

## EDUCATION SECTOR

40. Structure of Education: The Education Law of 2007 provides a legal framework for the education system. It seeks to “determine the national measures and criteria for establishing the completely comprehensive and uniform education system ensuring the principles of freedoms of studies in compliance with the constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia”.<sup>26</sup> The National Supreme Council of Education, chaired by the Prime Minister, has responsibility for developing relevant policy proposals and long-term strategies. It also evaluates the system’s performance and determines its resource requirements. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) issues relevant regulations, develops strategic plans and monitors system performance<sup>1</sup>.

41. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) has administrative, financial and academic control over all aspects of primary, secondary, tertiary and distance education as well as teacher training<sup>2</sup>. The education system consists of:

- Pre-primary
- Six years of primary education
- Three years of lower secondary education
- Three years of upper secondary education comprising two streams - social sciences and science and math (list subjects offered)
- Diploma /Tertiary/Vocational/technical

42. Basic education is compulsory and comprises 9 years of schooling (primary plus lower secondary). Upon graduation from lower secondary schooling, students may either continue to upper secondary education (USE) or enroll in secondary-level vocational training programs offered by Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training (MoLVT) . Those who have completed USE may pursue vocational training, which lasts from one to three years, or proceed to universities, which offer associate, bachelor, master, and doctorate programs.<sup>3</sup>

43. **Achievements in Access and Quality.** Cambodia has made note worthy progress in expanding access to education, particularly basic education. This has been achieved through carefully targeted policies, gradually increasing the spending on education to fill the resource gaps, and channeling development assistance.

44. With support from development partners, Cambodia has significantly expanded and improved the school infrastructure. There are currently over 6900 primary schools, 1630 lower secondary schools, and 432 upper secondary schools. The number of teachers has also increased at all levels of school education.

45. These investments have resulted in improved Pupil- Classroom Ratios (PCR) and Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTR) although there is an imbalance in the supply of teachers at the primary and secondary levels and supply of classrooms needs to be increased.

46. In 2014/15 gross enrollment ratios were 111.2% at the primary level, 53.3% at the lower

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<sup>1</sup> ASEAN State of Education 2013.

<sup>2</sup> On 17 January 2005 RGC created the Ministry Of Labor and Vocational Training assigning it responsibility for vocational education and training hitherto held by MOEYS.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports obtained from <http://MoEYS.gov.kh/en/education.html>

secondary level, and 24.2 % at the upper secondary level respectively. Corresponding GER in 2000/01 for the three levels was 109.8%, 27% and 10.9% respectively. Net enrolments at the primary level also saw a steady increase from 87% in 2000/01 to 95.2% in 2009/10 but have declined marginally to 94.5 % in 2014-2015<sup>4</sup>.

There are significant disparities in access among provinces with the remote and disadvantaged provinces recording lower enrollments. Five provinces<sup>5</sup> register NER at the primary level below 90 percent with Preah Sihanouk being the lowest at 77.4%. At the lower secondary level, three provinces<sup>6</sup> have enrollments below 40%. At the upper secondary level, the situation is severe in nine provinces<sup>7</sup> with enrollments below 20%. Similar disparities exist (grade-wise) with regard to the percentage of students who get promoted, repeat a grade or drop out without pointing to any clear regional pattern for quality or access indicators. In all, in 2014/15, there were 257,619 students who successfully completed primary level, the number of students completing lower secondary and upper secondary was 104, 869 and 29, 258 respectively..

47. Enrollment of girls has improved very significantly during this period:

- Primary level: increased from 103.2% to 110%
- Lower secondary level: increased 20.3% to 55.3%
- Upper secondary level: increased from 7% to 24.6%.

48. Thus, gender parity has not only been achieved but girls' enrollment exceeds that of boys at lower and upper secondary levels. Statistics below provide a snap shot of the gender based differentials in promotions, retention and drop outs among boys and girls at the provincial level for primary, lower secondary and upper secondary level.

