher Training Centers (PTTCs) and Regional Teacher Training Centres (RTTCs) are being upgraded and transformed, renewed focus is being given to conducting and harmonising learning assessments, and Child-Friendly Schools have been expanded.
- Teacher salaries have been steadily increasing.
- The high-level government official interviewed for this report highlighted that a teacher roadmap will be developed to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

However, teaching is not currently a profession that attracts the top graduates in Cambodia and teacher training centres report difficulties recruiting well-qualified candidates (Tandon & Fukao, 2015). While the recent salary increases are positive, there are still weak linkages between performance and incentives which can lead to increased wages without corresponding increases in quality (Prigent, 2016). There are currently only 18 provincial training centres and two regional training centres, leaving a gap in access for many potential candidates to enter the profession from underserved provinces (MoEYS, 2018). Moreover, pre-service training has not produced graduates with a sufficient understanding of content or a student-centered learning environment. In-service training also appears to have gaps. The VSO rapid assessment of in-service education training provision found that 38 per cent of teachers interviewed believed it could improve their knowledge but not their teaching practice.

Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities: The inclusion and equity focus of the SDG 4 framework calls on governments to ensure that changes in policies and education plans are made so that the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, are not left behind. MoEYS has devised a range of strategies and actions to guide the path forward:

- In 2009, RGC adopted the Law on the Protection and the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and then the National Plan of Action for Persons with Disabilities (NPA), including Landmine/ERW Survivors 2009-2011.
- Following the NPA, the National Disability Strategic Plan 2014-2018 was launched.
- In 2016, MoEYS created the Special Education Department, an expansion of the mandate of the Office of Special Education.
- A National Institute of Special Education was established in 2017 to train specialised teachers.
- MoEYS has recently adopted a Policy on Inclusive Education in June 2018.

At the present time, educational achievements among persons with disabilities are significantly lower than persons without disabilities. An NEP study (2018) found that barriers to access school include the lack of disability identification, limited physical infrastructure, weak teaching capacity, and the lack of special education learning materials. Underpinning many challenges is the lack of quality data on children with disabilities in Cambodia, with different data collection mechanisms using different classifications of disabilities. Additionally, many teachers have not received training on educating children with disabilities or how to modify their curriculum to support children with different learning needs.

Non-Formal Education: Set as one of the seven sub-sectors of the education system, non-formal education (NFE) has been recognised by the government as critical to achieving SDG 4. Several key actions have been taken to develop this sub-sector, including:

- The National Action Plan for Non-Formal Education 2008-2015 recognises Community Learning Centres (CLCs) as central to the implementation of NFE, and stipulates that "each commune should have one."
- The government's main NFE policy goals in the ESP 2014-2018 include improving literacy rates, helping out-of-school youths re-enter the formal education system or gain equivalent qualifications, and providing vocational skill training.
- The MoEYS' "minimum standards for CLCs" aim to guarantee the quality and consistency of CLCs across the country.

Non-formal education is a fundamental element of lifelong learning, and given the current literacy rate and high rates of

school drop-out, it is an essential driver towards achieving the ambitions of SDG 4. With the recent decreases in the number of graduates in Functional Literacy and Post-Literacy programmes, it is unclear whether the programmes are meeting the needs of the target population. The relatively small allocation to NFE relative to other sub-sectors (0.8% of the overall education budget in 2016) is compounded by the slow and ineffective financial management processes, which has prevented the already small budget allocated to NFE from reaching its beneficiaries. There is a general lack of standards across the sub-sector, including NFE programmes, facilities, resources and curricula, as well as a gap in linkages between NFE and the Technical and Vocational Education and Training sector. These have prevented the progressive NFE standards and policies developed by MoEYS from being fully implemented.

Education Financing: The Education 2030: Incheon Declaration Framework for Action recommends allocating 15 per cent to 20 per cent of the public expenditure and 4 per cent to 6 per cent of the GDP to education. The total budget allocation towards the education sector has been increasing at a rate of approximately 1 per cent each year—it was 13.3 per cent in 2018 and is expected to reach 4.5 per cent of the GDP by 2030.

Looking at domestic allocation alone, analysis of the 2017 budget by the CSO Budget Working Group also showed a lack of equitable investment across provinces. It found that the non-salary budgets per learner of Pursat and Preah Vihear were lower than the per learner allocation in Koh Kong, despite both provinces having a lower poverty rate. Furthermore, Cambodia's spending per pupil is below regional standards. In Cambodia, the average spending per child at the primary level is USD 208, while it reaches USD 1,207 in Vietnam, and USD 3,564 in Thailand (Bista, 2017). In its tenacious drive towards regional competitiveness, Cambodia's relatively low allocations towards education and inequities in investment across regions to address specific disparities pose a challenge.

A large proportion of the education budget is allocated towards personnel emolument, including salaries and other staff related costs. In 2017, 78 per cent of the total education budget was allocated to personnel emolument, and 86 per cent of the provincial education budget was allocated to personnel

emolument (CSO Budget Working Group, 2018). While human resources play a pivotal role in the functioning and growth of the education sector, sufficient budget must also be specifically allocated towards the monitoring and implementation of policies and plans to meet the education sector targets.

Conclusion and Key Recommendations

The MoEYS has made great strides in its localisation of SDG 4. The Roadmap paving the way forward to contextualise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development into the Cambodian context reflects learning from the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), consultative inputs from key stakeholders across the education landscape, and the spirit and rigour of the deep, ambitious reforms underway to improve the quality of education for all. The concepts and targets of the 2030 Agenda are rather new, so greater awareness of the localised content, strategies, monitoring approaches, and implementation modalities is still required by both sub-national Ministry representatives, as well as NGOs. This will ensure ownership and the active engagement of all stakeholders in realising the Agenda. It is then highly recommended to:

- Increase opportunities for the sub-national level to deeply engage in the process of CSDG4 planning and rollout, including increased capacity-building on SDG 4 localisation and alignment, and timely information-sharing for long-term planning at the provincial level.
- Ensure that CSOs are working closely together to improve their knowledge of SDG 4 in order to integrate the agenda into their organisational planning.
- Accelerate the increase of budget allocation towards the education sector to reach 20 per cent of the total budget with equitable investments for learners, and with sufficient budget towards monitoring and implementation.
- Continue to improve Human Resources Information Management (HRIM) systems and provide capacity building to sub-national education officers to utilise EMIS data to make evidence-based teacher requests.
- Improve the data collection system to include missing CSDG4 indicators.
- Build a cohesive strategy to develop one integrated programme for teacher professional development, linking pre-service, in-service, and on-the-job training, and include the training in special and inclusive education. •



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Established in 2002, NGO Education Partnership is a key focal point for education sector work in Cambodia. NEP is a membership organisation working with 144 Education NGOs (92 local and 52 international based on NEP database 2018). It aims to promote active collaboration between NGOs working in education and advocates on behalf of its member organisations in policy meetings and discussions with the Royal Government of Cambodia. It has also been recognised as a prominent partner for improving education policy and its implementation by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and as a key ally by Development Partners. NEP is a member organisation of ASPBAE.



Asia South Pacific Association
for Basic and Adult Education
Learning Beyond Boundaries

ASIA SOUTH PACIFIC ASSOCIATION FOR BASIC AND ADULT EDUCATION (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals working towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, lifelong adult education and learning.

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ISBN: 978-621-95859-0-3