

# Global Partnership for Education

## Thematic and Country-level Evaluation

### Cambodia Case Study (2024)

**Transformation potential of the priority reforms, Cambodia's position to implement these reforms, and GPE support to the reform process up to the compact**

#### Introduction and background

This report is a part of the Thematic and Country-Level Evaluation (TCLE) of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)'s global and country-level support to its partner countries as part of its [Strategic Plan for 2021–2025](#) (GPE 2025). To operationalize this strategy, GPE's operating model seeks to support governments to transform their education systems. Cambodia was selected as one of eight country cases for study as part of Phase 1 of the evaluation,<sup>1</sup> which explores Cambodia's potential for transformative reform by closely examining the process of the partnership compact development, selection of its priority reform, and potential for implementation. This case study uses evidence from primary data (interviews with key country-level stakeholders with fieldwork conducted between September 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia) and a secondary document review. A stakeholder map, list of respondents interviewed, and a full list of documents reviewed can be found as annexes.

#### Current education situation in Cambodia

Since achieving a 97% net enrollment rate in primary education in 2012/2013,<sup>2</sup> reform efforts have shifted focus from *access* to *quality* of education in response to the low achievement learning outcomes in Cambodia, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2021, it was estimated that 45.4% of Grade Six students failed to reach 'basic proficiency' in the Khmer language, and 74.3% failed to achieve basic proficiency in mathematics in 2021<sup>3</sup>. The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) has been actively addressing these challenges through ongoing efforts to enhance teacher training, exemplified by the Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) 2015, which was updated in 2023 to cover the period of 2024-2023.<sup>4</sup> Cambodia has prioritized gender equality in education since 2016, as evidenced by the Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan (GMSP) 2021-2025 which aims to ensure equitable and inclusive access to education, emphasizing quality learning outcomes and efficiency.

#### GPE partnership in Cambodia

Cambodia joined GPE in 2006 and has received a total of US\$172,883,760 over 16 grants, The GPE partnership is supported by UNICEF as the coordinating agency. Previous grants include four education sector program implementation grants (ESPIG) received between 2007 and 2022, totaling US\$123,460,855.<sup>5</sup> Cambodia has also previously received two education sector plan development

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<sup>1</sup> The other seven partner countries sampled include Sierra Leone, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Nepal, Tajikistan, Tanzania – Mainland, and Uganda.

<sup>2</sup> MoEYS, *ESP 2014-2018*, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF, *Learning Loss in the Covid-19 Pandemic Era: Evidence from the 2016-2021 Grade Six National Learning Assessment in Cambodia*, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> Approved in 2015, the TPAP is designed to address challenges in recruiting highly qualified teachers, committing to refining teacher training frameworks, and promoting active pedagogies. A comprehensive assessment of its achievements is planned in the coming months.

<sup>5</sup> Source: GPE Implementation Grants data base, updated 1 Feb 2024

grants (ESPDG) totaling \$240,160 between 2013 and 2016. Under the GPE 2020 strategy, a Multiplier grant of \$10m was approved in 2021 and active from 2022.

Cambodia receives further support from GPE as part of GPE's Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX), with an ongoing project that aims to enhance the quality and inclusiveness of early childhood education and other applied research projects focusing on gender inequalities in secondary education since 2022. Cambodia has also benefited from GPE's Education Out Loud (EOL) initiative under which the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) is supported to build capacity in influencing government education policy, budget, and program development in the areas of domestic finance, gender, and inclusivity.

## Cambodia's engagement with GPE 2025

Cambodia is part of GPE 2025's second cohort, which began in October 2021. Cambodia completed its enabling factors analysis in October 2022 and the assessment by ITAP was finalized in November 2022. The partnership compact was finalized in March 2023. Subsequently, the GPE Board approved its allocation and strategic parameters of GPE's support to Cambodia in April 2023.

Cambodia was eligible for three grants: the system transformation grant (STG), the system capacity grant (SCG), and the multiplier grant. The \$15.39m STG application, at the time of writing the report, was still pending. Grant disbursement was expected to begin in January 2024 with UNESCO and UNICEF as the grant agents. Cambodia's \$2.7m SCG was active from September 2023, with UNICEF as grant agent. Finally, Cambodia has received a multiplier grant allocation of up to \$30m.<sup>6</sup>

As outlined in its partnership compact, Cambodia's selected priority reform envisions achieving system transformation by attaining the overarching goal of improving student learning outcomes. The compact identifies three priority areas to focus on to achieve this goal: gender equality, quality learning, and quality teaching. The priority reform intends to achieve three main outcomes:

- **Gender equality:** improvements in gender equality and inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups in the education system will be reached by (i) enhancing teaching and learning to enhance retention, progression, and learning outcomes, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged children, in a gender-equitable manner, and (ii) providing gender-equitable support to the career development of education professionals, starting at the school level;
- **Quality learning:** improving student learning outcomes by (i) providing robust support to schools in developing core foundational skills by identifying learning needs and offering targeted remedial support, and (ii) enhancing the digital competencies of both teachers and students;
- **Quality teaching:** Equipping and supporting all teachers to enhance students' learning outcomes by (i) upgrading qualifications, providing pre-service training (PRESET) and in-service training (INSET), and continuous professional development (CPD) to enhance content knowledge, pedagogy, teaching methods, and information and communication technology (ICT) utilization, and (ii) offering enhanced school-based support for all teachers and school leaders, focusing on professional development

## 1. Did the GPE model help with policy dialogue, identification of system bottlenecks, and solutions to address these bottlenecks for better education outcomes?

### How inclusive is the policy dialogue in Cambodia?

**Policy dialogue in Cambodia was government-led and participatory**, with all stakeholders affirming the coordinating role of the Department of Planning (DoP) at the MoEYS. The ownership and commitment of the MoEYS were maintained despite the government changes following the elections

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<sup>6</sup> The multiplier grant documents were not available during the analysis and reporting writing phase of the TCLE evaluation.

in July 2023. Building on the country's existing strong mechanisms for sector dialogue<sup>7</sup>, most interviewees noted increased participation and coordination during the compact development.

**Despite the inclusivity of a wide range of stakeholders, gaps were identified in civil society representation.** Some development partners raised concerns (also reflected in the ITAP assessment) around the relatively limited representation and policy impact of non-government organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs), which relied on representation through the NGO Education Partnership (NEP)<sup>8</sup>, an alliance of over 100 member organizations. Other gaps included the limited involvement of academics and universities, and teacher training colleges who can provide relevant insights to inform policy dialogue. To enhance planning and implementation linkages, involving a higher number of CSOs and NGOs in these meetings, beyond representation through the NEP, could facilitate a more connected feedback loop from the field. Development partners also highlighted the limited engagement of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) as an important gap, given its responsibility to allocate sufficient national resources for education.

### **What enabling factors bottlenecks were identified and what policy actions/interventions were chosen to address the bottlenecks in Cambodia?**

Through the GPE 2025 operating model, Cambodia identified bottlenecks to system transformation via the enabling factors analysis process. Bottlenecks were found in all four enabling factors. ITAP agreed with the countries proposed priority ratings for three of the enabling factors, but increased the priority rating for Domestic Financing from medium to high. The ITAP review often highlighted additional bottlenecks not identified in the country's analysis. Actions are proposed to address bottlenecks for all priority areas, though these actions were not always clearly defined or evidenced.

The partnership compact contains a section discussing enabling factors in detail, including setting out their strengths, weaknesses, and blockages, and it identifies priorities for proposed policy actions, strategies, and activities to address these blockages. We explored the proposed policy actions, as related to the three medium-priority enabling factors and one high-priority enabling factor, below. We have additionally reviewed grant documentation for this analysis. For further details on the identified bottlenecks and corresponding actions, see Annex 4.

**Domestic financing (high priority):** While initially assessed as a medium priority by the local education group, the domestic financing enabling factor was upgraded to a high priority following the ITAP assessment, stressing that increasing domestic resources and improving equity and efficiency in financing are crucial for Cambodia's educational progress. As highlighted in compact and enabling factors analysis, strengths in this area include strong financial management capacity at the central level, the existence of Financial Management Information Systems (FMIS) including one for education, and a transparent formula used by the School Operating Fund (SOF). Reports also show sustained improvements in the efficiency and punctuality of funding delivery. However, several bottlenecks remain, including reduced volume of domestic financing for education following COVID-19, fragmented contributions from development partners, complex financial systems and legislation that are overly technical, and therefore hindering effective use at school and sub-national, and a SOF formula that is not fully equity-based.

Policy actions proposed in the compact include simplifying the financial legislation and the FMIS/ Education Financial Management System (EFMS) systems to reduce administrative burden on non-financially trained users, strengthening the Department of Finance's central capacity for systems development, and reviewing SOF allocations with potential increases for areas with additional needs. The SCG partially focuses on domestic finance, delineating specific measures targeting improvements in this area, including initiatives to enhance MoEYS's capacity in sectoral planning and financial simulation. It also underscores potential support for evidence-based programming and proposals to fortify the ongoing Public Financial Management (PFM) program funded by the European Union. While the SCG application does not explicitly mention increased allocation for needed areas, it does refer to "support for further review on School Operating Funds mechanisms." As per GPE's recommendations, the STG top-up allocation will prioritize various aspects of domestic financing. The first trigger aims to

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<sup>7</sup> For further details, please refer to Section 2.2. See also Universalialia, *Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation*, 2019, pp. 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> For further details on the NEP, please see: <https://nepcambodia.org/>

increase the School Operating Fund allocation, focusing on volume. The second trigger relates to equity and efficiency, aiming to strengthen the EFMS.

