



Supporting teachers to improve student learning: MoEYS, UNESCO and UNICEF celebrate the achievements of GPE-3

Wednesday, 16 November 2022
[FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE]



Cambodia has made steady progress in increasing access to education in recent years, with the primary net enrolment rate increasing from 87 per cent in 2001 to 97 per cent in 2020. To support its transformation into a high-performing education system, Cambodia has prioritised teacher development to also improve the quality of education so that students attending schools are gaining the knowledge and skills – especially core competencies like Khmer reading and Mathematics – that support their personal and academic development.

Through a \$20.6 million GPE-3 grant provided by the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) implemented since 2018, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), jointly with UNESCO and UNICEF, has successfully upgraded the competencies of teachers to support better learning for over 230,000 early grade students in Cambodia. GPE-3 is the third consecutive GPE implementation programme launched in Cambodia since it became a GPE partner country in 2006. Cambodia has received two prior grants from GPE totalling \$95.6 million.

To celebrate the joint achievements of GPE-3, the MoEYS will be organising an event on Thursday, 17 November at the Phnom Penh Teacher Education College (PTEC) to share the results and best practices of the GPE-3 programme with key education stakeholders, including MoEYS leaders and officials, development partners, school leaders and teachers. The event will provide important findings to inform the strategic priority focus of the new programmes under GPE 2025 to sustain and build upon the gains achieved by GPE-3.



The GPE-3 programme is designed to address the issue of poor student learning outcomes, where students are not attaining the proficiency levels in Khmer and Mathematics expected at their grade level, even in the early grades. The programme recognises that well-prepared, qualified, motivated teachers who continue to develop professionally is the strongest school-level factor for improving student learning, and the interventions are developed in alignment with the national priority of teacher development. The programme achieves its objectives through two complementary parts, for which UNESCO is the grant agent of the \$14.4 million ‘Fixed Part’ – known as the Strengthening Teacher Education Programmes in Cambodia (STEPCam) – and UNICEF is the grant agent of the \$6.2 million ‘Variable Part’.

Through STEPCam, new first-of-its-kind systems have been developed and introduced in Cambodia’s education system. First, a national CPD system has been developed to provide teachers and education staff with access to needs-based training courses to update and upgrade their knowledge and skills in line with the demands of the evolving education sector. Second, teachers and school management are now able to access individual student data, and monitor their attendance, well-being and learning outcomes through the new Student Tracking System. With the system, schools are better able to identify early signs of students at risk of dropping out and take necessary prevention measures to ensure that no student is left behind.

In the classrooms, to support the MoEYS in accelerating the implementation of the national Early Grade Learning programme “*Komar Rien Komar Cheh*”, STEPCam provided technical support to develop a training programme for teachers, and a comprehensive package of teaching and learning materials for Grade 1 to 3 Mathematics to improve the way the subject is taught in the classrooms so that it is more engaging and rewarding for young learners. New investments from development partners to support the roll-out of the Early Grade Mathematics package will benefit a further 131,000 students beyond the STEPCam target provinces. Additionally, the national school-based mentoring system established through STEPCam has supported around 7,000 early grade teachers with regular mentoring.

Improving the quality of education goes beyond supporting teachers who are already teaching. New teachers joining the profession must be better prepared to adopt new teaching approaches – including using ICT in education – to improve teaching and learning. To ensure quality initial teacher education for new primary school teachers, STEPCam completed a \$3.4 million renovation project to improve the infrastructure and resources at 11 teacher training centres, which are now equipped with well-resourced libraries, computer laboratories and science laboratories. Importantly, the digital infrastructure at all 11 centres has been enhanced with campus-wide Wi-Fi services, ICT and videoconferencing equipment to increase the use of ICT in pre-service teacher education and strengthen the ICT competencies of future primary school teachers. 249 teacher educators and 1,277 primary school teachers each year are expected to benefit from these infrastructure improvements and upgraded facilities. Furthermore, STEPCam has successfully upgraded the qualifications of teacher educators in 18 teacher education institutions (TEIs) to a Bachelor of Education level.

