



TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD

Help Ireland Make a Difference

Ireland's New International Development Policy – Public Consultation Paper

Submission from the Cambodian-Ireland Changemaker Network.



លើកកម្ពស់យុវជន
Empowering Youth

SeeBeyondBorders



Contributors:

Rith Sarakk, Duth Kimsru, Kaia Rose Smith (PEPY Empowering Youth),

Nissay Chanleakena, Phan Sophen, Nel Ratana, Khann Phearith, Colm Byrne, Pheung Pov, Blung Phath, Chhout Sovoeun, Keo Somalita Cheut Reasmey, Deirdre Corish, Gerry Kelly (SeeBeyondBorders)

Una Molloy (Donabate Community College)

Maeve Corish, Micheal Garvey, Mary Collins, Jenny Stanley, Cormac O'Brien, Niamh Kershaw (Donabate Portrane Educate Together National School)

Avril McClenahan (Francis Street C.B.S.)

Tom MacGuinness (CEO Horseware)

Nadine Ferris France (Irish Forum for Global Health /The Work for Change)

Ian Croft (Owner of New Leaf)



The Cambodian-Ireland Partnership started five years ago when a group of Irish teachers travelled to Cambodia seeking to establish an educational partnership that would benefit both Irish and Cambodian students. Over the ensuing five years this partnership has grown and developed into the Cambodian-Ireland Changemaker Network. It now involves primary and secondary schools in Ireland, collaborating and partnering with Ireland's largest teacher union The INTO, Irish Aid, Dublin City University and a number of businesses including Horseware which has factories in both countries. Two Irish Aid partner organisations in Cambodia are at the centre of this network – PEPY Empowering Youth and SeeBeyondBorders. The underlying philosophy of the Cambodian-Ireland Changemaker Network is an irrefutable conviction that change will only come about through education and that the way to achieve this change is through authentic partnership between people in the developed and the developing world working together towards a shared goal.



SeeBeyondBorders staff visiting the Horseware factory in Dundalk, and presenting a painting as a thank you gift for all of their support



PEPY and SeeBeyondBorders staff meeting President Michael D Higgins

As Irish and Cambodian people, we are very proud of Ireland's track record in providing quality international development programmes and in spending money wisely and focusing on results and outcomes. We are very grateful to Irish Aid for their support for the work that we have been doing in Ireland through the Development Education Grant and in Cambodia through the embassy in Hanoi, Vietnam.

In August 2018 a group of Irish and Khmer educators and development partners met at a specially convened workshop and discussed what we would like to communicate to Irish Aid in this submission. We also sought the views of other



partners in both countries who could not partake in this workshop. The following submission summarises our feedback.

Our key points

- Walk the talk to leave no-one behind - include Cambodia as a priority country for development support from Irish Aid given how far it trails behind its neighbours in the region and build on the partnership that is already happening and thriving
- We wholeheartedly support the call from the Irish Forum for Global Education (IFGE), for a substantial increase in Irish Aid funding for Education and teacher training specifically.
- We call on Irish Aid to prioritise increased support for improving education in Cambodia and are of the firm belief that support targeted in Cambodia will offer unparalleled opportunities for Irish Aid and the Irish Government

Why Cambodia?

In answering the call to 'Leave No One Behind' we are urging Irish Aid to look closely at Cambodia and to focus more directly and more intensely on what is happening there. Cambodia is trailing far, far behind its neighbouring countries of Vietnam and Thailand, in terms of economic growth, social mobility and development. It is not just years behind its neighbouring countries, but decades behind.

