



**Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport**

**Understanding Social Exclusion  
in the Cambodian Context and Planning  
for Inclusive Education**

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**Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport**

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and Planning for Inclusive Education**

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## Acknowledgment

The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) developed a Policy on Education for Children with Disabilities in 2008 and did a revision in 2018 as a Policy on Inclusive Education. The aim of the revised policy is to ensure individuals with special educational needs could develop the skills and attitudes required to become active citizens in a society of shared prosperity.

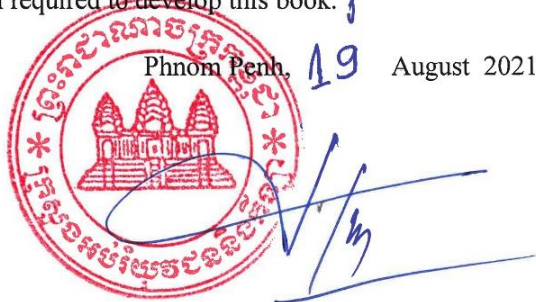
The Cambodian Education Roadmap 2030, which is committed to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, was developed in 2019, and focuses on providing inclusive, equitable and quality education for early childhood, primary and secondary education, as well as technical and vocational education. The Education Roadmap 2030 promotes lifelong learning to improve job productivity in order to support economic and social prosperity.

*“Understanding Social Exclusion in the Cambodian Context and Planning for Inclusive Education”* highlights the exclusionary factors which prevent individuals or groups from participating in the economic, social, political and cultural life of their society. It also provides comprehensive knowledge on root causes of social exclusion as experienced by children within the education system in Cambodia.

This book should help national and sub-national education staff, including those working at Provincial and District Offices of Education, and school principals, teachers and students who want to know more about social exclusion and inclusive education. It also aims to support anyone who wishes to undertake social exclusion and gender analysis through action research to bring about positive change in the education system.

MoEYS hopes that this book will enable readers to expand their knowledge on the social exclusion of children from education and to work towards a national inclusive education system in Cambodia. MoEYS would like to give profound thanks to the technical team, relevant stakeholders, and development partners for their valuable time and the physical, mental, and intellectual strength required to develop this book.

Phnom Penh, 19 August 2021



**Dr. HANG CHUON NARON**

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## Definition of Terms

**Action research** Action research describes small-scale, participatory and democratic research studies which can easily be carried out through interviews and focus groups. Action research is used where people seek to implement positive change in their personal practice, or in their schools, communities or organisations. Social Exclusion and Gender Analysis can be conducted through action research.

**Ethnic Minorities** Chinese, Cham, and Vietnamese are the ethnic minorities which live in Cambodia. They differ from the Cambodian indigenous groups in terms of their history, their means of living, the ways in which they practise their cultural traditions, and their sense of identity.

**Gender Equity** Gender equity is the process of treating both men and women fairly. To ensure fairness, measures must be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantage that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field. Equity is the means to achieving gender equality.  
*UNESCO Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework 2003*

**Inclusive Education** “The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) ... prohibits any exclusion from, or limitation to, educational opportunities on the basis of socially-ascribed or perceived differences, such as by sex, ethnic/social origin, language, religion, nationality, economic condition, ability.”  
<https://en.unesco.org/themes/inclusion-in-education>

<b>Indigenous People</b>	Groups and communities living mainly in upland areas of Cambodia who have a cultural identity, language and religion which is distinct from mainstream Khmer society, and who lead a semi-nomadic lifestyle due to their practice of ‘slash and burn’ or swidden agriculture.
<b>Patriarchy</b>	A social system where men have the power and dominate in roles of political leadership and privilege. In patriarchal systems, women are excluded from positions of power and are expected to focus on the home, family and child-rearing.
<b>SEGA</b>	Stands for Social Exclusion and Gender Analysis. SEGA is a tool which can be used to identify root causes of problems connected with social exclusion from education and how girls in particular can be excluded from the education system. The analysis can be carried out through a small-scale action research study.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	<p>A person’s sexual attraction toward other people. Sexual orientation is a complex interaction between sexual attraction and self-identity. LGBT(QIA) stands for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Lesbian:</b> women who are attracted to other women.</li> <li>○ <b>Gay:</b> men who are attracted to other men.</li> <li>○ <b>Bi:</b> which is short for ‘bi-sexual’ and describes people who are attracted to both men and women.</li> <li>○ <b>Trans:</b> which is short for ‘transgender’ and describes someone whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex at birth.</li> <li>○ <b>Queer:</b> once seen as a negative term for a lesbian or gay man, the word has been reclaimed as a self-affirming term referring to anyone who is not heterosexual.</li> </ul>