The measures proposed to address identified bottlenecks in education funding are a step in the right direction. However, concerns remain about the adequacy of funding levels, particularly given that recurrent expenditure on education was only 17% in 2021 as part of the total budget and much less than the recommended 4% of the GDP. The GDP rebasing calculation of 2024 will show that Cambodia commits to education much less than it is internationally recommended. Development partners have expressed uncertainties regarding the effectiveness of these measures in securing a long-term commitment to higher volumes of domestic funding.

**Data and evidence (medium priority):** The compact and enabling factors analysis highlighted Cambodia's strengths in national reporting structures such as the EMIS which are operational, accessible, and provide gender-disaggregated data. Data collection systems are well-established at school, sub-national, and national levels. Cambodia actively participates in national, regional, and global learning assessments, with improvements noted in the analytical capabilities of National Learning Assessments due to enhanced central capacity. However, several weaknesses were identified, warranting a medium priority for this enabling factor. These weaknesses include the limited utilization and quality of data across all levels of the education system, low capacity at the school level to continuously assess student learning, inadequate disaggregation of data beyond gender (e.g., disability, socioeconomic factors, ethnic groups), and the predominantly descriptive nature of reports.

Policy actions proposed in the compact aim to address these issues by ensuring accurate collation and effective use of data, starting from the school level. This includes harmonizing and improving data collection systems and enhancing the analytical nature of reports for evidence-based policymaking. The compact also emphasizes incorporating additional vulnerability criteria (disability, health, minorities, etc.) into the EMIS system, with a commitment to diagnosing student retention issues, reflecting an intersectional approach. The SCG, in particular, will be used to improve the consistent data use for planning purposes and to address gaps in monitoring systems (e.g. aligning EMIS reporting and integrating it with other MIS systems). It will also be used to conduct the two aforementioned analyses on students' retention and the achievement and retention of marginalized groups, with a strong focus on disparities affecting boys at the secondary level. These efforts will build the capacity of the Department of Policy (DoPo) of MoEYS to carry out gender-informed research and support MoEYS in developing evidence-based policies.

**Gender-responsive sector planning, policy, and monitoring (medium priority):** The EFA and ITAP assessments recognized that Cambodia has made gradual improvements in gender-responsive sector planning through the Education Sector Plan (ESP) 2019-2023 and the GMSP 2021-2025. However, significant barriers persist. Key challenges include the absence of a theory of change and a comprehensive monitoring framework in the ESP. Gender reporting tends to be descriptive rather than utilized for policy planning. Additionally, there are high repetition and drop-out rates and low completion rates at the lower secondary level, particularly for boys. Moreover, there are low enrollment rates of girls in technical education (TE) fields, and low proportion of women hold leadership roles within the education sector.

Relevant policy actions include improving the ESP format to address the identified gaps and facilitate strengthened monitoring and evaluation processes, and strengthened coherence and alignment of strategies, budgets, and activities among development partners. This includes streamlining policies to improve their accessibility and ensure alignment with the ESP and ensuring that there is an increased focus on marginalized groups in MoEYS core planning documents. Another policy action proposed in the compact is a mid-term review of the GMSP 2021-2025. To improve girls' enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics disciplines and motivate students to continue beyond basic education, the compact includes strengthening TE provision at upper secondary. Both the SCG and STG align with the proposed policy actions: The STG aims to strengthen the Student Tracking System (STS) to support gender-responsive education policy and planning. Additionally, it advocates for access to professional development, promotion opportunities, and equitable working conditions for both male and female professionals. The STG also supports gender-responsive pedagogies by reducing gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination in the curriculum. The SCG focuses on conducting studies and diagnostics to complement the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) to deepen the analysis and understanding of gender in the education sector at both student and educator levels.

Despite the use of the SCG for gender diagnosis suggesting a strong commitment to evidence-based gender planning, one of the remaining gaps, as identified in the ITAP report, remains the absence of specific strategies to address the growing disparities affecting boys at the secondary level.

**Sector coordination (low priority):** The compact and ITAP review highlighted Cambodia's strengths in inclusive sector dialogue and coordinated action, emphasizing robust national coordination bodies like the Joint Technical Working Group for Education (JTWG-Ed), Education Sector Working Group, and NGO Education Partnership. The compact also acknowledged the increased coordination between MoEYS and development partners particularly evident in areas like pre-service training, in-service training, and continuous professional development reform, the national rollout of the Early Grades Learning (EGL) strategy, and the implementation of School-Based Management (SBM) in select schools. However, some challenges persist, particularly in extending these reforms to provincial and sub-national levels, ensuring all schools meet SBM standards, and securing funding for nationwide EGL strategy implementation. In this regard, the policy actions proposed in the compact are the continuation of the MoEYS key reform areas with aligned ESP/ ESP mid-term Review (ESP-MTR), and the strengthening of coordination with partners in all the above-mentioned strategies or reform implementation. The SCG funding will be used to support the reinstatement of JTWG-Ed annual retreats, which were suspended from 2019 due to COVID-19, but which have the potential to improve sector coordination and accountability. ITAP recommends that these meetings shift from an information sharing focus, towards more strategic discussions on key issues, implementation challenges, and factors impeding progress.

A notable bottleneck is the medium priority assigned to coordinated financing and funding. While operational pooled funding mechanisms and Annual Operating Plans (AOPs) are established across MoEYS departments, there are concerns regarding development partner contributions' alignment with MoEYS priorities. Weaknesses include inadequate school-level reporting and financing, which hinder effective data utilization and evidence-based decision-making. Proposed policy actions to address these bottlenecks include efforts to improve coordination of financing from development partners to reduce duplication effort and increase alignment with the ESP by integrating all development partner contributions into MoEYS AOPs and enhancing SBM guidelines accessibility. Plans also include conducting a consultation of pooled funding mechanisms.

### **How useful were the enabling factors analysis and ITAP processes?**

Interviewed stakeholders involved in the compact development process acknowledged the value of the enabling factors analysis and ITAP assessment in the validation of and subsequent planning for the priority reform, and consequently in informing policy dialogue. These mechanisms facilitated an evidence-based process to identify critical bottlenecks to system transformation in the education sector, involving various groups like the local education group (LEG) - referred to as the JTWG-Ed, the GPE Task Force and the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG). Both the enabling factors analysis and the reform drew on documents such as the ESP-MTR, and the National Statement of Commitment to Transform the Education System in Cambodia.

While stakeholders found the enabling factors analysis to be a sound and valuable process to identify key bottlenecks, analyze challenges, and select priorities, some had mixed views on its effectiveness and efficiency, arguing that it was overly time-consuming and intensive, and considered simply as a means to secure funding. It is unclear to what extent the enabling factors analysis incorporated insights from the concluded ESP-MTR and whether it will provide additional value to the drafting process of the new ESP 2024-2028.

The ITAP assessment validated the bottlenecks identified through the enabling factors analysis, but placed a stronger emphasis on domestic financing, increasing the priority rating from medium to high and resulting in the inclusion of top-up triggers as part of the STG allocation to incentivize efforts to improve equity of domestic financing. Additionally, ITAP identified the need to better utilize evidence and data to support gender-responsive planning. Interviewed development partners agreed with ITAP's assessment of the limited involvement of local CSOs and NGOs, which contributed to a more donor-driven process.

While ITAP recommendations were included in the compact, the increased priority rating for domestic financing did not lead to a significant change in the identified policy actions in the compact compared to those in the self-assessment, and there was no greater emphasis or urgency resulting from the

increased rating. We were not able to confirm if this is because the LEG deemed the identified solutions to be sufficient, or if the need to conduct further analysis to address domestic financing bottlenecks was overlooked.

## 2. Do the priority reforms demonstrate potential for transformation?

### What is Cambodia's understanding of system transformation and the need for transformation?

Stakeholder interviews and a review of the compact document did not reveal a strong or consistent understanding of 'system transformation' in the context of Cambodia. Stakeholders generally articulated the concept of system transformation in terms of the importance of priority actions required to achieve transformation, in particular teacher capacity development. For example, all stakeholders from the MoEYS stressed the pivotal role of teacher capacity development as having the highest transformation potential to improve quality education and outcomes, and some development partners emphasized broader capacity development, extending from the Ministry to provincial and school levels.

The MoEYS' staff and partners talked about system transformation within the framework of the compact development process, rather than as a change according to the system transformation criteria of speed, scale, and inclusion. For some MoEYS stakeholders, the concept of system transformation remained abstract and broad. The compact itself does not present a definition or contextualized understanding of system transformation, and the concept is solely used in reference to the STG.

These findings may imply that while there are positive signs that stakeholders appreciate the need to prioritize actions to achieve transformation in the context of Cambodia, it is less clear that there is a concrete and shared understanding of what transformation means in practice, and how this would be achieved. At this early stage, the concept appears to be largely considered as a GPE-driven initiative, and not yet fully internalized and adopted by stakeholders. It is important that an understanding of system transformation is shared across all tiers of government, including at the local and school levels. However, it was outside of the scope of this evaluation to explore the views of stakeholders at this level.

