



Project Information Document (PID)

Concept Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 02-Nov-2020 | Report No: PIDC30244

**BASIC INFORMATION****A. Basic Project Data**

Country Cambodia	Project ID P174335	Parent Project ID (if any)	Project Name Cambodia General Education Improvement Project (P174335)
Region EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC	Estimated Appraisal Date Jul 20, 2021	Estimated Board Date Oct 29, 2021	Practice Area (Lead) Education
Financing Instrument Investment Project Financing	Borrower(s) Royal Government of Cambodia	Implementing Agency Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

To improve general education quality in target areas, and to provide immediate and effective response in case of an eligible crisis or emergency.

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)**SUMMARY**

Total Project Cost	60.00
Total Financing	60.00
of which IBRD/IDA	50.00
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS**World Bank Group Financing**

International Development Association (IDA)	50.00
IDA Credit	50.00

Non-World Bank Group Financing

Trust Funds	10.00
EFA-FTI Education Program Development Fund	10.00



Environmental and Social Risk Classification

Substantial

Concept Review Decision

Track II-The review did authorize the preparation to continue

Other Decision (as needed)

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

Over the past two decades, Cambodia has undergone significant economic transition, reaching lower-middle-income status in 2015. The total population in Cambodia is approximately 16.7 million.¹ The economy is growing rapidly driven by agriculture, garment exports, tourism, and, more recently, construction. The annual average growth rate of 7.7 since 1995 ranked Cambodia among the top seven fastest-growing economies in the world over this time period. As a result, Cambodia's per capita gross national income in current U.S. dollars increased from US\$323 in 1995 to US\$1,621 in 2019. Cambodia had also made significant progress in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Continuous high growth has led to dramatically reduced monetary poverty. Official estimates show that the percentage of Cambodians living under the national poverty line fell from 47.8 percent in 2007 to 13.5 percent in 2014. Poverty reduction was accompanied by improved human development and significant increases in living standards. Cambodia's growth has also stimulated job creation, especially for youth and women in labor-intensive activities, as part of the expansion of activities across agriculture, manufacturing, and services. Inequality level is reducing—consumption per capita for the bottom 40 percent grew at an annual average rate of 7.8 percent, compared with that for the top 60 percent at 4.7 percent. Despite this progress, most of the poor have low-paying jobs, signaling that low skills and productivity continue to be challenges. Moreover, Cambodia's gains in poverty reduction remain highly precarious, as most households that escaped poverty did so by only a small margin.

With an aspiration to become an upper-middle-income country by 2030, Cambodia needs to strengthen its growth drivers. The recent COVID-19 global outbreak has caused sharp decelerations in most of Cambodia's main engines of growth in the first half of 2020.² Cambodia's labor-intensive, export-oriented garment industry is facing a severe supply and demand shock in 2020 due to Covid-19 alongside rising wages and greater competition from abroad. Recent partial suspension of Cambodia's preferential access to the European Union (EU) market under the everything-but-arms policy could add to the impact on the country's exports given its reliance on the EU market. Tourist arrivals have also been severely impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, and foreign direct investment has slowed. The real estate market correction following increased credit provided to the construction and mortgage sectors, which rely heavily on Chinese investment, and high outstanding credit, are additional vulnerabilities.

Measures under an emergency response program have been introduced in 2020 by the Royal Government of Cambodia

¹ United Nations. 2020. *World Population Prospects*.

² World Bank. 2020. Cambodia Economic Update, May 2020: *Cambodia in the Time of COVID-19*.



(RGC) to mitigate the negative impact. The Ministry of Health has updated Cambodia’s existing pandemic response strategy³, and an Inter-ministerial Committee for responding to COVID-19 was established with participation of all ministries and provincial governors. Efforts to diversify the agriculture sector and rural households’ incomes are expected to help in the medium term. Given that a large share of the population are living in rural areas, improving road connectivity and access to healthcare and emergency services in rural areas remains an important task to strengthen the preparedness for emergency situations, as well as to improve access to jobs and services for the rural poor.