- **Intersex:** people who have physical sex attributes which are not easily classified with typical definitions of male or female.
- **Asexual:** someone with no sexual attraction to either males or females

**Social exclusion** “... a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household.”

*DFID policy paper (2005) Reducing poverty by tackling social exclusion,* Department for International Development, UK

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Inclusive Education: Global and Cambodian Commitment

Cambodia is not alone in struggling with persistent school drop-out rates, weak school attendance, poor learning outcomes in many schools, and in trying to understand how to deal with students who present with a challenging range of behaviours and disabilities. These issues are experienced in schools around the world, in both developed and developing countries.

In recognition of this fact, and in fostering a shared vision which seeks to ‘*transform lives through education*’, the 2015 World Education Forum (WEF) in Incheon, Republic of Korea, adopted the Incheon Declaration for Education 2030 [1]. This Declaration committed participant countries, which include Cambodia, to addressing issues of children’s exclusion and marginalisation from education in order to fulfil Sustainable Development Goal no. 4 (SDG-4) by 2030. SDG-4 strives to:

*‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.’*

In making this commitment, it is important that all those working within the education sector in Cambodia clearly understand how social exclusion and marginalisation undermine children’s access to education and severely reduce the opportunities to build an inclusive education system. Education sector workers must learn how to identify those children at risk and work together towards the elimination of exclusionary practices in education from Early Childhood Education to university level. If people remain ignorant of how social exclusion affects society, then school dropout rates, repetition rates, poor school enrollment and attendance, and so on, will persist and children will continue to be denied their rights to an ‘*...education ... on the basis of equal opportunity...*’ as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28. If children continue to be denied their rights to ‘*equitable quality education,*’ then SDG-4 will be difficult to achieve.

In acknowledgement of the importance of ‘*inclusive and equitable quality education*’, in February 2019, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) launched the Education 2030 Roadmap [2], which aligns with the Incheon Declaration and represents a guideline for Cambodia to become an upper-middle income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050. In addition, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), through its Educational Strategic Planning, has been continuously working towards ensuring all Cambodian children and youth have equal opportunities to access quality education, which is consistent with the RGC’s commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [3]. To improve learning outcomes for all children, MoEYS currently promotes two overarching policies:

*1) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*

*2) Ensure effective leadership and management of education officials at all levels*

In 2018, MoEYS published a Policy on Inclusive Education (PIE) which covers educational provision for vulnerable and socially excluded students from kindergarten to higher education levels of both public and private institutes (MoEYS, 2018).

## **1.2 Challenges to Inclusive Education**

A major challenge to the realisation of the Government’s mission on inclusive education is that the concepts of social exclusion and social inclusion are relatively new to Cambodia; this is reflected in the lack of Khmer words used to describe them. It is thus difficult to communicate the concept clearly, especially to those who have themselves never experienced social exclusion. Therefore, it is important to develop a shared understanding of the terms and concepts involved in social exclusion/inclusion in order to raise awareness in those working in the field of education at all levels.

The fact that there is a limited perception of social exclusion explains, to some extent, that when the concept of inclusive education was introduced to Cambodia after the ‘Education for All’ World Education Forum in 2000 in Dakar, Senegal, it was:

*‘... in a context with a very limited history of special schools, no infrastructure for training or materials for general education teachers, severely limited numbers of specialized personnel who could meet the needs of students with disabilities whether in special schools or general education, and the perception that any schooling was better than no schooling at all. [4]*

Despite these early obstacles, Cambodia has made good progress in educating its children. Since 2007, the number of children enrolled in preschool programmes has more than doubled and the number of children enrolled in primary education in 2018 was over 97 percent. Nevertheless, children and youth in Cambodia are still failing to reach learning standards appropriate for their age due to a number of exclusionary factors. Access to secondary education still shows inequalities across gender, geography, and socio-economic groups, and large numbers of girls and boys remain out of school at all levels of education. Worryingly, many children are still dropping out of school before completing their basic education.