### What is Cambodia's priority reform?

The overall objective of Cambodia's priority reform is to "improve student learning outcomes" through focusing on two areas: 1) classroom learning, and 2) teacher professional development. The compact introduces three strategies to address learning loss and enhance learning outcomes: 1) Structured pedagogy, encompassing detailed lesson plans, student books, skills-focused teacher training, and integrated teacher coaching; 2) Teaching at the right level, involving grouping students by competency rather than grade; and 3) Remediation, utilizing student performance data to provide additional support to those lagging behind.

Cambodia's current priority reform builds upon the foundation laid by the ESP 2019-2023. After achieving a 97% net enrollment rate in primary Education in 2012/2013, subsequent ESPs shifted toward a focus on quality of education as a priority. The latest ESP specifically concentrated on two primary goals: ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all; and ensuring effective leadership and management of education officials at all levels. The compact is in complete alignment with the scope of the previous ESP. This alignment is explicitly discussed in the compact document, with the two ESP goals "strongly reflected in all aspects of this compact document. The compact stresses educational attainments, school learning, and teacher professional development, as well as strengthening the leadership and management capacity of schools."<sup>9</sup> The compact development process was also relevant to and coherent with Cambodia's existing policy cycle and processes, which coincided with the publication of the ESP-MTR. This alignment ensured the compact could inform the development of the new ESP 2024-2028 as emphasized by stakeholders.

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<sup>9</sup> MoEYS, GPE 2025 Partnership Compact, March 2023.

## Does the priority reform meet the criteria of system transformation?<sup>10</sup>

There is no explicit discussion of **speed** in Cambodia's partnership compact but there are explicit references to **scale** and **inclusion**. The theory of change outlines a priority reform using a combination of existing interventions that require additional scale-up and/or funding, new interventions, those that are not yet effectively implemented, and those that are likely to continue to effectively support systems transformation. For example, the partnership compact discusses the importance of pooled financing in ensuring interventions are scaled nationwide: *"The ability to leverage funds at scale can make a significant difference to interventions on learning outcomes and teacher professional support."* As reported in the Compact, proposed activities under the multiplier grant aim to increase in scope and scale existing interventions that support school leadership and management.

Inclusion is discussed in the partnership compact in relation to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all. Indicators included in the compact align with the policy outcomes under the ESP-MTR and include annual targets for 'core breakthrough indicators' such as the percentage of five-year-old children enrolled in any form of ECE Program and completion rate in primary education, disaggregated by sex. Other dimensions of vulnerability such as migration and minority status are not discussed in detail beyond the need to include additional relevant variables into the EMIS system for more targeted interventions and improved support. While the key indicators and annual targets included in the compact help infer the extent of Cambodia's ambitions for the speed of interventions, they are not sufficient to provide a detailed analysis of the country's approach to speed in comparison to previous reform efforts.

There is evidence in the compact of a **multi-faceted approach** to change, demonstrated by the focus on barriers to transformational change falling under three areas: structured pedagogy, teaching at the right level, and remediation. The reform covers student disparities across multiple levels of the education system (primary and secondary). The compact frequently references multiple system levels from school to sub-national and national levels when outlining the strengths, weaknesses, blockages, and identified priorities against each enabling factor. Activities proposed in the compact aim to harmonize subsystems, policies, and practices for improved and effective use of data (*"ensure harmonized and effective data collection systems, starting at school level"*), for clear and aligned monitoring (*"streamline policies for increased accessibility and harmonize alignment with ESP/ESP-MTR"*), for scaling strategies nationwide (*"continue harmonization of school-level support, such as Early Grades Learning (EGL) strategy and SBM implementation"*) and for ensuring accessibility of tools (*"simplify financial legislation and FMIS/EMIS systems with emphasis on access and reduced administrative load for non-financially trained users"*).

There is little evidence of how Cambodia will align actors' incentives in efforts to implement these activities. Capacity building support is largely planned at the central/department level (e.g. *"strengthen Department of Finance (DoF) central capacity to ensure systems development and ICT capacity strengthening"*), with little evidence of how reform efforts will ensure capacities exist at the provincial and district levels (*"There will be an allocation for additional funding to district level from 2023, but the implementation of this towards support for cluster-level activities [...] cannot yet be evaluated."*)

## Is the priority reform evidence-based?

The ESP 2019-2023 and the compact are grounded in solid evidence regarding the challenges faced

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<sup>10</sup> These criteria are set out in our inception report. The criteria includes: 1) Whether the reform endeavors to achieve improvements to learning with greater speed, scale, and inclusion than past and/or business-as-usual reforms; 2) The reform addresses multiple system constraints through a multi-faceted approach to change. 3) Whether the reform aligns relevant subsystems, policies as well as practices such as those related to teacher professional development, curriculum, assessment systems, EMIS and more, to achieve the intended outcomes. 4) Whether the reform aligns the incentives of actors from all relevant levels and aspects of the education system (e.g., national, regional and district).

One further criterion (whether the reform endeavors to achieve learning improvements through approaches that are evidence-based) is set out in the section below. In addition to these five criteria to define a transformative reform, there are three additional transformative reform criteria which examine the implementation of a transformative reform as well as five criteria which define the process required to design a transformative reform.

by the education sector. However, both faced challenges in the subsequent prioritization process.<sup>11</sup> These challenges may stem from limited capabilities to consistently use data for planning, a weakness acknowledged in the compact. Efforts to address this issue are included in the SCG.

Regarding global best practices' adoption as part of priority reforms, the theory of change narrative in the compact identifies three evidence-based solutions to tackle learning loss: structured pedagogy, teaching at the right level, and remediation. These approaches are thoroughly supported by evidence-based identification and prioritization processes. However, in the schematic overview of the Theory of Change (ToC), they are presented as one outcome (teaching at the right level) and two sub-outcomes (structured pedagogy and remediation), while for the remaining 29 outcomes, evidence-based problem identification and prioritization are not provided. This hinders the assessment of their potential contribution to reaching the desired change of the reform initiative.

### **Is there a credible theory of change for the priority reform?**

Cambodia's ToC reveals notable weaknesses, including lacking specificity concerning the chosen reform and its pathways for achievement. The ToC as outlined in the compact lacks indicators that are specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant (SMART) in Cambodia's context and there is a lack of clearly defined pathways to the intended reform. Furthermore, the ToC lacks support from a dedicated and clear monitoring framework. The overarching goal in the compact, "Improve Student Learning Outcomes," could benefit from additional details, such as specifying the targeted student cohorts (e.g., early or secondary grades) and intended outcomes for improvement, like foundational learning. This could have helped Cambodia set a more specific scope for its reform, defining a more focused and strategic approach. This lack of specificity permeates all levels of the ToC. The outcomes often take the form of activities without clear impact descriptions, making them non-specific and challenging to measure. For instance, the outcome of "structured pedagogy" lacks specific information on the target teacher group and the expected level of mastery of the priority reform. This lack of specificity is also evident in the absence of well-defined causal and temporal connections between proposed activities and their intended outcomes.

## **3. What is Cambodia's readiness to implement its priority reform?**

### **To what extent are implementation plans for the priority reform in place and how credible or feasible are the plans?**

The compact lacks a comprehensive implementation plan<sup>12</sup>, but the SCG grant application provides a detailed plan with clear roles, responsibilities, and timelines (although this does not, and is not intended to, cover the entirety of the priority reform). Managed through the education Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF), the SCG aligns with the CDPF's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, including outcome and output statements. This approach is meant to leverage existing systems to minimize transactional costs and prioritize needs. The SCG application also identifies complementary activities funded by the STG, the Multiplier, and other external sources, ensuring coordination and alignment with the SCG. The implementation plan includes a timeline and budget, specifying the MoEYS focal departments and development partners involved. These detailed plans show a promising level of credibility.

For the STG, only the first draft of the program outline was available at the time of the evaluation. Broad implementation arrangements are provided, identifying that the JTWG-Ed will serve as an advisory and coordinating group, validating progress and results. UNESCO and UNICEF, acting as grant agents, will build on their GPE3 implementation experience, utilizing established monitoring and coordination mechanisms, and will coordinate with World Bank as grant agent for the Multiplier grant. Given the program's ambitious scale and short implementation timeline, the GPE Quality Assurance

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<sup>11</sup> Universalis, *Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation*, 2019.

<sup>12</sup> It is noted that the GPE compact development guidelines do not explicitly require an implementation plan or budget to be provided, however this is a specific area of enquiry included in the overarching evaluation matrix to assess implementation readiness.



Review (QAR) acknowledged the need for clarity in prioritizing strategies and interventions<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, while the division of activities between UNESCO and UNICEF is outlined, it recommended further explanation about the rationale for this division. For these reasons, the implementation plans of the current version of the STG application appear less credible and feasible. However, there is significant room for improvement in the next version of the application.