Sectoral and Institutional Context

The education sector plays an important role in the national development and the government has made great strides towards increasing access and educational outcome. The aim is to provide high quality education and lifelong learning services to children, youth and adults, which are relevant and responsive to the labor market demand. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2019-2023 has been designed to respond to these demands and makes clear the relationship between national policy and the education policy. The Plan demonstrates a logical relationship between the strategic framework, programs, activities and both human and financial resources. There is provision for strong monitoring and evaluation, feedback and adjustment to the plan if needed.

The country achieved the MDG goal in universal primary education in 2015. In 2019, the net enrollments for primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary sub-sectors increased from 85.5%, 14.4%, and 3.3% in 1999 to 97.3%, 59.9% and 30.9%, respectively. The pre-primary education enrollment rate for 5-year-olds rose from 24.6 percent in 2004 to 62.9 percent in 2019; the rate reached its peak in 2017 at 68%, and gradually decreased since then. It is now receiving only 6.5% of the total education budget. The Gender Parity Index for net enrollment in 2019-20 was 1.06 in pre-primary school (aged 3 to 5 years), 1.01 for in primary school (grades 1 to 6), 1.27 in lower secondary school (grades 7 to 9), and 1.41 in upper secondary school (grades 10 to 12). This implied that more girls enrolled in school than boys of their ages, and the difference was profound when they entered secondary education.

The ESP is gradually shifting its focus from access to quality in Early Childhood Education, primary and secondary education. Specific measures have been taken to assure quality education for marginalized children and youth. Focus, accountability, and clear outcomes are central to the ESP. Within the context of decentralization, providing the education system with the right resources and the mechanisms to account transparently is crucial to improving the outcomes and impact of the education activities. The ESP includes measures to improve the budget management and to better linking results to financial resources. Rigorous and effective implementation in strengthening teaching and administrative staff capacity at all levels is highlighted as key to better governance. In order to support this, the government continues to strengthen of the partnership between the Government, communities, parents, and the development partners.

Today, 59 percent of children in Cambodia at late primary age are not proficient in reading and writing⁴. Many students who are in schools do not learn much, and most perform significantly below the MoEYS’ mathematics and language standards. Significant number of schools need to be rehabilitated and many classrooms are overcrowded. These conditions not only deteriorate access to education but also severely hamper student learning when inclement weather prevents students from attending schools. In 2020, the system had approximately 93,225 teachers (teaching staff) and 19,862 administrative staff members (non-teaching staff). Less than 20 percent of the general education teachers hold bachelor’s degree or higher degrees and teacher absenteeism remains also prevalence. The distribution of teachers is uneven across regions and is not correlated with the number of students or school-age population. In 2015, it was

³ Kingdom of Cambodia. 2020. *National Action Plan: Preparing for and Responding to Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Kingdom of Cambodia, February to August 2020.*

⁴ They are the six-graders who performed at “proficient” and “advanced” levels of the national assessment in conducted in 2016.



calculated that urban schools, including pre-primary, primary and secondary schools, had a surplus of 124 teachers while rural schools had shortage of 31,824 teachers nationwide⁵.

The ESP outlined two key challenges: low learning outcomes and inequitable access. These twin challenges cut across the sub-sectors of general education (pre-primary, primary, and secondary education), albeit in different ways, and are major barriers to ensuring quality education. The proposed General Education Improvement Project (GEIP) will aim to address these issues.