## Chapter 2: Understanding Social Exclusion in Cambodia

### 2.1 General Definition

Many people believe the effects of social exclusion are only experienced by physically disabled people or where gender issues are involved. However, the term is much broader and covers a range of areas from which people can be socially excluded and experience discrimination. A more accurate definition of social exclusion is:

*'... a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live. Discrimination occurs in public institutions, such as the legal system or education and health services, as well as social institutions like the household.'* [5]

This definition highlights the fact that people (either individuals or groups) can be socially excluded and face discrimination due to diverse factors. Exclusion is compounded when two or more exclusionary factors intersect,

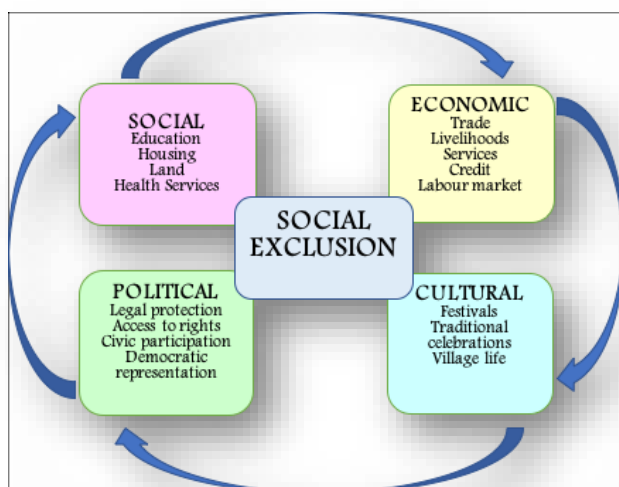


Fig 1. Dimensions of Social Exclusion

for example, gender *plus* disability *plus* poverty, or sexual orientation *plus* HIV. Social exclusion covers social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, and is characterised by unequal power relations. This leads to groups being marginalised and pushed outside of mainstream society.

Individuals and groups who suffer from social exclusion are often poor although poverty alone does not always lead to being socially excluded; there are fundamental differences between the concepts of poverty and social exclusion. Nevertheless, it is recognised that poverty is nearly always a key driver of social exclusion. Social exclusion and discrimination represent a denial of human rights, severely limit progress on poverty reduction and negatively impact economic growth and development. Social exclusion is not always intentional, for example, when disabled people are excluded through a lack of awareness of their needs, or when indigenous groups are excluded through the lack of a shared language. Nevertheless, a sense of powerlessness can lower people's aspirations, particularly where clear discriminatory behaviours are evident. In this way, socially excluded individuals or groups are undermined in their efforts to escape from poverty through their own endeavours.

## **2.2 Social Exclusion in Education**

The definition of social exclusion given above offers examples of general exclusion taking place through different factors. However, not all of these examples are relevant in every context and are not necessarily linked with children's social exclusion from the education system. Those factors which undermine the realisation of inclusive education, and which are commonly experienced in Cambodian schools, are outlined below.

### **2.2.1 Disability**

Due to civil and international conflict over decades, which resulted in large numbers of residual mines and unexploded ordnance, Cambodia has one of the highest numbers of people with disabilities worldwide. After the various conflicts, rehabilitation and educational services for children with disabilities were deemed crucial by government and non-government organisations (NGOs). Although school enrollment rates increased dramatically, the majority of children with disabilities were either not enrolled or dropped out of school [6]. In 2019 the total number of students with disabilities in Cambodia was nearly 45,000 in primary schools and close to 7,000 in secondary schools [7].

Disabled children are often excluded from aspects of life due to their lack of mobility, physical restrictions due to poor vision or deafness, and sometimes due to ignorance of their needs. Most schools in Cambodia are not easily accessed by children with physical disabilities because of the lack of infrastructure addressing their needs, such as ramps, easy-access toilets and washing facilities. Children with mobility issues can also find negotiating transport to and from school very difficult.

In addition, physically disabled children often face social discrimination from teachers and students when at school, which leads to name-calling and bullying. Many teachers are not trained to work with students with disabilities so are not able to teach them effectively, if at all. This problem is further compounded where a child's disability is less visible and less easily understood, for example, cognitive disabilities, dyslexia and autistic spectrum disorders. If schools are unable to address the needs of their disabled students, and where teachers demonstrate discriminatory practices, it is perhaps unsurprising that these students feel socially excluded and ultimately drop out of the education system.