#### (i) Primary Education

**49. Promotion:** In all provinces girls have higher promotion rates than boys. The gender difference in promotion rates ranges from a low of 0.4% in Ratanakiri to a high of 6.9% in Preah Vihear. The provinces with the lowest gender gaps are Ratanakiri, Kep and Kampot. Highest gender gaps are in Preah Vihear, Koh Kong and Siem Reap. **Amongst boys and girls themselves, the lowest promotion rates are in Ratanakiri, Pailin and Siem Reap**

**50. Repetition:** In all provinces boys repeat more than girls. The gender difference in repetition rates ranges from a low of 0.5% in Ratanakiri to a high of 2.7% in Siem Reap. The provinces with the lowest gender gaps are Ratanakiri, Mondul Kiri, Phnom Penh and Preah Sihanouk. Highest gender gaps are in Preah Vihear, Siem Reap, Stung Treng and Kompong Chhnang. **Amongst boys and girls themselves, the worst repetition rates are in Stung Treng, Preah Vihear and Siem Reap.**

**51. Dropout:** In all provinces boys drop out more than girls except in Kep and Ratanakiri where girls drop out slightly more than boys (only 0.1% in both provinces). The gender difference in drop out rates ranges from a low of 1.1% in Both Kampot and Svay Rieng, to a high of 4.9% in Koh Kong. Highest gender gaps are in Koh Kong, Preah Vihear and Pailin. **Amongst boys and girls themselves, the highest drop out rates are in Ratanakiri, Pailin and Koh Kong**

<sup>4</sup> Cambodia Launch EFA Global Monitoring Report, 2015. MOEYS and UNESCO.

<sup>5</sup> Banteay Meanchey, Kep, Koh Kong, Palin, Phnom Penh, and Preah Sihanouk.

<sup>6</sup> Palin, Ratanak Kiri, and Stung Treng.

<sup>7</sup> Bunteay Meanchey, Buttambang, Kampong Speu, Kratie, Mondul Kiri, Otdar Meanchey, Palin, Ratanak Kiri, and Stung Treng.

## (ii) Lower Secondary Education

**52. Promotion: Girls perform better than boys in all provinces except 3:** (Kompong Speu - gender gap of 0.4%, Stung Treng and Kratie - gender gap of 0.8% in both provinces.) The difference in promotion rates favouring girls ranges from a low of 0.8% in Preah Sihanouk to a high of 10.6% in Kep. The 3 provinces with the lowest gender gaps are Preah Sihanouk, Kampot and Prey Veng. Highest gender gaps are in Kep, Siem Reap and Battambang. **Amongst boys themselves, the lowest promotion rates are in Mondul Kiri, Battambang and Kep. Amongst girls, Tbaung Khmum, Koh Kong and Kompong Speu indicate the lowest promotion rates**

**53. Repetition: In all provinces boys repeat more than girls.** The gender difference in repetition rates ranges from a low of 0.2% in Preah Vihear to a high of 3.5% in Kep. The 3 provinces with the lowest gender gaps are Preah Vihear, Prey Veng and Stung Treng. Highest gender gaps are in Kep, Pailin, Preah Sihanouk and Siem Reap. **Amongst boys themselves, the worst repetition rates are in Kep, Battambang, Preah Sihanouk. For girls, the most repetition occurs in Kep, Stung Treng, Battambang and Siem Reap**

**54. Dropout: Boys drop out more than girls in 18 provinces. Girls drop out more than boys in 7** (Koh Kong, Stung Treng, Preah Sihanouk, Kompong Speu, Tbaung Khmum, Kampot and Svay Rieng) but the gender difference in these 7 is small (0.1 – 1.4%). In the 18 provinces, the gender gap ranges from a low of 0.3% in Pailin to a high of 7% in Kep. Highest gender gaps are in Kep, Siem Reap and Battambang. **Boys drop out the most in Mondul Kiri, Tbaung Khmum and Battambang. Girls drop out the most in Tbaung Khmum, Kompong Speu and Koh Kong**