Low student learning outcomes

Improving student learning outcomes remains a major challenge. According to the National Student Assessment, the student learning outcomes remained low and did not improve between 2013 and 2017. The results show that on average students in Grades 6 and 8 can only answer correctly about half of the questions. These results were in line with the findings from the PISA-D in 2018, where Cambodian 15-year-olds scored below the average of all participating countries. Only around 10 percent of students tested achieved level 2, the minimum achievement level for Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4).⁶ Furthermore, teachers remain ill-equipped to teach and schools are not effectively managed. MoEYS outlined its approach to address learning outcomes in its current ESP. The ESP set out a number of core reform programs including (i) improving teacher training, (ii) scaling up implementation of school based management (SBM), (iii) improving learning management, including student assessment and inspection, (iv) implementing digital education and (v) creating enabling environments at national and sub-national levels for educational reform.⁷ The key priority actions in ESP 2019-23 were included based on the successful lessons learnt from the completed or ongoing projects by MoEYS and DPs. SBM model has been implemented under an ongoing IDA-financed Secondary Education Improvement Project, which MoEYS evaluated a successful model, which is appropriate for Cambodia, to provide support to teachers by upgrading their qualifications and providing on-site coaching and grants to schools as seed funds to invest in teaching and learning materials and engage community and authority in school operations to hook for local funding to improve infrastructure and tasks that improve student learning outcomes.

In addition, MoEYS also intends to improve student learning outcomes by strengthening school effective minimum standards across the sub-sectors. These standards cover a range of issues in the education system, from teaching and learning to governance and accountability. Primary and Lower Secondary (grades 7-9) school effective minimum standards have been adopted by MoEYS while those for pre-primary and upper secondary are still under development. Although these standards differ across the sub-sectors, each aims to improve student learning outcomes.

Inequitable access

Despite the gains in improving access, certain groups of children remain excluded. These groups include those (i) living in remote areas; (ii) from low socioeconomic families; (iii) who are disabled; and (iv) from ethnic minority communities. On access, in 2019, 115 communes in rural and remote parts of the country did not have lower-secondary schools⁸, despite the RGC strong commitment to having a primary school per village, a lower-secondary school per commune, and upper-secondary/secondary school per district or town. There are a large number of school buildings with poor conditions (structural problems, leaked roof, broken or cracked walls, thatched roof and/or walls, etc.) that require renovation or maintenance to ensure safety. On quality, the national assessment results for the students in grades 3, 6,

⁵ World Bank. June 2019. Improving the Effectiveness of Public Finance in Cambodia

⁶ MoEYS. 2018. Education in Cambodia: Finding from Cambodia's Experience in PISA for Development

⁷ MoEYS. 2019. Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023

⁸ MoEYS. March 2020. Education Congress Report



8 and 11 showed consistent results that the students in rural areas and low socio-economic quintiles academically performed poorer than their counterparts in urban areas and high socio-economic quintiles. Those rural and low socio-economic status children tended to have low enrollment and high dropout rates in every education sub-sector.

MoEYS outlined in the current ESP its immediate objective to ensure these hard to reach children receive equal opportunities to access quality education, consistent with the Cambodian constitution. This objective will be met by (i) constructing schools in remote areas, often where ethnic minorities live; (ii) rehabilitating overcrowded and/or dilapidated schools in both urban and rural communities; (iii) incentivizing teachers to work in rural and remote areas; (iv) distributing scholarships to students and grants to schools; and (v) providing training and guidelines to school management committees, including on gender issues.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which forced schools closed for six months (most re-opened between September and October), revealed a digital divide that will likely widen as technology becomes increasingly used in teaching and learning. Over half of students surveyed while schools were shut did not have internet at home, preventing them from watching the digital content recorded by teachers.⁹ Such disparities hinder the goal of equitable access, so MoEYS wants to pilot distance learning classrooms where recorded content can be played, in safe ways, to small groups of children.

The various reform programs addressing both challenges require substantial investment. However, the government has reduced – and will likely further reduce – public expenditures on education because of the projected economic contraction from COVID-19. In early 2020, the annual operating budget for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) was reduced by 2 percent to provide resources for immediate COVID response programs in health and social protection.¹⁰ With Cambodia’s economic growth projected to experience continued downturns because of COVID-19, further reductions to the education budget are expected in the years ahead. This will negatively impact education development, compounding the loss of learning time and reducing learning outcomes. These effects will also be felt unevenly across the country, impacting disadvantaged groups most. Addressing financing constraints will require political negotiations to ensure that the education sector secures an increased share of the government budget in the context of the ESP as well as improving allocative efficiency within the education sector. It will also require careful support and coordination of development partners (DPs).