### **2.2.2 Indigenous Groups**

There are around twenty-four different indigenous groups living in Cambodia with estimated numbers representing one to two percent of the population. Most of these groups are located in the Provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri, but other groups live across a further thirteen provinces (National Institute of Statistics): Stung Treng, Kratie, Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom, Koh Kong, Pursat, Kampong Speu, Sihanoukville, Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Oddar Meanchey and Siem Reap. The indigenous groups are culturally distinct, although some share similar traditions and beliefs. Many of the older indigenous generations are illiterate and do not speak Khmer.

A major challenge faced by indigenous groups is physical well-being as their health status is significantly poorer than that of other Cambodians. Indigenous groups follow shifting cultivation practices and depend on forests for their livelihoods.

Increased environmental degradation and land-grabbing has led to a reduction in land used for farming so high numbers of children suffer from stunting (impaired growth and development) due to poor diets. The lack of basic sanitation in some indigenous villages increases the risk to children of diarrhoeal and parasitic diseases [8]. Malnutrition, parasite infections and stunting are closely associated with poor cognitive performance. [8]

Many children living in remote regions must travel long distances to get to school. Walking long distances through remote areas is particularly unsafe for girls. Problems with transport are made increasingly difficult during the rainy season when roads are often flooded and may become impassable. Other challenges are the lack of schools offering an education beyond Grade 3 in indigenous mother tongue languages. Thus, school-age children from indigenous groups are at risk of being poorly educated which, in turn, can lead to high drop-out rates and reduced long-term opportunities to secure employment. Where needs are not adequately addressed and academic performance remains below expectations, these children are unlikely to complete basic education.

### **2.2.3 Gender Equity**

While the Government continues to promote gender equity in its policies and planning, discrimination against girls and women is still prevalent in Cambodia. Cambodian society is a strong patriarchy in which men are seen as more important, as well as more intelligent, than women. There are traditional attitude of Cambodia society, but those for women focus on women's behaviour and honour, rather than promoting a good education or being successful in business [9]. Women are encouraged to stay 'in the kitchen' to look after the home and the children while their husbands go out to work.

Domestic violence is common but is viewed as something the family should deal with rather than the courts. While divorce is legally possible in Cambodia, women who find themselves in bad marriages are forced, by a lack of agency, to remain within a marriage that is neither equal nor conducive to raising children [10].

Patriarchal gender norms are perpetuated in the education system. In school, traditional attitudes have an impact on ‘*gender-based violence including sexualized bullying, sexual harassment and forced sexual activity, and male aggression*’ [11]. These behaviours lead to female students achieving lower academic outcomes and displaying low self-esteem. Textbooks used in Cambodian schools also show gender discrimination in portraying, ‘*men as doctors, lawyers, engineers and managers and women as receptionists, weavers, housekeepers, farmers, and shop assistants.*’[12]

Poor infrastructure in schools is a continuing issue for girls as toilet facilities can be inadequate and lack water. Girls who are old enough to menstruate (generally from around 12 years of age) are unable to attend school if there are no toilet facilities which offer safety as well as privacy so that girls can keep themselves clean and where they can easily dispose of sanitary hygiene items. A lack of clean, safe toilets can result in girls failing to attend school on a monthly basis and ultimately dropping out of education completely.

#### **2.2.4 Sexual Orientation**

In Cambodia there are no specific criminal laws against consensual same-sex sexual behaviours. Nevertheless, the law does not protect the actual rights of LGBT people as there is no anti-discrimination legislation and no penalties for those who discriminate against LGBT people. LGBT people are generally tolerated where they do not challenge social and cultural norms [13].

Nevertheless, according to a Rainbow Community Kampuchea (RoCK) survey in 2015 [14], discrimination based on sexual orientation has been experienced by LGBT people in many aspects of their lives, for example, within their families, in the workplace, in school, in public places, and when accessing public services. Members of the LGBT community identify social exclusion and isolation at school as a major problem as they experienced bullying due to their gender identity and sexual orientation. Consequently, dropout rates among LGBT youth are higher than in the general school-age population, which leads to difficulty in finding conventional employment and consequent long-term psychological impacts.