### **To what extent are priority reforms costed or resourced?**

The compact lacks detailed budgets and implementation plans. However, the SCG application includes a well-costed, detailed budget for each activity group with specific cost descriptions. Although it does not cover the cost of related activities funded by other sources (STG, Multiplier, etc.), these are listed in the application concept note, providing a comprehensive overview of their interactions.

The STG budget, while included, consists of indicative estimates. The document explains that a full detailed program budget will be prepared during the development of the Program Document once all proposed activities are outlined. Therefore, it is not currently possible to assess to what extent the STG is properly costed.

It is important to note that GPE funds are not intended to fund the entirety of the priority reform and that other external partners and funds are expected to be aligned around the reform, such as the European Union or the CDPF.

### **Are stakeholders aligned around the priority reform?**

The compact development was a government-led process with strong stakeholder participation, incorporating structured mechanisms for inclusive dialogue. However, there is currently insufficient evidence to determine how effectively the GPE operating model has aligned partners and resources around the priority reform.

Stakeholders valued the coordination and dialogue opportunities during the EFA and compact drafting phase. However, as funding applications began and the compact development phase ended, achieving sector alignment became more challenging, revealing a more complex sector alignment landscape. Various incentives influenced the cooperation levels of development and financing partners, both with each other and with the Ministry, with the similarity of activities and financial autonomy being key factors. As reported by some respondents, increased program similarity heightened competition, while greater financial autonomy, especially outside the GPE fund, reduced the incentive to coordinate with other partners. However, it also increased the interest in better coordination with the government.<sup>14</sup> The presence of a broad ToC encompassing 30 different outcomes without clearly identified pathways linking proposed activities to the ultimate goal of reform may also confirm the absence of a strong stakeholder alignment around the identified priority. Despite being deemed a low priority in both the self-assessment and the ITAP report, a more comprehensive assessment of sector coordination, considering the quality of stakeholder relations (cooperative vs. competitive), incentives for engagement, and power dynamics, would have offered a more nuanced understanding of the education sector alignment's effectiveness.

As noted in the ITAP report, the complex donor landscape in Cambodia involves over 30 projects that necessitate coordinated efforts to prevent duplication and inefficiency. It is crucial to balance stakeholder representation and incentivize cooperation to improve overall alignment among stakeholders.

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<sup>13</sup> The proposed program includes four components that range from pre-service teacher education to teacher professional development, the expansion of Early Grade teaching and learning and the preparation and development of the digital transformation in education.

<sup>14</sup> This concern was also reported in Universalialia, *Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation*, 2019, p.43: "In addition, DPs do not consistently promote aid effectiveness principles, and some prefer bilateral discussions with the government to the established coordination platforms."

## To what extent are monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks in place to support the priority reform?

The new operating model has supported Cambodia's monitoring and evaluation capacities, including gender monitoring, but the absence of a dedicated monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework hampers accountability and adaptability for the priority reform. The compact uses the ESP 2019-2023 existing MEL mechanisms and indicators. Notably, despite robust monitoring tools like the Annual Congress and Educational Retreats, the ESP and the compact lack a dedicated monitoring framework, making it challenging to align indicators with chosen strategies.<sup>15</sup> Specifically, the compact mainly relies on six of eight core breakthrough indicators from the ESP 2019-2023. While leveraging existing major indicators can prevent duplication and maximize capacity, the absence of a dedicated monitoring framework in both the ESP and the compact poses challenges in progress assessment and accountability. The grant application for the SCG includes a clear results framework, detailing all activities, related targets, and verification tools. In contrast, the currently available STG application only offers a broad set of high-level indicators and commits to developing a monitoring plan to detect issues during implementation. However, without a comprehensive MEL framework in the compact, assessing the entire reform initiative, which encompasses aspects beyond individual grants, remains challenging.

The new operating model has helped Cambodia improve its joint MEL environment for reform implementation. Through the enabling factors analysis focused on data and evidence, and the support of the SCG, Cambodia identified and addressed gaps in its monitoring systems. For instance, utilizing the SCG for reviewing and aligning EMIS reporting and integrating it with other MIS systems, demonstrated an effort to strengthen existing system capacity. The inclusion of additional vulnerability criteria (disability, health, minorities, etc.) into the EMIS system, along with a commitment to diagnosing student retention issues, reflects a more intersectional approach. Progress in gender monitoring includes the commitment to a GMSP (2021-2025) mid-term review. The GMSP had planned an MTR for 2023 and a final review for 2025. However, it has been underfunded and many activities and targets remain unmet, partly due to COVID-19 reprioritizations. To address this, the SCG was expected to fund an MTR in early 2024 to assess progress, identify challenges, and plan the remaining implementation period. This review will focus on identifying necessary resources (human resources, internal and external funding) to support gender-responsive planning and capacity development, and it will prioritize strategies that align with the ESP 2024-2028.

Despite efforts to strengthen Cambodia's monitoring and learning capacities, the absence of a structured MEL framework tailored to the priority reform hamper Cambodia's ability to monitor and learn about its reform progress. This gap affects accountability, achieving current goals, and potential improvements through iterative learning.

## 4. Domestic financing

### What is the status of domestic financing in Cambodia?

**Volume:** The ITAP report highlighted concerning trends. The proportion of education expenditure as a share of total government expenditure has steadily decreased over the past four years, dropping from 13.8% in 2019 to 11.4% in 2021, with projections for 2025 attesting to 14.5%. Recurrent expenditure on education, crucial for ongoing operations, is around 17% of total public recurrent expenditure. The capital expenditures are only 12% of the total education budget. While the ESP-MTR anticipates reaching the 20% target by 2025, the progress has been partially hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting aspects of the MoEYS recurrent budget. Despite these challenges, the new government remains committed to the global benchmark of devoting at least 20% of the public budget (excluding debt service) to education by 2025, as pledged in the Kenyatta Declaration at the Global Education Summit in 2021 and as confirmed by all stakeholders interviewed.

Despite Cambodia's current low allocation of GDP to education (2.9% budgeted in 2022), there is a recognized opportunity to augment funding for the sector. This increase could potentially address priority

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<sup>15</sup> The concerns about the ESP 2019-2023 MEL framework are reported in ITAP, *Assessment of Enabling Factors*, 2022, and in Universalialia, *Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation*, 2019.

non-wage spending, improve school conditions, fund scholarships, and take over significant programs currently managed by development partners. The country expresses confidence in its ability to mobilize resources to further enhance its educational landscape.<sup>16</sup>

**Equity:** The ITAP report notes how, despite some progress, public spending on education in Cambodia remains inequitable. Wealthier households dominate pre-primary, secondary, and higher education enrollments, while rural areas suffer from lower primary and secondary school enrollments. There is an unequal distribution of teachers, with shortages of schools and teachers in remote provinces. Funding per student varies significantly between provinces and is not targeted to poorer areas. The School Operating Fund (SOF) aims to improve facilities in disadvantaged regions in a more equitable way, but is insufficient to meet needs. Additionally, there is no extra funding for schools with additional requirements, such as those with large ethnic minority populations. Although educational spending has become more pro-poor over time, high dropout rates and frequent grade repetition highlight ongoing inefficiencies. Teacher shortages and poor distribution continue challenging the system, increasing costs, and hindering enrollment in remote areas. Program budgeting has improved efficiencies but still faces significant challenges in aligning budgets with policy outcomes.

**Efficiency:** The EFA and ITAP assessment highlighted areas where the efficiency of financing procedures could be improved. Indications of inefficiencies in the education system are highlighted by poor learning achievement results, and low survival rates, which have worsened due to COVID-19. Overly complex financial systems and legislation create administrative burdens for non-financially trained users and require simplification to improve the efficiency of financial transactions at decentralized levels.

### **Do the domestic financing-related policy actions have the potential to support the enabling conditions for transformation?**

The measures proposed in the compact and different grant applications partially aim to improve volume, efficiency, and equity in domestic financing. The policy actions related to the priority reform are aligned with the challenges of domestic finance identified by the ITAP report and those the country faces. As confirmed by many stakeholders interviewed, the new government has shown commitment to education and the education budget, with a strong political commitment to focus on priority areas like teacher reform and school reform. Whether this commitment will translate into significantly higher shares of government expenditures dedicated to the education sector needs to be explored through future evaluation activities.

**Volume-related policy actions:** Cambodia continues to focus on volume. For example, it aims to improve the volume of education sector non-salary recurrent expenditure by improving evidence-based decision-making. The selected triggers indicators, (1) Increased allocation of SOF relative to non-wage expenditure year by year and (2) Implementation of EFMS v.3.3, align with this directive. The first target, concentrating on the volume of domestic funding, was chosen because MoEYS lacks control over percentage increases concerning expenditure in other categories. As for the second target, strengthening the Public Finance Management (PFM) reform and, in particular, the Education Financial Management System (EFMS) is deemed critical to all other areas of financial management, as it may support addressing the weaknesses identified not just in the compact development process but also from GPE recommendations.<sup>17</sup> The actual impact of this activity will require follow-up in future evaluation activities. It is uncertain whether policy actions related to domestic finance will lead to a long-term commitment to maintaining a higher volume of domestic financing for the education sector. Key decisions lie with the MEF, and MoEYS lacks awareness of the levels of domestic financing and available resources for the upcoming years and has limited control over securing increases.