MoEYS has requested its DPs to jointly implement the ESP and improve student learning outcomes and ensure equity. Several DPs are already working to support the core reform programs in Cambodia (See Annex 2 for the main projects). At primary education, USAID, UNICEF (via the GPE financing), and SIDA are the key partners supporting the implementation of early grading reading and mathematics, while at lower secondary and upper-secondary education levels, the World Bank and Asian Development Bank provides support respectively. The capacity development of MoEYS has received a pooled fund from the EU, USAID, SIDA, GPE, and UNICEF, while teacher training institution improvement is mainly supported by JICA. EU and SIDA support schools nationwide by providing school operational budget annually. No development partner currently assists the pre-primary sub-sector. Though there has been substantial support for the education sector, the financial and technical support in form of grants will be phased out in the next few years, according to the February 2020 mapping exercise of education support conducted by the Education Sector Working Group. The proposed General Education Improvement Project (GEIP) exists within this context, aiming to solve the twin challenges facing the sector while not overlapping with existing DP interventions.

⁹ Plan International & Care. July 2020. Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 Impacts on Girls’ Education

¹⁰ MoEYS. July 2020. Cambodia Education Response Plan to COVID-19 Pandemic



Relationship to CPF

GEIP is closely aligned with the Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2019-2023 Focus Area 2: Foster Human Development,¹¹ the Human Capital Project, World Bank's corporate target on reducing learning poverty, and the Education Global Practice's Strategy. The project aims at improving access to quality general education, including pre-primary education, which is closely linked with the Objective 5 of the CPF: Expand access to quality early childhood services. By supporting the implementation of school-based management (SBM), improving teachers' qualifications and teaching quality, and setting up strong monitoring and evaluation mechanisms at primary and secondary education level, and introducing education technology, the project is serving the CPF's Objective 4: Enhance quality and alignment of education with labor demands.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

To improve the quality of and equitable access to general education in target areas and to provide immediate and effective response in case of an eligible crisis or emergency

Key Results (From PCN)

The following indicators will be monitored to measure the performance of project outcomes.

1. Number of direct project beneficiaries (Disaggregated by gender and educational sub-sectors)
2. Percentage/Number of teachers using effective teaching practices in early grade reading and mathematics
3. Percentage/Number of targeted schools meeting minimum standards of school effectiveness
4. Number of enrolled students in newly constructed secondary schools (Disaggregated by gender)

D. Concept Description

GEIP will build on MOEYS' extensive achievements in implementing a series of GPE and World Bank projects in the primary and secondary sub-sectors. It will continue to support a subset of the general education reform programs stated in ESP 2019-23, focusing on improving quality and equity from pre-primary to upper secondary levels. It will combine financing from the International Development Association (IDA) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The IDA financing will support the activities in secondary education sub-sector and the GPE financing will support activities in pre-primary and primary education. The project is comprised of three components.

Component 1: Improving Student Learning Outcomes

This component aims to improve equity and student learning outcomes in target schools across general education by (1) supporting the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM); (2) providing capacity development to teachers and school leaders; and (3) improving learning environments. Target schools will be spread across disadvantaged districts with high numbers out-of-school children and poverty in the country, giving this project national reach. This targeting will be based on two criteria: number of out of school children and poverty rate.

Sub-component 1.1: Establishing school-based management across general education. Strong school management and governance are crucial for building safe learning environments and motivating high-quality teacher performance. Most school principals and communities currently receive little guidance and support. This sub-component will establish

¹¹ World Bank. 2019. Country Partnership Framework for the Kingdom of Cambodia for the Period FY2019-FY2023



and/or support school management committees in target schools.¹² Activities of this sub-component will include (i) updating/developing SBM guidelines for each sub-sector of general education; (ii) providing school grants and related school-based management training to school principals and vice-principals, community representatives, key local authority members, and sub-national education officials; and (iii) providing on-going coaching to schools on standardized student assessment, school self-assessment, yearly improvement plans, school management, and gender based violence. These activities will be implemented by national core trainers who will visit and work with each target school. A mentorship program will also be established among clusters of schools to share knowledge and experiences of best practices. These activities and implementation modalities will help meet the various school effectiveness standards within each sub-sector, primarily in relation to school management and governance. The activities in this sub-component will also improve equity through school grants and targeted training. This sub-component will use results-based financing.