### **2.2.5 HIV Status**

In 2019 there were around 73,000 people living with HIV in Cambodia [15]. This number includes around 3,000 children. Numbers continue to decrease, but children living with HIV, or living with a parent or family member who has HIV, continue to suffer discrimination. While the majority of children with HIV, or from HIV families, are able to attend school, a small minority stated that they had been excluded from their local school. The main reasons for such exclusion were ignorance regarding HIV and a fear of catching the illness [15].

### **2.3 The Complexity of Social Exclusion**

There are many ways in which children can be socially excluded from the education system either through simple acts of ignorance, through living in poverty, or through more deliberate acts of power, prejudice and control. The concept of inclusive education seeks to ensure that children suffering from such discrimination are brought back into the education system so they can complete, at least, their basic education.

Discriminatory attitudes are reflected in different ways by different generations in Cambodia. The younger generation, who are skilled in the use of social media, are likely to have been exposed to more liberal attitudes and have a very different attitude towards members of the LGBT community and towards gender equity compared to their parents and grandparents. Nevertheless, Cambodia remains strongly patriarchal and social norms and embedded cultural behaviours cannot be changed quickly, even where there is a strong desire to do so.

It should also be noted that there are groups who choose to socially exclude themselves in order to protect their culture and identity. This is evident in the case of indigenous groups who do not wish to integrate into mainstream society and feel threatened by the gradual erosion of their way of life. There are strong and complex connections between language, culture and identity and where children, through necessity, attend Khmer-speaking schools, there is a fear that indigenous culture will fade as children gradually forget their mother tongue and increasingly adopt a more 'mainstream' life-style.

In recent years, the Government has produced a number of policies to address the needs of the excluded, for example, supporting those with disabilities and developing first language support for indigenous children so they can learn to read and write in their mother tongue. However, policies alone cannot address the needs of all those who feel excluded, particularly where a number of exclusionary factors intersect. For inclusive education to be achieved, positive action needs to be implemented.

## Chapter 3: Moving from Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion in Education

This chapter will look at the ways in which social exclusion can be addressed and, in the long-term, eradicated from the education system. This chapter will use a variety of perspectives from which to look at ways social exclusion can be transformed into social inclusion in order to achieve, *‘inclusive and equitable quality education.’*

### 3.1 National Policy for Inclusive Education

The Incheon Declaration and Education 2030 maintain a strong focus on inclusion and equity. The documents highlight the need for increased efforts aimed specifically at marginalised children in vulnerable situations: *‘All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities.’*

However, Education 2030 also recognises *‘the danger of concentrating on access to education without paying enough attention to whether students are learning and acquiring relevant skills once they are in school.’* Inclusive education can only be effective where teachers are committed and skilled in teaching diverse students. Therefore, schools must employ well-trained, empathetic and experienced teachers to ensure that SDG-4 goals are met; MoEYS has the responsibility to ensure that this is explicitly planned for as a matter of urgency.

In broad terms, to ensure that no child is excluded from education, schools need to share a well-defined understanding of what is meant by inclusive education. Inclusive classroom practices must be developed which allow all students to participate in learning, and schools should work hard to create classroom cultures in which student diversity is welcomed. School leaders

need to collaborate with their teachers to build a culture of inclusivity in their classrooms.

The fundamental aim of inclusive education is to eradicate exclusionary practices which are built on ignorance and negative attitudes towards disability, gender, ethnicity, indigenous groups, sexual orientation, and those who are HIV positive. Schools need to strengthen comprehensive child protection and safeguarding policies which focus on the most vulnerable children at risk from gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual and physical abuse and forced labour.

### **3.2 Planning for Inclusion at all Levels in the Education Sector**

As well as sharing a well-defined understanding of inclusive education, those working in the education sector at national, Provincial, District and school levels must be able to identify those children at risk of social exclusion and ensure that interventions are put in place to prevent these vulnerable children dropping out of the system and failing to complete their basic education. To fund these interventions, either through government budgets, or funds provided by development partners and NGOs, interventions must be included in Education Strategic Planning (ESP) and Annual Operational Planning (AOP) as planned activities. The national ESP (2019 – 2023) has already created the mechanism for this with its overarching policy no. 1:

*1) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all*

Nevertheless, as stated above, for change to happen, positive action needs to be taken by all stakeholders. Therefore, it is planners' responsibility to identify, include and develop activities in their planning which will work towards countering social exclusion and lead to more inclusive practices in their schools.