**Equity-related policy actions:** Cambodia aims to improve allocation and equity through increased allocation of the SOF relative to the non-wage expenditure year by year to allow for need-based financing. The first target above (1) Increased allocation of SOF relative to non-wage expenditure year

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<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing the report, we were informed that the GDP recalculation was currently underway and that with the re-basing, the percentage of education expenditures would be even lower, highlighting the critical importance of advocating the MEF to increase the education budget towards the 4% of the updated GDP calculation, to comply with international recommendations. However, the research team did not have access to the recalculations, so was unable to verify this.

<sup>17</sup> This was reported in MoEYS, *GPE 2025 Partnership Compact*, March 2023, p. 29.

by year also addresses the equity aspect, as SOF, decentralized to the school level, allows for need-based financing. As recognized in the ITAP report, this approach aims to enhance facilities and equipment, especially in disadvantaged regions. The ITAP report highlighted limitations, such as a low budget and the absence of additional provisions for schools with additional needs, such as those with large ethnic minorities. To address these limitations, the compact commits to "Review SOF allocation and guidelines for use by schools, including possible increased SOF allocation for areas of additional needs." Equity-related top-up triggers may have a limited impact, especially in the short term. These tackle issues not directly linked to domestic finance, suggesting their potential to promote equitable distribution might only become evident over a longer period.

**Efficiency-related policy actions:** Cambodia aims to improve the efficiency of the education sector's non-salary recurrent expenditure by improving evidence-based decision-making. This effort builds on responses to previously identified bottlenecks, addressed through existing national policies such as the Public Financial Management initiative launched in 2004. This initiative aimed to improve budget reliability, foster financial accountability, align policy and budget, and improve performance accountability. In the compact, the MoEYS capitalizes on this reform, proposing activities such as diversifying funding sources, streamlining financial regulations, strengthening the MoE's Finance Department, and establishing equitable scholarship systems to address ongoing challenges.

While MoEYS has shown some capacity in identifying key bottlenecks through the enabling factors analysis, evidence is limited to confirm if they have the potential to support the enabling conditions for transformation. The MoEYS faces constraints in addressing these due to key decisions resting with the MEF. Annually, the MEF oversees the overall budget allocated to the MoEYS. As reported by stakeholders, MoEYS lacks awareness of the actual levels of domestic financing and the available resources for the upcoming years and has limited control over securing increases to address additional needs identified through strategic planning processes.

### **To what extent did the GPE operating model help Cambodia identify and address system bottlenecks in domestic finance?**

The compact's development process had a limited impact on aligning stakeholders around domestic finance, and this was due to both structural and strategic factors. On the structural side, the technical complexity of the topic restricted involvement to stakeholders with specific skills and expertise. On the strategic front, some stakeholders felt that ongoing engagement throughout the entire compact development process, especially from the MoEYS Department of Finance, and increased multilateral discussions between GPE, MoEYS, and MEF would have been beneficial.

As for the EFA, the country's self-assessment primarily focused on the volume and efficiency of financing, giving less attention to equity, which was more thoroughly analyzed in the ITAP report. The ITAP findings and GPE's recommendations<sup>18</sup> led to the inclusion of specific targets in the reform to improve funding equity, especially through indicators in the top-up part of the STG. This enhancement demonstrates the effectiveness of the ITAP review in identifying and targeting additional challenges. However, the broader assessment of volume, equity, and efficiency of domestic financing did not show a similar impact. While the self-assessment categorized domestic finance as a medium priority, ITAP considered it a high priority enabling factor. Despite this higher priority in the ITAP assessment, the priorities identified in the compact remained unchanged from those in the self-assessment. This lack of alignment in priority levels did not reflect an increased sense of urgency. The continuity of the same measures in the compact, as identified in Cambodia's self-assessment, raises questions about whether the LEG considered these solutions adequate or if further analysis was overlooked. Consequently, the overall effectiveness of the enabling factors analysis process, especially concerning domestic finance, remains uncertain.

Regarding grant applications, the SCG and STG's top-up portion served as an incentive for the MoEYS to address gaps in the enabling factor areas, including in domestic finance, aligned with the identified bottlenecks. An increase in the SOF allocation to non-wage recurrent expenditure is seen as a 'real terms' increase, irrespective of other factors. Despite being aligned with the limitations identified in the ITAP review, all the measures proposed in the different grant applications may have limited

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<sup>18</sup> GPE Secretariat, Review Of The Strategic Parameters Of The Draft Partnership Compact (Cambodia), Global Partnership for Education, 2022.

potential to increase domestic financing and reach the goal of 20% of domestic allocation to education in 2025, as key decisions in this area rest with the MEF. The effectiveness of SCG activities in strengthening domestic finance capacity is yet to be evidenced.

Within the GPE initiative, the EOL initiative collaborates with the NEP to support enhancements in domestic finance, alongside its primary focus on gender and inclusion. Evidence is limited to assess how effective it has been to date.

Interviewed stakeholders held mixed views on the likely possibility of leveraging the entire compact reform to increase MEF's funding to the education sector. While some believed that improved results, evidence-based planning, and enhanced spending efficiency could serve as leverage for the MEF, others were more skeptical about the potential positive spillover of the compact in the funding allocation process by the MEF.

## 5. Gender equality

### What is the status of gender equality in Cambodia?

In terms of **access to education**, gender equality varies across different school grades. Girls demonstrate higher completion rates than boys in primary and lower secondary levels, but this trend reverses in higher education. The gender parity index for lower secondary education, reflecting this imbalance, increased to 1.24 in 2021/2022, from 1.15 in 2017/18 and 1.05 in 2015/16.<sup>19</sup> In secondary school completion rates, girls consistently outperform boys, maintaining a 10.3 percentage point gap. The lack of specific measures to counterbalance this trend is one of the main gender-related challenges in the country.

Factors such as safe and quality facilities and pupil-teacher ratios are crucial for access to education. As for school facilities, the percentage of primary schools meeting WASH standards increased to 78% in 2020/21, with notable progress in the highest standards.<sup>20</sup> This positive trend in facility improvements contributes to students' health and regular attendance. In secondary schools, similar improvements are observed.

The pupil-teacher ratio significantly influences gender-equitable access to education. A lower ratio allows for more personalized attention and support for each student, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. This aligns with the compact's strategy of utilizing remedial education to positively impact gender equality and marginalized groups. Cambodia's pupil-qualified teacher ratio in primary education has significantly improved since 2017/18, reaching 45 in 2020/21.<sup>21</sup> In secondary schools, the increase in lower-secondary teachers has led to a decline in the pupil-teacher ratio from 27.53 in 2007/08 to 23.4 in 2021/22, contributing to enhanced education quality. However, both in primary and secondary education, sub-national disparities should be explored at the district level to identify areas with less qualified teachers.<sup>22</sup> Yet, the biggest challenge related to gender equality in access to education is the absence of compulsory education. Indeed, as provided by Article 31 of the Law on Education, "every citizen has the right to access qualitative education of at least 9 years in public schools free of charge". Yet, education is not

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<sup>19</sup> For further details, please refer to Universalialia, *Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation*, 2019.p.77, and EMIS, *Public Education Statistics and Indicators 2021-2022*, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> The Ministry employs a classification system for school facilities, ranging from one to three stars, to assess and ensure the quality of services provided. This system encompasses criteria such as drinking water supply, latrine conditions, and handwashing facilities, with each star level representing different standards of facility quality. For further details, please refer to MoEYS, *Minimum Requirement Guidelines On Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools (WinS)*, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> As referred in the ESP-MTR, the pupil-teacher ratio recommended by UNESCO is 40:1. For further details, please refer to Universalialia, *Summative GPE Country Program Evaluation*, 2019.p.77.

<sup>22</sup> Compared to 2017/2018, there has been an improvement in pupil-teacher ratio differences between urban and rural areas in 2021-2022. In 2017/2018, the pupil-teacher ratio for urban areas was 25, while for rural areas, it was 36.9, resulting in a gap of 11.9 points. In the current scenario, these differences have reduced to 8.8 points, with the pupil-teacher ratio for urban areas at 27.9 and for rural areas at 36.7. However, significant disparities persist across provinces, such as in the Siem Reap province, where the pupil-teacher ratio reaches 46.9.

For further details, please refer to EMIS, *Public Education Statistics and Indicators 2017-2018*, 2018, and EMIS, *Public Education Statistics and Indicators 2021-2022*, 2022.

declared compulsory, which may in turn not incentivize parents to send their children to school.

In terms of the progress of **gender within education**, the state of gender-responsive pedagogy and curriculum reforms in Cambodia presents a combination of advancements and challenges. Although there is targeted gender equality content in the Life Skills Program for lower secondary education, its non-mandatory nature and limited nationwide implementation pose challenges. A comprehensive sex education initiative, supported by UNFPA, is in progress. The 2019 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Concluding Observations stress the importance of eliminating gender-discriminatory content in school curricula. However, higher education lacks women's/gender studies programs or departments in public universities. A 2017 gender assessment in teacher education found a generally unbiased classroom environment, but sustained gender responsiveness necessitates ongoing monitoring under the Gender Policy in Education.<sup>23</sup> Addressing these challenges, the GMSP 2021-2025<sup>24</sup> incorporates Strategy #4, aiming to mainstream gender at various levels, from general curriculum and teacher training to teaching and learning activities and broader education environments. Specific activities include mainstreaming gender in curriculum and textbooks, delivering training for teachers and trainers on gender-sensitive pedagogy, enhancing teacher capacity in producing gender-responsive teaching materials, and providing training on gender-responsive school leadership and management. The SCG's contribution to the MTR of the GMSP will support the evaluation progress in implementing these activities.