## (iii) Upper Secondary Education

**55. Promotion: Girls perform significantly better than boys in all provinces except one:** (Koh Kong where boys are promoted slightly more than girls - the gender gap is 0.7%). The difference in promotion rates favouring girls ranges from a low of 1.7% in Kep to a high of 14.3% in Stung Treng. The provinces with the lowest gender gaps are Kep, Preah Vihear and Otdar Meanchey. Highest gender gaps are in Stung Treng, Preah Sihanouk and Mondul Kiri. **Amongst boys, the lowest promotion rates are in Stung Treng, Battambang and Mondul Kiri. For girls, Koh Kong, Battambang, and Tbaung Khmum indicate the lowest promotion rates**

**56. Repetition: Boys repeat more in all provinces, except one:** (Stung Treng where girls repeat slightly more than boys - the gender gap is 0.7%). The gender difference in repetition rates ranges from a low of 0.1% in Koh Kong to a high of 5% in Mondul Kiri. The provinces with the lowest gender gaps are Koh Kong, Kompong Speu, Pailin and Preah Veng. Highest gender gaps are in Mondul Kiri, Kompong Chhnang and Banteay Meanchey. **Amongst boys, the worst repetition rates are in Battambang, Mondul Kiri and Phnom Penh. For girls, the worst repetition occurs in Battambang, Stung Treng and Phnom Penh**

**57. Dropout: Boys drop out more than girls in all provinces except one** (Koh Kong where girls drop out slightly more than boys - the gender gap is 0.8%). The gender difference in drop outs rates ranges from a low of 0.9% in Kep to a high of 15% in Stung Treng. The provinces with the lowest gender gaps are Kep, Preah Vihear and Kompong Chhnang. Highest gender gaps are in Stung Treng, Preah Sihanouk and Kompong Speu. **Boys drop out the most in Stung Treng, Battambang and Tbaung Khmum. Girls drop out the most from Koh Kong, Ratanak Kiri and Tbaung Khmum**

58. Despite near universal enrollment at the primary level and increased enrolments at the lower secondary level, enrollments at the upper secondary level have stagnated. While there are many extraneous factors contributing to the enrollment and learning gaps, the quality and efficiency of education plays a critical role in checking drop-outs and grade repetition. As the statistics indicate, the expansion of enrollments at the primary level has not yielded the dividends in terms of an educated and skilled workforce that were expected. In hind sight it is easy to see that the emphasis of expansion of education was not matched by an equal emphasis on quality of education. This neglect of quality is evident from the gap that exists between enrollments, completion rates and learning outcomes.

59. Making an accurate assessment of the quality aspects of education is sometimes constrained due to inaccuracy of data, and lack of regular student assessments. Although the statistics at the primary level are impressive with 98% net enrollment, the completion rates for primary are low. In 2008/09 504,005 students were enrolled in Grade 1. By 20013/14 only 257.619 or 51.11% had successfully completed primary education. **Thus, 49% of the children who enrolled in Grade 1 in 2008/09 did not go on to finish primary education.**

52. The investments in education and the consistent push towards reforms have resulted in some qualitative improvement and there are indications that student learning has improved, specially in the lower primary grades. But overall scores remain low, and indicate that a large percentage of students struggle to grasp a considerable portion of the curriculum. As a result, they are failing to meet the required learning standards at their grade level. This could be a key contributor to stagnating participation at the upper secondary level.