#### **3.2.1 Social Exclusion and Gender Analysis (SEGA)**

To find out what exclusionary factors are affecting students in any given school, an investigation needs to be carried out by the Provincial or District

Office of Education, or schools themselves, to not only identify which specific exclusionary factors are present, but also to find the root causes responsible for children being at risk of social exclusion from the education system. The process through which these investigations are conducted is called Social Exclusion and Gender Analysis (SEGA). The investigation is undertaken through a simple action research study so that root causes of exclusion can be better understood and interventions put in place. Once the analysis has been conducted and information collected, the evidence can be converted into planned activities to be included in the ESP or the yearly AOP. It is important that evidence-based, quality planning is developed so that factors leading to social exclusion can be addressed and eliminated.

### **3.3 From Exclusion to Inclusion at Village and School Level - Experience from Ratanakiri**

Ratanakiri was selected as a Province in which to study one aspect of social exclusion at first-hand due to the significant number of school students from indigenous groups who live there (Jarai, Tampuan, Kreung, etc.) A brief research study was carried out using interviews and focus groups at five schools:

-  Banlung City Dormitory High School
-  Lumphat High School
-  Pak Nhay Secondary School
-  Yak Loam Primary School
-  Krala Primary School

A number of students from these schools indicated that economic, cultural, social, political, and individual factors led to students experiencing exclusion from education. Data collected from the five schools showed the reasons for exclusion at the school level were:

### 3.3.1 Language Used in the Classroom (Lao, Tampuan and Jarai)

The implementation of the government's multilingual education (MLE) programme leads to the mother tongue being used in schools at 100 percent at kindergarten level, 80 percent mother tongue use at Grade 1, 60 percent in Grade 2 and 30 percent at Grade 3. From Grade 4, all teaching must use solely the Khmer language.

Students explained that they use their mother tongue at home with their parents, families and friends. Therefore, some indigenous students found the Khmer language difficult to learn, so sometimes teachers needed to use their native language to explain the meaning of words.

Possible interventions leading to inclusion:

- ☞ Strengthen the quality of teaching and learning, especially multilingual teachers, to ensure that students can learn and use Khmer from Grade 4 onwards.
- ☞ Expand multilingual education where necessary

### 3.3.2 School Infrastructure

Due to the lack of classrooms in some areas, the number of students in classrooms is very high and some students therefore have difficulty studying due to overcrowding. In addition, toilets and washing facilities are lacking in several schools. A further issue is the lack of dormitories. Most indigenous students live a long way from school and lack transportation. Students also move from one area to another due to seasonal crop changes. In these situations, dormitories are essential to ensuring continuity of education for Secondary school students and to reduce the risk of dropping out.

Possible interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ The Government must enable students to study at a school near their home by building more schools. This will also help students who move from one area to another according to the crop season.

- ☞ Increase the number of dormitories to allow more students to attend good schools and to avoid interruption of their education
- ☞ Provide transportation such as bicycles or rent a van for students through fundraising from philanthropists and the Community.

### **3.3.3 Different Religions and Cultures are Not Inclusive**

Parents of indigenous students prefer to live in their indigenous groups. Thus, students become accustomed to living solely within their cultural group and isolate themselves from multi-cultural living.

Possible interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ Disseminate religious rights and establish rallies for religious leaders
- ☞ Educate indigenous people to understand more about living in a multicultural society through civic education.

### **3.3.4 Inadequate Provision of Educational Services in Schools and Learning**

Lack of teaching quality, unresponsive deployment of teachers, and neglect of public-school teaching have made it difficult for students to fully acquire necessary knowledge and skills. These factors demotivate students who then spend less time in school, especially students at Secondary and High School.

Possible interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ Improve the quality of teacher-training
- ☞ Provide adequate educational services (increase free tutoring for late learners)

### **3.3.5 Lack of Freedom and Equality in Classroom Expression**

As students from Grade 4 onwards are required to learn in the Khmer language, some indigenous students are less likely to participate in class

activities because they fear Khmer students will humiliate them when they read incorrectly or do not speak clearly. This reduces communication with classmates and teachers.