Finally, as for the progress of **gender through education**, according to the 2018 Ministry of Civil Service's data, 46% of personnel at MoEYS in Cambodia are women, surpassing the average for all line ministries (31%). However, this representation is largely concentrated in lower education levels, with women comprising 65.9% of pre-primary and primary teachers. As the educational levels rise, women's representation decreases, particularly in higher education and leadership positions, with only 7% of director generals and 13% of school directors being women.<sup>25</sup> The GMSP 2021-2025 highlights gender gaps in leadership roles and underscores the need for changes in promotional and hiring practices to achieve gender parity in management levels.

### **Do the gender equality-related policy actions have the potential to support the enabling conditions for transformation?**

While the compact and its theory of change prioritize gender equality, the treatment of gender issues remains partial, lacking evidence-based and context-specific measures, and indicating a potential misalignment with GPE's broader gender equality goals. Gender equality-related policy actions identified, in particular those aiming to address increasing gender imbalances in access to education, may have limited potential to support the enabling conditions for transformation. While there is some evidence of partial understanding of the concept of gender equality in and through education among government stakeholders as evidenced by MoEYS policies and interviews, there is no consensus around priorities behind gender-related policy actions.

Cambodia explicitly targets gender equality through its reforms, making it a thematic priority area, with a dedicated workstream of activities within its ToC. Priority reform includes components aimed at improving gender equality *in access to education* by focusing on teaching quality and providing remedial support to children. Moreover, the compact aims to improve gender equality *within education* providing gender-equitable support to education professionals and advocating for equitable working conditions and teachers' professional development.

According to Cambodia's EFA, the main priorities for gender-responsive sector planning and monitoring include reviewing the ESP to integrate the ToC, strengthen internal coherence, and align strategies with AOPs. Additionally, there is a focus on improving the quality of M&E and the results framework, streamlining policies for increased accessibility and harmonization, and conducting an MTR of the GMSP 2021-2025. The SCG will support developing the ESP 2024-2028, ensuring targets are disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, disability, and other relevant categories. It will also

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<sup>23</sup> R. Montero Cano, N. Vong, *Participatory Gender Audit of Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Final Report*, 2020, pp.9-10.

<sup>24</sup> MoEYS, *Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education 2021-2025*, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> R. Montero Cano, N. Vong, *Participatory Gender Audit of Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. Final Report*, 2020.

fund the National Education Policy Framework (NEPF) to align existing policies and guide education transformation to 2050, incorporating a gender-responsive approach. Additionally, the SCG will finance both the MTR of the GMSP 2021-2025 and the GMSP 2026-2030 development. The SCG effectively addresses key priorities for gender-responsive sector planning and monitoring, supporting policy actions with the potential to transform this area.

Regarding gender equality *through* the education sector, the compact aims to ensure all teachers have improved working conditions, professional status, and career progression in line with teacher reform policies. The STG will fund the enhancement of the Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS) to expand its functionality for teacher management and integrate it with other management systems. This will allow all relevant professional development activities to be incorporated into the CPD system and integrated with the appraisal system and career progression. The STG also includes a commitment to advocating for equitable working conditions and professional development opportunities for male and female teachers, teacher educators, and related education officials. The compact's efforts to promote gender-equitable educational professionals' careers are promising, but the identified may have limited transformative potential. While more specific actions may be developed in the MTR of the GMSP 2021-2025 or in the GMSP 2026-2030, there is currently limited evidence of their potential impact.

Regarding gender equality *within* education, the proposed activities may have limited potential or are in too early a stage to be fully evaluated. The STG commits to efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination from the curriculum and teaching methods, which can limit educational opportunities for girls and boys. For this area, too, specific actions may be developed in the MTR of the GMSP 2021-2025 or in the GMSP 2026-2030.

To improve gender equality *in access to* education, the compact's chosen actions include structured pedagogy, teaching at the right level, and remediation. These aim to improve learning outcomes and retention in a gender-equitable way, with a focus on boys and other disadvantaged groups, particularly in primary education. The SCG plans to conduct diagnostics on student retention factors, one of those focusing on factors affecting boy's achievement and retention. The STG will also fund strategies like classroom assessment and the Student Tracking System (STS) to support gender-responsive education policy and planning. The STS will be further developed and rolled out to track student characteristics and learning progress at the school level. Formative assessment practices will be crucial in creating gender-responsive, inclusive classrooms and schools. The STS is a valuable school-level tool that tracks student characteristics and learning. Data from the STS or diagnostic on retention factors can inform gender-responsive school policies, planning, governance, and classroom learning interventions. In addition to these diagnostic measures, the Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX) initiative will support applied research projects focusing on gender inequalities in secondary education, such as the "Analysis of Gender Parity in Lower-Secondary Education using Geospatial Data: A Case Study of Cambodia" (2022). This research aims to provide insights into gender disparities and inform targeted interventions.

Some of the policy actions identified in the compact or addressed through grants may have limited potential to address the increasing gender gaps, lacking rapid measures for boys' disadvantages and missing the opportunity for urgent buffering policies pending a detailed diagnosis. While the compact's efforts to promote gender-equitable educational professionals' careers show promise, the identified activities to address gender gaps in education access may have limited transformative potential. Strategies like structured pedagogy, teaching at the right level, and remediation, though based on strong global evidence, may lack an immediate impact on the increasing gender disparity across all education levels. Concerning secondary education gaps, planned analysis on retention, progression, and achievement barriers, shows promise for long-term policy planning, yet may be insufficient in reversing the escalating gender gap favoring girls. This trend is evident in the consistent increase in the Gender Parity Index (GPI) across all education levels. While the GPI in primary school has remained relatively stable between 0.98 and 1.0, indicating gender parity, the lower secondary school gap has risen from 1.15 in 2017/2018 to 1.17 in 2021/2022, highlighting

a growing disparity in favor of girls.<sup>26</sup> The most significant shift is observed in upper secondary school, where the GPI surged from 1.19 to 1.24, reflecting a substantial 0.5-point difference in four years.

### **To what extent did the GPE operating model help and incentivize Cambodia to identify and address challenges in gender equality and hardwire gender equality into its priority reform?**

The GPE operating model supported Cambodia to identify bottlenecks and put in place corresponding policy actions. However, there is mixed evidence that the operating model supported greater stakeholder alignment behind the policy actions related to gender equality, with alignment appearing to vary across stakeholders.

The GPE operating model was efficient in helping Cambodia acknowledge gaps in gender equality in the education sector, by facilitating the identification of coherent measures to support improvements in this area. The enabling factors analysis acknowledged various challenges, later confirmed in the ITAP report, including the gender imbalance in secondary education, disparities in decision-making positions, and the need for enhanced coordination of strategies, budgeting, and activities among development partners through a more comprehensive ESP. Moreover, the analysis of the data and evidence enabling factor, enabled the MoEYS to pinpoint issues in this area, potentially enhancing intersectional gender analysis and evidence-based policy planning.

There is mixed evidence of greater stakeholder alignment behind the policy actions related to gender equality. As indicated in interviews, alignment with gender equality priorities in the education sector varies among stakeholders. While the MoEYS focused more on policies related to educational professionals' careers, development partners highlighted the urgency of addressing gender inequality in education access. Regarding the process leading to the inclusion of gender equality in the priority reform, some development partners claimed significant ownership, while others saw it as a strategic alignment with GPE's interests. One partner reported that the emphasis on girls' disadvantages is attributed to donor preferences. Although these observations provide anecdotal evidence about the origin of the push to include gender equality in the compact, all are consistent in identifying this incentive as external to the MoEYS. This may partially explain why the area of boys' disadvantages in access to education was overlooked by MoEYS during the interviews, but this hypothesis needs further assessment.

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<sup>26</sup> A GPI between 0.97 and 1.03 indicates parity between the genders. A GPI below 0.97 indicates a disparity in favor of males. A GPI above 1.03 indicates a disparity in favor of females. For further details, please refer to the following: <https://learningportal.iiep.unesco.org/en/glossary/gender-parity-index-gpi>.