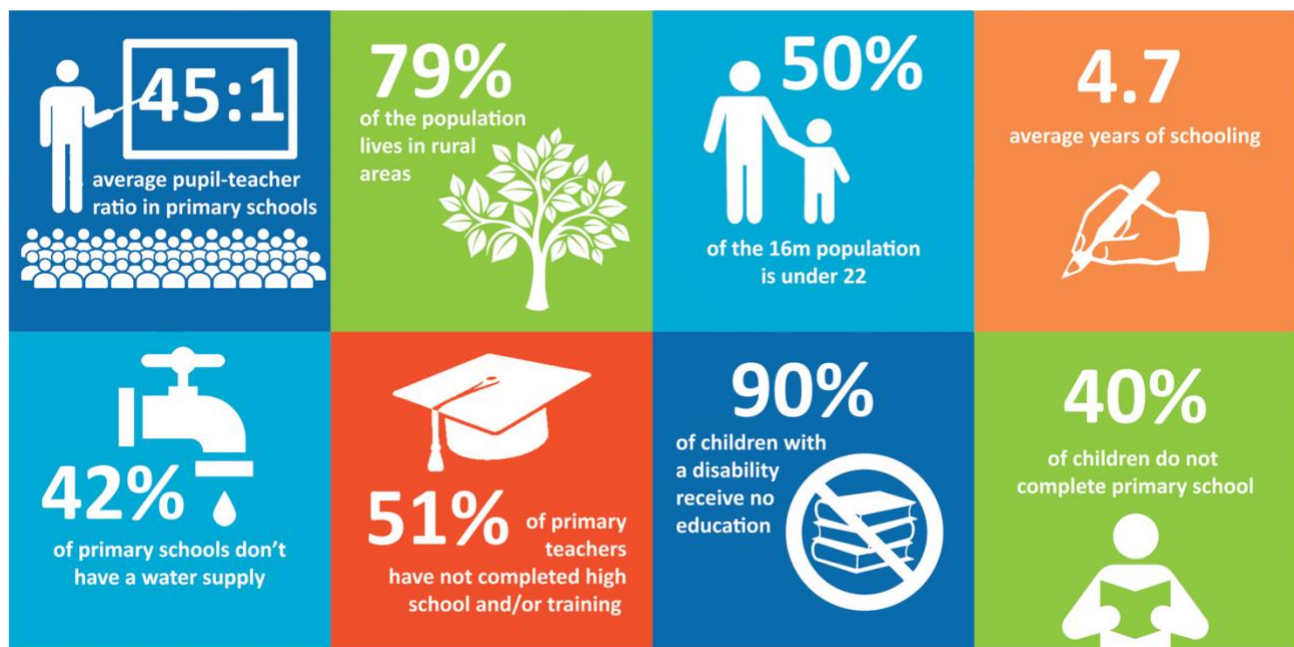
There have been several recent studies on the poor quality of teaching in Cambodia (Tandon & Fukao, 2015; Kelsall et al., 2016) which ranks amongst the lowest in the region (World Economic Forum, 2014, p. 16). During the Khmer Rouge Regime in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, 1.7 million Cambodians died as a result of enforced labour, malnutrition and mass executions; that was 21% of the population (Ross & Library of Congress, 1990). 90% of teachers were lost during this period and the education system was effectively and deliberately dismantled (Ross & Library of Congress, 1990).



The effects of the Khmer Rouge Regime are still being felt today with less than half of Cambodian teachers having completed secondary school themselves (UNICEF, 2016). Many Cambodian people live in abject poverty with very little hope of that changing. The majority of the adult population who survived the Khmer Rouge Regime are illiterate and today Cambodia has a myriad of societal problems including very high rates of suicide, domestic abuse and poverty.

Cambodia has the 2nd highest number of NGOs per capita in the world, and yet these issues persist. Cambodia does not need more NGOs. What it desperately needs is investment in and support for the NGOs that are creating sustainable systemic change.

Why education in Cambodia?



We believe that a focus on education is the best way to bring about positive social change in Cambodia. The political landscape is tense, leaving its people very vulnerable to oppression and poverty. The Cambodian people, as part of our partnership, strongly believe that if young Cambodians can access quality education they can improve their lives and their society. They urge us to ensure that the political issues their country faces are not treated as a barrier to supporting and empowering them. Furthermore we collectively recognize the



many parallels between our two countries with a recent troubled history and the efforts to bring peace to a country.

The problems in the Cambodian educational system are many. According to the World Bank Report in 2018, Cambodia is experiencing a “learning crisis.” Many of the teachers in the system have very low levels of education themselves with less than half completing secondary school. The vast majority of teachers have never been exposed to a student-centred learning environment. Teachers have few opportunities to learn or share best-practice lessons with peers. The best students are not attracted to teaching. They are underpaid, and the evaluation system is disconnected from classroom realities, providing teachers with little incentive to improve their quality of work (Tandon & Fukao, 2015). Class sizes are too big, with many classes in northern Cambodia in excess of 80 students. Absenteeism is a major problem, and only 55% of girls and 51.5% of boys stay in education long enough to reach secondary school (Department of Education, Youth & Sport Management Information System, 2016). Schools also lack basic resources and equipment. Parents do not always value education or even realise that it can impact on job prospects.