“Our joint achievements through STEPCam under GPE-3 are made possible by the strong leadership of the MoEYS, the efforts of all its key technical departments, and the complementary support provided by development partners and private sector partners. UNESCO is proud to be supporting teacher development in Cambodia. Through STEPCam, we have provided teachers in Cambodia with access to professional development and contributed to improving their professional status and working conditions. With qualified, competent, motivated and supported teachers equipped with the right knowledge and skills, we can ensure that students in Cambodia have access to quality education for their learning and development,” said Mr Sardar Umar Alam, UNESCO Representative to Cambodia.

Under the ‘Variable Part’, administered by UNICEF through the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF III - a partnership between the European Union, USAID, Sida, GPE and UNICEF), the GPE-3 grant



supports improvements in equity, efficiency, and learning outcomes. The 'Variable Part' funding is dependent on the achievement of agreed indicators, incentivising the concentration of efforts to improve certain education markers, including improvements to the scholarships programs and systems, Early Grade Mentoring, and the capacity of schools to develop and implement school development plans and budgets, complementing the work under the 'Fixed Part'. Result-based financing like this is relatively new to Cambodia and to the MoEYS, and important lessons have been learned in the process, including on the development of appropriate indicators, the monitoring and verification processes, and the most appropriate disbursement mechanisms. Through the CDPF, the 'Variable Part' financing has supported the achievement of key reforms and priorities as outlined in the Education Sector Plan (ESP): expansion of Early Grade Learning, the revision of scholarships programs and support to the COVID-19 response plan.

"The results-based financing modality has been well implemented in Cambodia through the strong leadership of the MoEYS, demonstrating the technical capacity of the Ministry to plan, implement and monitor key programmatic interventions. UNICEF, through the CDPF, is very pleased to have been working with MoEYS under GPE-3 to strengthen programmes around scholarships, Early Grade Learning, and the COVID-19 response, amongst other interventions, ensuring that all children are able to access quality education and learn," said Dr Anirban Chatterjee, UNICEF Representative A.I.

The success of GPE-3 has been well-recognised by GPE, which selected Cambodia earlier this year as the first country in the Asia Pacific region to be featured as a success story in teacher development and to share the achievements and lessons with other countries. These results are a testament to the longstanding partnership established between Cambodia and GPE, with the support of UNESCO and UNICEF, to accelerate Cambodia's educational progress.

In his opening speech, Dr Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, thanked the technical departments, UNESCO and UNICEF, for their close collaboration to achieve these remarkable results. "The success of GPE-3 has really contributed to the overall achievements of the Ministry and supported the implementation of the Ministry's reform priorities. Teacher development is a top priority and will remain a priority for the Ministry in the coming years. These best practices have demonstrated the positive changes in the education system and should be considered for future programmes."

Through the four years of implementation under GPE-3, the MoEYS along with UNESCO and UNICEF have promoted teacher development to transform teaching and learning in the classrooms. The interventions also contribute to raising the overall professional status and working conditions of teachers in Cambodia and ensure that they are supported in their professional development. These factors are important to attract the strongest, most competent and most motivated individuals in the country to join the teaching profession.

"We have already achieved very positive results in the four years of GPE-3 to promote teacher development. Now, moving forward, the best practices of GPE-3 should be scaled up to continue this momentum," said Dr Nath Bunroeun, Secretary of State at the MoEYS and GPE-3 Programme Director.

As Cambodia moves into the next phase of GPE 2025, the momentum generated through GPE-3 to promote teacher development and quality education needs to be sustained and expanded. New investments will ensure that the interventions introduced through GPE-3 can be progressively scaled up to the national scale, and teachers in Cambodia continue to be supported to improve their pedagogical and ICT skills to support the academic and personal development of all children in Cambodia.

For further information about GPE-3, please contact:



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