# Annex 1 Summary background tables

What is the priority reform that Cambodia is planning to undertake?<sup>27</sup>

Summary description the priority reform in Cambodia	
<b>Focus area and strategic parameters for GPE funding</b>	The compact objective is to “improve student learning outcomes” and proposes two focus areas: 1) classroom learning, and 2) teacher professional development.
<b>Levels targeted</b>	Primary
<b>Thematic areas covered</b>	Learning, Gender Equality, Quality Teaching
<b>Description</b>	Cambodia’s partnership compact envisions achieving system transformation by attaining the <b>overarching goal of improving student learning outcomes</b> . The compact identifies three priority areas to focus on to achieve this goal: <b>gender equality, quality learning, and quality teaching</b> .
<b>Priority reform intended outcomes</b>	<p>Three policy outcomes with the potential for system transformation are identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome 1 (Gender equality):</b> improvements in gender equality and inclusivity in the education system will be reached by (i) enhancing teaching and learning to enhance retention, progression, and learning outcomes, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged children, in a gender-equitable manner, and (ii) providing gender-equitable support to the career development of education professionals, starting at the school level;</li> <li>• <b>Outcome 2 (Quality learning):</b> improving student learning outcomes will be achieved through (i) providing robust support to schools in developing core foundational skills by identifying learning needs and offering targeted remedial support, and (ii) enhancing the digital competencies of both teachers and students;</li> <li>• <b>Outcome 3 (Quality teaching):</b> Equipping and supporting all teachers to enhance their students' learning outcomes involves (i) upgrading qualifications, providing PRESET, INSET, and CPD<sup>28</sup> to enhance content knowledge, pedagogy, teaching methods, and ICT utilization, and (ii) offering enhanced school-based support for all teachers and school leaders, focusing on their professional development.</li> </ul>
<b>Priority reform main activities and pathways of change</b>	<p>The compact offers two different visualizations of the Theory of Change (ToC) underlying the priority reform, as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 in Annex 2. One of the two visualizations of the ToC underlying the priority reform included in the compact (Schematic Overview – Figure 2 in Annex 1) is underpinned by an explanation elucidating how school leaders, with assistance from central and local resources and professional development opportunities, and colleagues, can provide support to teachers. Teachers, who may also benefit from similar support structures, can then offer targeted teaching tailored to student needs. This entire structure aims to facilitate more effective learning for students, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes.</p> <p>The compact introduces <b>three strategies</b> aimed at addressing learning loss and enhancing learning outcomes. These strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Structured pedagogy</b>, encompassing detailed lesson plans, student books, skills-focused teacher training, and integrated teacher coaching;</li> <li>• <b>Teaching at the right level</b>, involving grouping students by competency rather than grade; and</li> <li>• <b>Remediation</b>, utilizing student performance data to provide additional support to those lagging behind.</li> </ul>

<sup>27</sup> The source for this table is the partnership compact.

<sup>28</sup> PRESET (Pre-Service Training), INSET (In-Service Training), CPD (Continuous Professional Development).

Despite various support measures identified in the system for these strategies, their contribution to the reform is not clearly outlined in either the Schematic Overview or the Simplified Schematic (see Figure 1 and 2 in Annex 1).

## What GPE support has Cambodia received to identify transformative priority reforms and align partners and resources to them?<sup>29</sup>

GPE engagement					
Year joined GPE	2006				
Coordinating Agency	UNICEF				
Total grant support	USD \$172.9m over 16 grants in previous years				
Key GPE 2025 timelines and grants					
Cohort	Cohort 2				
<p>The timeline chart displays key milestones for Cohort 2 from October 2021 to October 2023. The milestones are: Cohort start date (Oct 2021), ITAP assessment finalized (Nov 2022), GPE Board approval of strategic parameters (Apr 23), Submission of Enabling Factors Analysis (Oct 2022), and Compact finalized (Mar 2023).</p>					
Status of GPE grants to support the priority reform					
GPE grants	Grant agent	Maximum allocation	Current status	Expected start date	Duration
System Transformation Grant	UNESCO, UNICEF	US \$15.3	Pending	January 2024	2 years, 2024 – 2026
System Capacity Grant	UNICEF	US \$2.7	Active	September 2023	3 years, 2023– 2026
Multiplier Grant	US\$ 30m				
Priority ratings from the enabling factors analysis					
Enabling factor type	Self-analysis		ITAP		
Data and evidence	Medium		Medium		
Gender responsive sector planning, policy, and monitoring	Medium		Medium		
Sector coordination	Low/Medium		Low/Medium		
Domestic financing	Medium		<i>High</i>		
Other GPE programs and support					

<sup>29</sup> The sources for this table are: GPE Secretariat Operating Model Pipeline for key GPE 2025 information and timelines (updated February 2024), GPE website on Cambodia (see: <https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/cambodia>).

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<b>Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX)</b>	<p>KIX has been instrumental in identifying challenges and shaping reforms for gender equality in education through various initiatives. The ongoing KIX-funded project, "Adapting, testing and scaling a proven summer pre-primary education model in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Tanzania," places capacity strengthening at the core of cross-regional applied research, aiming to enhance the quality and inclusiveness of early childhood education. This involves workshops for various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community teaching assistants, community leaders, and government officials at all levels.</p> <p>Additionally, since 2022, Cambodia has benefited from KIX-supported applied research projects focusing on gender inequalities in secondary education. Key studies, such as "Analysis of Gender Parity in Lower-Secondary Education using Geospatial Data: A Case Study of Cambodia" (2022) and "Diagnostic Tools for Improving Education Policy and Planning: A Case Study on Dropouts in Early Secondary Schools in Cambodia" (2023), align with the country's priorities. These studies provide crucial insights for a comprehensive diagnosis of gender inequalities in secondary education, supporting evidence-based policy planning.</p>
<b>Education Out Loud (EOL)</b>	<p>The EOL initiative collaborates with the NGO Education Partnership (NEP) to support enhancements in domestic finance, in addition to its primary focus on gender and inclusion. A two-year project has been designed to enhance the NEP's capacity in influencing government education policy, budget, and program development.<sup>30</sup> While the initiative primarily concentrates on gender and inclusivity, it also includes a component related to domestic finance. This aspect involves promoting the inclusion of the NEP in budget development and the representation of marginalized groups in policy and budget development and related initiatives.</p>






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<sup>30</sup> For further details please refer to the following link: <https://educationoutloud.org/project/strengthening-quality-educational-policy-dialogue-and-delivery>

## Annex 2 Strength of evidence ratings for the Cambodia case study

Question	Rating	Description of sources of evidence
1. Did the GPE model help with policy dialogue, identification of system bottlenecks, and solutions to address these bottlenecks for better education outcomes?		<p>Sources for this section include stakeholder interviews primarily with MoEYS, MEF, development partners and CSOs. Document review includes an examination of the enabling factors analysis; ITAP Report; partnership compact, grants application to STG and SCG and other relevant policy documents such as the Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023, the Education Strategic Plan Mid-Term Review (ESP-MTR), Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan (GMSP), and EMIS statistics. Appraisals of the previous ESPs were also taken into consideration.</p> <p>Sources for this section were generally complete and from multiple sources; however, there is mixed evidence to assess the extent to which the GPE operating model support effective prioritization, and the absence of a MEL doesn't allow us to make a further judgment. There is also limited evidence to assess how the enabling factors analysis informed policy dialogue.</p>
2. Do the priority reforms demonstrate potential for transformation?		<p>This section builds on stakeholder interviews primarily with MoEYS, development partners and CSOs. Document review includes an examination of the enabling factors analysis; ITAP Report; partnership compact and other relevant policy documents such as the Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and the Education Strategic Plan Mid-Term Review (ESP-MTR). Appraisals of the previous ESPs were also taken into consideration.</p> <p>Sources for this section were generally complete and from multiple sources; however, there is limited evidence to assess how the GPE model is relevant to key country-level stakeholders with respect to the feasibility of the priority reform and usefulness of the processes.</p>
3. What is Cambodia's readiness to implement its priority reform?		<p>This section builds on stakeholder interviews with the MoEYS, development partners and CSOs. Analysis of the key documents from the GPE 2025 operating model was also included (compact, ITAP report, SCG and STG grant applications) and other relevant policy documents such as the Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and the Education Strategic Plan Mid-Term Review (ESP-MTR).</p> <p>Sources for this section were generally complete and from multiple sources; however, there is limited evidence to assess in detail whether needed capacities and resources are planned or in place.</p>
4. Domestic financing		<p>This section builds primarily on document review, with an examination of the partnership compact, enabling factors analysis, ITAP Report, STG and SCG grant applications, and GPE Domestic Financing Matrix.</p> <p>Evidence for this question is incomplete due to research limitations: during both field visits and desk reviews, the evaluation team encountered challenges in obtaining information about domestic finance in Cambodia. MoEYS and partners lacked precise information, frequently citing conflicting figures and projections for domestic expenditure dedicated to the education sector. Additionally, accessing further relevant documentation proved unfeasible.</p>
5. Gender equality		<p>This section builds on stakeholder interviews primarily with MoEYS, development partners and CSOs. Document review includes an examination of the enabling factors analysis; ITAP Report; partnership compact; grants applications and other relevant policy documents such as the Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023, the <i>Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education 2021-2025</i> and the <i>Participatory Gender Audit of Cambodia's Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport</i>. Appraisals of the previous ESPs and different EMIS <i>Public Education Statistics &amp; Indicators</i> were also taken into consideration.</p>

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Evidence for the question on whether gender-equality related policy actions have the potential to support the enabling conditions for transformation is mostly complete and includes multiple, credible sources; however, there is mixed evidence to assess the extent to which the GPE operating model support greater stakeholder alignment behind the policy actions related to gender equality.