Sub-component 1.2: Training and upgrading teachers and school principals. This sub-component will provide a series of capacity development opportunities to teachers and school principals in the target schools and districts. The activities under this sub-component will include: (i) training, mentoring, and coaching pre-primary teachers on new curriculum and parental education; (ii) training, mentoring, and coaching primary school teachers on early grade reading and mathematics assessment and teaching techniques; and (iii) upgrading the qualifications of secondary school teachers and school principals to obtain Bachelor's or Master's Degrees¹³. These activities will be implemented through a combination of the various teacher training institutions currently in operation, including the National Institute of Education, Teacher Education Colleges, Regional and Provincial Teachers Training Centers, Pre-School Teacher Training Center, and the Faculty of Education at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. Support to these institutions will be provided where needed to ensure capacity development offerings align with school effectiveness standards. On-going support will be provided by national core trainers. This sub-component will use results-based financing.

Sub-component 1.3: Improving equitable access to quality learning environments. This subcomponent ensures general education is available to all students in targeted schools and provides targeted support to stop learning loss from external shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This subcomponent will support (i) school construction and rehabilitation in targeted districts;¹⁴ (ii) teacher home/dormitory construction in targeted schools; and (iii) the development of specialized environments, such as distance learning classrooms¹⁵ and for students with disabilities. These activities will support equity across general education while also ensuring the education system is resilient to any future shock. This sub-component will be financed through Investment Project Financing.

Component 2: Strengthening Sector Development and Project Management

This component aims to strengthen sector governance and monitoring and evaluation and support project management. Proposed activities include: (i) strengthening results-based management and monitoring systems across the sub-sectors of general education; and (ii) enhancing capacity in managing and implementing reform programs.

Sub-component 2.1: Improve sub-sector performance and M&E. The sub-component will ensure each of the sub-sectors

¹² The project will follow the World Bank's School Vision of 6As Closed Loop Model of school-based management. The 6As integrated approach to quality education includes autonomy (local decision making based on evidence), accountability (responsibility for school and student performance), assessment (measuring school and student performance), attention to teachers, attention to culture and attention to early childhood development. [Patrinós, Velez, & Wang (2013). Framework for the Reform of Education Systems and Planning for Quality]

¹³ The learning arrangements will not interrupt teachers' duties. The course will be conducted on the weekend (Saturday and Sunday), during vacation, and from a distance.

¹⁴ This includes public preschools, primary and lower secondary schools, and special needs schools as well as libraries and other facilities needed to improve the provision of quality and equitable education. Construction activities will use IPF with disbursement condition.

¹⁵ This would include EdTech such as simplified adaptive learning systems.



have systematic plans to improve the quality and teaching and learning. Activities include (i) developing sub-sector strategies; (ii) conducting sub-sector monitoring and review; and (iii) developing a policy on school governance.

Sub-component 2.2: Project management and M&E. This sub-component will support the day-to-day implementation, coordination, and management of project activities on planning and execution, financial management (FM), procurement, supervision and reporting, internal and external audits, environmental and social safeguards management, and monitoring and evaluation. In addition, this component will provide necessary vehicles, training/workshops, logistics, and operational costs to relevant MoEYS departments. The project will provide critical and strategic technical assistance (TA) and capacity building to support and strengthen relevant departments at all levels. In addition to regular monitoring and evaluation, the project will conduct an impact evaluation of the project interventions. Using the GPE financing, the project will hire an independent verification agency to verify the achievement of the performance-based condition (PBC) indicators.