**Table XX:** Assessment Results by Grade Level (Percentage denotes average score)

Year	Grade 3				Grade 6		Grade 9	
	Khmer	Numeracy	Measurement	Geometry	Khmer	Math	Khmer	Math
2006	40%	37%	39%	43%	-	-	-	-
2008	45%	41%	43%	47%	68%	53%	-	-
2009	49%	45%	47%	51%			65%	34%

53. At all grade levels, urban students scored higher in both Khmer and Mathematics. In 2009, at the primary level, the urban students scored 17% higher in Khmer and 7% higher in Mathematics than their rural counterparts. At grade 6 level, in 2008, urban students scored about 6% higher than rural children in both Khmer and Mathematics. At grade 9 level, in 2009, urban students scored 3% higher in Khmer and 7 % in Math as compared to the rural students.

54. At grades 10 and 11 students are tested each semester.at the school level. Grade 12 students take a high-stakes national examination. Those who pass are eligible for entry to HEIs and those who do not, can take the test again the following year. In 2014, a government crackdown on cheating and corruption resulted in a dramatic drop from an 87% passing rate in 2013 to just under 25% in 2014. The government permitted a re-take of the test, and just under 18% of more than 60,000 hopefuls, who retook the Grade 12 national exams, passed. The 2015 results were better, with 55.8% passing the examination that was strictly supervised. In all,

71.18% students (6,872 out of 9,655) taking social sciences and 53.87% students (39,688 out of 73,670) taking the sciences passed the examination. Schools attribute this improvement to: (i) students studying harder because they realized that government was serious about examination reform, that cheating would not be allowed; (ii) additional coaching by teachers who in turn were provided some intensive training by the Teacher Training Department to improve their competencies.

**55. Attendance:** According to the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2013 (CSES2013), the net attendance rates at the primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels were 85.1%, 39.4% and 23.9% respectively. Aggregated gender differentials were not significant except at the lower secondary level where attendance rates were slightly higher for girls at 40.5% compared to 38.2% for boys.

56. According to the CSES2013, children below the age of 18 years who were not attending school gave the following reasons for non attendance:

- Need to contribute to household income (approximately 31% girls and 26% boys)
- Too young to go to school (approximately 23% girls and 22% boys)
- Did not want to go to school (approximately 9% girls and 16% boys)
- Too poor (approximately 9% girls and 15% boys)

57. Repetition rates at the primary level remain a concern despite an overall decline across grades. At Grade 1, repetition rates increased from 17.5% in 2000/01 to 21.8% in 2004/05 but have declined to 10% in 2014/15. In fact, repetition rates across grades – with the exception of Grade 6 - peaked in 2004/05 and have declined since. Repetition rates at grade 6 have remained largely unchanged, declining only marginally from 2.1 % to 1.6% during 2004/05 and 2014/15.

58. Repetition rates were low at lower and upper secondary levels but have doubled to 3% and 4% respectively in 2015. This is attributed to the stringent standards applied to conduct of secondary level examinations.

**Table xx:** Repetition Rates by Grade – Primary Level.

**59. Drop-Out Rates:** Drop out rates have declined only marginally at the primary level between 2008 -2015 having dropped from 10.8% to 8.4%. At the lower secondary level, drop out rates have remained fairly constant and remain high at 21%. At the upper secondary level, the drop out rate increased slightly since 2008 but rose sharply in 2014/15 to 27.5%. Again, this sharp increase is attributed to the examination reform.

60. The above data makes it clear that upper secondary education faces the dual challenge of both access as well as quality. Low quality is also a deterrent to expansion due to low perceived value of weak quality of education. The shortcomings in education quality place Cambodia at a disadvantage within the ASEAN economic community where it lags behind other countries in most indicators of educational achievements except enrollments at the primary level where it is second only to Vietnam.

61. But as can be seen from the table below, Cambodia has the lowest gross primary

graduation rates among the ASEAN countries.

62. The above indicators are a sign of severe inefficiencies in the delivery of education, particularly at the school level and provide a clear indication that access does not ensure survival rates. It is now well recognized that the key factors that impact quality of education and higher student achievement are centered in the school: school management, school facilities, teaching learning materials, qualified and motivated teachers, and an assessment system that allows for analysis and feedback to both teachers as well as students.