In rural areas of Cambodia, most families depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, and wages tend to be insufficient for basic needs (Asian Development Bank, 2014). Children are often needed to help their parents tend their agriculture, and are frequently kept home from school. Difficulties producing adequate income leads many high school students to drop out, and illegally migrate to neighbouring countries, where wages for precarious jobs are higher than in their own areas. In this process, youth are frequently exposed to high risks and exploitation, especially as they are usually undocumented (UNICEF 2017). As a result, there is a need to raise awareness about the value of investing in education in order to obtain secure employment, specifically by supporting youth to plan for and reach higher education.



A meeting between members of SeeBeyondBorders, PEPY, DPETNS, and the Irish Minister of International Development, Ciarán Cannon, and Senior Official of the INTO, John O'Brien

The two NGOs we are working with in Cambodia, SeeBeyondBorders and PEPY Empowering Youth, are both working tirelessly to change the educational landscape in Cambodia. They have identified a number of problems /challenges and are seeking to address these issues. They are experiencing significant success in the schools they are working in, but bringing about systemic change is an enormous undertaking. The CambodianIreland Changemaker Network advocates Irish Aid focusing on helping Cambodians to achieve Sustainable Goal Number 4 – Quality Education.

In order to empower rural youth to obtain skilled jobs so they can sufficiently support themselves and their families, PEPY provides Dream Management classes to high school students, showcasing local job/scholarship opportunities and required skills for the labor market and providing lessons on capacity building. In addition, PEPY's Scholarship Program provides financial support and Learning Center access to dedicated but financially disadvantaged students to pursue higher education in Siem Reap. The Learning Center is comprised of English, ICT, and Youth Empowerment (soft skills) classes, where students studying in Siem Reap have access to context-driven, critical-thinking-based instruction on areas that employers in Cambodia have noted to be lacking in potential employees.



Teachers from Donabate Portrane Educate Together NS visiting the PEPY learning centre as part of our annual exchange



PEPY staff and students visiting DPETNS and waving the Cambodian flag high`



SeeBeyondBorders are focusing their work on upskilling teachers and supporting them through a mentorship programme. This is a sustainable model and is yielding successful results in the students' learning. Their emphasis is on building teacher capacity. We are working closely with SeeBeyondBorders as part of the Changemaker Network and the INTO is continuing to support the work of SeeBeyondBorders through its Solidarity Fund and a sharing of expertise. The INTO has a decorated history of improving education in Cambodia and we are delighted that the largest teachers' union on the island of Ireland is leading the way as part of this network.



*Deirdre O'Connor from the INTO
visiting SeeBeyondBorders' office in
Siem Reap*

Conclusion

We share the Irish Aid's vision in our desire to work towards a world that is more equal, peaceful and sustainable. Like Ireland, peace has only recently returned to Cambodia. Unlike Ireland, Cambodia has yet to be transformed through positive systemic changes in education. We in the CambodianIreland Changemaker Network are working to change this. The Network is creating real change for real people and real change to real systems. We urge Irish Aid to make Cambodia a priority country in their new International Policy and to recognize that true change can only take place with education at the forefront. We pledge to work tirelessly to strengthen public and corporate support in both the island of Ireland and Cambodia on the Sustainable Development Goals. Our work is only beginning. In unity there is strength. Ní neart go cur le chéile



For more information on the Cambodian-Irish Partnership visit:

www.cambodiaireland.com

Email: infocambodiaireland@gmail.com

Siem Reap/Dublin, August 2018

REFERENCES:

Asian Development Bank. (2014). *Cambodia: Country Poverty Analysis 2014*.

Manila: Asian Development Bank.

Retrieved at <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/151706/cambodia-country-poverty-analysis-2014.pdf>

Cambodian Department of Education, Youth & Sport Management Information System. (2016). *Education, Statistics and Indicators 2015-2016*. Phnom Penh.

Ross, R. & Library of Congress, Federal Research Division. (1990) *Cambodia: A Country Study*. Washington, D.C.: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.

Tandon, P., & Fukao, T. (2015). *Educating the Next Generation: Improving Teacher Quality in Cambodia. Directions in Development-Human Development*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

UNICEF. (2016) *Inclusive Quality Education: UNICEF Country Programme 2016-2018*.

Retrieved at

<https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/Country Kit Education Final A4.pdf>



UNICEF. (2017). *Executive Summary Study on the Impact of Migration on Children in the Capital and Target Provinces, Cambodia*.

Retrieved at [https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/Migration -
Executive Summary Eng final.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/Migration_-_Executive_Summary_Eng_final.pdf)

World Economic Forum. (2014). *Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15*.

Retrieved at

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GlobalCompetitivenessReport_2014-15.pdf.