Possible intervention for inclusion:

- ☞ Establish empathy, give equal rights to all students in the class and train teachers to be role models in embracing difference. Encourage indigenous students to express their opinions, and not feel humiliated.

### **3.3.6 Technology**

In the digital age, the use of the internet and smartphones has become popular among students, whether urban or rural. The influence of technology has widened the gap between students who cannot afford to buy and use smartphones.

Possible interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ Teachers need to educate students on the influence of materialism.
- ☞ Teachers must be trained to be knowledgeable regarding technology so they can support their students in using ICT to their advantage in learning.
- ☞ Prohibition of the use of websites which negatively affect student learning
- ☞ Educate parents to guide their children about the disadvantages of materialism and know how to respond to their children's materialistic demands.

### **3.3.7 Non-Observance of Teachers' Standards and Inadequate Role Models**

Students' learning progress from one level to the next depends on the teaching of behavioural ethics. Teachers who use inappropriate gestures, words of rebuke, and who lack motivation are a bad example for students and discourage students from going to school. This results in increased school drop-out.



Possible intervention for inclusion:

- ☞ The Director of Enforcing the Ministry's Legal Standards (Sub-Decree 56, Teacher Ethics and General Statute of Civil Servants) provides opportunities to instruct teachers to respect and observe professional ethics

### **3.3.8 Political Tendencies between Teachers, Students and Governing Bodies**

The political affiliation of any party promotes the formation of groups and factions. At school level, political debates are not allowed. There is no propaganda or use of schools as a place to spread policy.

Interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ Explain the prohibition of political tendencies in schools
- ☞ Educate teachers and students not to follow political tendencies

### **3.4 From Exclusion to Inclusion at the District Office of Education (DOE) Level**

The DOE acts as a facilitator in solving challenges facing schools and sends reports to the Provincial Office of Education (POE). Reasons for exclusion from education at the District level include:

#### **3.4.1 A Lack of Understanding in the Community Regarding the Need for a Good Education**

At a basic level, quality education depends on the support and cooperation of the community. Not valuing education has left students with limited educational opportunities, an inability to continue their education, and consequent dropping out at an early age.

Possible interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ Disseminate to the community the value of education and present examples of successful learning
- ☞ Campaign to raise awareness of the need for a good education (banner messaging) and the long-term benefits of education

### **3.4.2 Parents of Uneducated Students and Uncertain Parental Occupations**

Some students have parents who regularly drink and gamble. In these cases, parents are not able to motivate, support and encourage their children. Lack of education, livelihood factors, and family problems have made some students perform poorly in their studies or show poor attendance at school. These students set themselves apart from friends and society.

Possible intervention for inclusion:

- ☞ Collaborate with the relevant authorities to provide career counselling, literacy programmes, and guidance on the effects of alcohol and gambling.

## **3.5 From Exclusion to Inclusion at the Provincial Office of Education (POE) Level**

The POE works closely with MoEYS. Several factors lead to exclusion from education at the Provincial level which need attention from Provincial planners:

### **3.5.1 Some Schools Do Not Have a Principal and Employ only a Few Local Teachers**

Equitable and inclusive education depends on good school leadership and a full teaching staff according to the needs of the school. Managing the teaching and learning process of teachers and students is important to ensure the quality of students' learning.

Possible interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ Accelerate the appointment of trained school Principals
- ☞ Increase regional allowances for new teachers who teach in remote and upland areas

### **3.5.2 Local Development is Low**

In low development areas, few people have the knowledge and skills to gain regular employment. Livelihood factors have prompted students' parents to move location and not send their children to school.

Possible interventions for inclusion:

- ☞ Increase the provision of scholarships for poor students and training for future job opportunities, and increase the number of vocational training facilities (TVET)
- ☞ Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) create permanent employment locally by establishing a local labour market and increasing local investment.
- ☞ Promote transparent local development and build additional infrastructure

### **3.5.3 Evidence-Based, Quality Planning**

The planning office at the POE is responsible for the preparation of District and school ESPs and AOPs. Therefore, the POE should ensure that evidence is collected on vulnerable students in their Districts through SEGA, and that appropriate activities are included in planning with a suitable and realistic budget. In overseeing the planning process, the POE must ensure that quality planning is in place at all levels so social exclusion issues can be regularly and robustly addressed. The POE must work consistently towards the implementation of inclusive education in their schools.