Component 3: Contingent Emergency Response

The objective of the contingent emergency response component (CERC) is to allow for the reallocation of financing in accordance with the IDA Immediate Response Mechanism in order to provide an immediate response to an eligible crisis or emergency, as needed. Learning from the lessons of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the project will develop Emergency Response Manual (ERM) and other necessary documents to ensure that CERC can be activated at any time during the emergency. While the ERM will be designed to release IDA financing, it will also serve as a guiding document for the whole sector in the case of an emergency.

Legal Operational Policies	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

Summary of Screening of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts

The overall environmental and social risk classification is Substantial. All districts and provinces in Cambodia will be included in the proposed project with facilities being improved or constructed for 213 early childhood centers, 1000 primary schools, and up to 500 secondary schools. The project targets big cities such as Phnom Penh and Siem Reap, as well as rural towns and small villages, including remote areas. The geographic area will include north-eastern provinces which are home to significant number of Indigenous Peoples where there are substantial gaps and disparities in poverty and quality of education.

The construction works will take place in existing school buildings or school land areas owned by MoEYS. E&S screening will take place for construction requiring new locations, to make sure it is on MoEYS' land. The exact locations of new project construction have not been known.

Nine of the ten Bank's environmental and social standards (ESS) have been screened as relevant. Standard ESS9 on Financial Intermediaries is considered not relevant.

Social risk is considered as Substantial. Social risks from the project include risks relate to inclusion, such as the exclusion



of certain groups from project benefits, especially those that may live in more remote locations, like indigenous peoples; and on child protection, Violence Against Children (VAC), health and safety, labor, and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), during construction but also within an education setting. Online education activities also carry several social risks, relating to child abuse and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA). Risks related to construction include the influx of labor force, particularly in small or remote communities where skilled labor may not be available, though this may be minimized by hiring local labor. The project will need to ensure there is equitable opportunities for unskilled labor (i.e. unskilled jobs made available to women at the same pay as men, that jobs are inclusive of indigenous peoples, the poor and vulnerable groups), that there is no child labor, that suitable worker's camps are set up (if needed), that appropriate precautions to prevent COVID are taken for both workers and the nearby community and that risks of GBV/SEA/VAC in the workforce and the community as well as the education setting are well managed. The level of risk will likely be associated with the extent of the labor force as well as with the remoteness of the community with an outsider labor force may be more vulnerable to risks from COVID as well as GBV. There are also safety risks during construction, in particular for children.

Environment risk is considered Moderate. The proposed project is nationwide, covering both existing urban communities and remote locations. The environmental adverse risks and impacts will be site specific, temporary and reversible and readily mitigatable. These potential risks and impacts are associated with activities under Component 1, such as rehabilitation of existing buildings, construction of new five-classroom buildings, and teachers' accommodations. The civil works may cause traffic disturbance, generate dust, noise, and waste. Attention should be paid to the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures and monitoring.

Prior to the civil works, specific locations for the buildings will be determined through a consultation process. The facilities will not be financed if they are located in sensitive natural critical habitats or protected areas. The potential locations will either be in the existing school's land and/or land owned by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS)/local authority. For the purpose of civil works, all locations will be identified and verified through environmental and social screening, which include consultations.

An assessment of these risks will need to be made as part of the Environmental and Social Assessment (ESA) which will inform the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) and the Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and various frameworks, procedures and plans as part of the ESMF.

CONTACT POINT

World Bank

Simeth Beng
Senior Education Specialist

Borrower/Client/Recipient

Royal Government of Cambodia
Vissoth Vongsey
Permanent Secretary of State
vongsey_vissoth@mef.gov.kh



Implementing Agencies

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
Bunroeun Nath
Secretary of State
nath.bunroeun@moeys.gov.kh

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

The World Bank
1818 H Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20433
Telephone: (202) 473-1000
Web: <http://www.worldbank.org/projects>

APPROVAL

Task Team Leader(s):	Simeth Beng
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Approved By

Country Director:	Inguna Dobraja	05-Nov-2020
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