## **3.6 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport Level**

### **3.6.1 Inclusive Education**

In 2017 MoEYS established the National Institute for Special Education (NISE) to support specialist teacher training for those teachers wishing to improve their knowledge and understanding of working with children with disabilities or children with special educational needs. In 2016, the Krousar Thmey Foundation (KTF) transferred five schools for children with vision and hearing impairment to the government; these schools were transformed into special High Schools in the academic year 2017-2018 (KTF, 2017).

The establishment of NISE and special schools enables children with specific educational needs to receive appropriate, quality education and offers them opportunities to be integrated into society. This initiative greatly encourages formerly excluded children to attend school and complete their education. It also motivates parents to stop concealing their children's disabilities and allow them to enter the education system.

### **3.6.2 Multilingual Education**

MoEYS has made efforts to provide access to quality education to children from indigenous communities through the Multilingual Education Action Plan (MEAP) 2019-2023 (MoEYS, 2019). Through its implementation, children from different indigenous groups have access to a state education which ensures links with the mother tongue, cultures, traditions, and customs of indigenous people (MoEYS, 2019).

### **3.6.3 Gender Equity**

Cambodia is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) [16] and has demonstrated its commitment to eliminate discrimination against girls and women in the education sector. CEDAW acknowledges that full participation of women is necessary for the development of a country. As a signatory to CEDAW, Cambodia has endeavoured to promote the empowerment of women

in education since 2007 through gender mainstreaming in education policies and action plans.

In 2015 MoEYS developed the Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education (2016-2020). The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1997 defined the concept of gender mainstreaming:

*‘Mainstreaming a gender perspective ... is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.’*

The National Education Strategic Plan (2019-2023) and the Policy on Higher Education Vision 2030 of MoEYS continue to address gender issues in education at all levels through the use of national scholarship programmes and capacity development for females.

Education is the most powerful means of achieving gender equality, of enabling girls and women to fully participate socially and politically, and of empowering them economically (Education 2030).

#### **3.6.4 Sexual Orientation (Including HIV)**

In 2016-17, MoEYS, with support from NGOs, launched a life skills curriculum for Grades 5–11 and for out of school youth. The new curriculum includes: basic reproductive, sexual and health education, including HIV/AIDS, hygiene and gender concepts; gender roles, sexuality and gender expression; human rights, gender equality, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. The new curriculum therefore offers specific and inclusive instruction on LGBT issues. The major challenge to the successful roll-out of the ‘comprehensive sexuality curriculum’ (CSE) is the development of appropriate textbooks and the building of capacity in teachers so they can teach the content effectively.

## Chapter 4: Conclusion and the Way Forward

This document contains a collection of key ideas on the practical issues of social exclusion in the Cambodian context. It is hoped that the information contained in this document will be used to improve the understanding of all those working in the education sector, and raise awareness of the issues of exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination against those children who are either not enrolled or who are at risk of dropping out of school before they complete their basic education. The exclusionary factors outlined focus on areas that are common within the Cambodian context and will be recognized by the POE, DOE and schools as they continue to grapple with issues such as school drop-out rates, poor school attendance, school completion rates, and so on.

In recognizing that all these issues need addressing to meet the SDG-4 and Education 2030 goals, MoEYS mandates that all planners, at all levels, conduct analyses on Social Exclusion and Gender in their Provinces, Districts and schools prior to their planning cycle so that they are able to incorporate issues related to social exclusion in their Education Strategic Plans (ESPs) and Annual Operational Plans (AOPs). In improving their understanding of social exclusion, all stakeholders will be better placed to realise the vision for inclusive and equitable education as set out in SDG-4.

As the Incheon Declaration [1] states:

*'... Education is a public good, a fundamental human right and a basis for guaranteeing the realization of other rights. It is essential for peace, tolerance, human fulfilment and sustainable development. We recognize education as key to achieving full employment and poverty eradication. We will focus our efforts on access, equity and inclusion, quality and learning outcomes, within a lifelong learning approach.'*

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