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# Annex 3 Depiction of Cambodia's priority reform theory of change

Figure 1: Simplified schematic

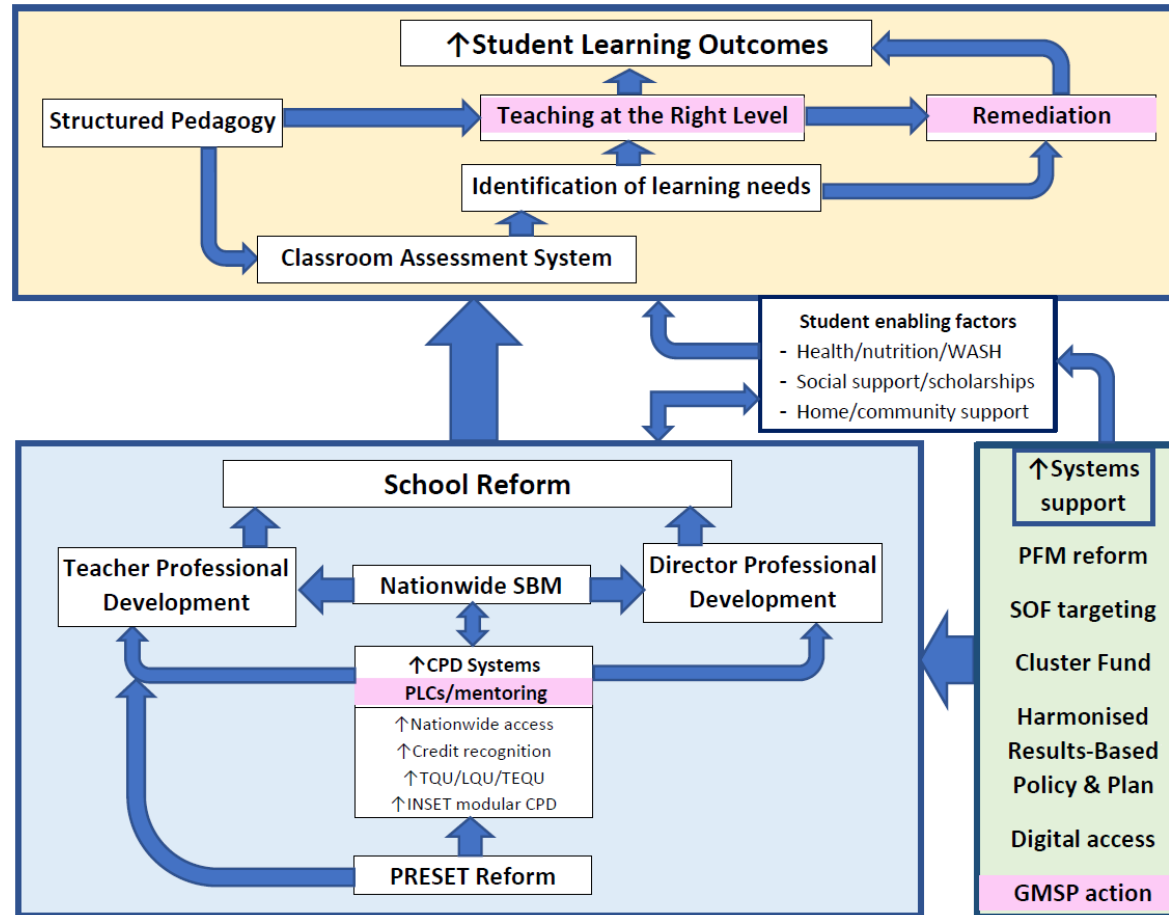


Figure 2: Schematic Overview

↑ = 'improve'		Impact: Students can maintain effective learning		
Reform: ↑ Student Learning Outcomes				
Areas				
↑	1. Quality Learning	2. Quality Teaching	3. Gender Equality	4. Systems Support
↑ Outcomes →	School 1.1 ↑Teaching at the Right Level (EG priority) 1.1.1 ↑Structured Pedagogy (EGL materials) 1.1.2 ↑Identification of learning needs (CAS) 1.1.3 ↑Remediation (inc. CwD, MLE, SEN etc.) 1.1.4 ↑Evidence-based learning 1.1.5 ↑MLE curriculum 1.2 ↑ICT skills 1.2.1 ↑Infrastructure Retention 1.3 ↑Post basic ed. opportunities (inc. Tech. Ed. High Schools and TVET) 1.3.1 Harmonisation of technical education/life skills/entrepreneurship	Teacher professional development 2.1 TPAP Review 2.2 ↑PRESET reform 2.2.1 ↑Curriculum relevance 2.2.2 ↑Practicum relevance 2.2.3 ↑TTIs capacity for private training 2.2.4 ↑MLE and SEN specialism support 2.3 ↑CPD systems effectiveness 2.3.1 Expansion of CPD credit earning access 2.3.2 ↑Teacher accountability ( <i>all teachers</i> ) 2.3.3 ↑Onsite mentoring support 2.3.4 ↑Capacity classroom assessment 2.3.5 ↑TQU support (and TEQU) 2.4 ↑Identification of CwD 2.5 ↑ICT skills and access Director professional development 2.6 SBM nationwide implementation 2.6.1 ↑ICT skills and access 2.6.2 ↑LQU support 2.6.3 ↑Director accountability 2.6.4 ↓Director and teacher admin 2.6.5 ↑Cluster-based support (prim. and sec.) 2.7 ↑Flexible timetabling 2.8 ↑Retention <i>all</i> good teachers 2.8.1 ↑Support for NQTs	School 3.1 ↑Classroom mentoring ( <i>Skilled classroom practitioners</i> ) 3.2 ↑Female SMC Policy 3.3 ↑GMSP relevance 3.3.1 ↑Awareness 3.3.2 ↑Funding 3.3.3 ↑Plan/implement Marginalised groups 3.4 Intersectional analysis 3.5 ↑Scholarships targeting and flexibility 3.6 ↑School Health and Nutrition (SHN) support 3.6.1 ↑WASH facilities	Policy and Planning 4.1 Planning/Policy Cycle Support 4.2 ↑Harmonisation under ESP/ESP-MTR Financial 4.3 EFMS/FMIS simplified 4.3.1 ↑Evidence-based funding proposals 4.4 Equitable SOF allocation 4.4.1 ↑Guidance 4.4.2 ↑Cluster funding 4.5 ↑Accurate budget projections 4.6 ↑Harmonised DP support Data and digital 4.7 ↑EMIS inclusivity (CwD, MLE, OoSC) 4.7.1 ↑Systems alignment 4.8 ↑Data use for plan/policy 4.8.1 ↑Analytical reporting 4.8.2 ↑DoPo involvement 4.8.3 ↑Research capacity 4.8.4 ↑Student data tracking 4.9 ↑ICT capacity central level 4.10 ↑Digitalisation of M&E Infrastructure 4.11 Complete TECs 4.12 ↑Electric/Wi-Fi/ICT devices 4.13 ↑WASH infrastructure
	↑ Inputs / Activities →	1.1.1A National EGL Strategy implemented 1.1.2A CAS policy develop (formative assessment) 1.1.3A Remediation policy 1.1.3B ↑Remedial materials and accessibility 1.1.3B1 Adapt materials for SEN (SED/NISE) 1.1.3C Deployment of specialist teachers (pilot) 1.1.3D Decentralised flexible timetable (pilot) 1.1.3E ↑Cluster-level support 1.1.3F ↑Co-operation primary-secondary 1.1.4A Complete Student Learning Outcomes analysis 1.1.4A1 NLA analysis 1.1.4A2 EGRA/EGMA endline (Intervention v. Control) 1.1.4A3 PISA 2022/2025 1.1.4A Review e-learning portal 1.1.5A Curriculum review 1.2A ICT policy review 1.2B School-level needs assessment 1.2C ↑ICT needs-based training (inc. online study) 1.2D ↑M&E follow-up 1.2.1A (as 4.12A-B) 1.3A ↑Post-G9 opportunities 1.3B Dissemination strategy 1.3.1A Technical education scholarships 1.3.1B Review interventions for harmonised approach	2.1A ↑Align with new TPAP 2.2A ↑12+4/12+2 alignment 2.2.1A ↑Textbook content 2.2.1B Training curriculum (PRE/INSET) 2.2.2A Overall review ( <i>timing</i> ) 2.2.2B ↑Use of new EGL materials 2.2.2C ↑Support co-op. schools 2.2.3A Policy review: Additional trainee intake 2.2.4A1 Curriculum review 2.2.4A2 Develop ICLC infrastructure for MLE 2.3A Post-COVID review (STEPCam final eval.) 2.3B ↑Capacity CPDMO and website 2.3C PLC establish and active 2.3.1A ↑Nationwide access and retroactive credit 2.3.2A ↑Performance appraisal (incl. contract) 2.3.2B ↑Accountability for inspections 2.3.2C Review contract teacher policy: align 2.3.2A 2.3.3A (=3.1A, 3.1B) 2.3.4A Needs assessment 2.3.4B Targeted CPD 2.3.5A ↑Self-directed CPD (inc. action research) 2.4A Policy review 2.4B Teacher CPD modules 2.4C ↑Links with health partners 2.5A Review e-learning portal and MoEYS website 2.5B Needs assessment 2.5C Teacher orientation/CPD 2.5D ↑ICT integration to PRESET 2.6A ↑Dialogue between different approaches 2.6B ↑Policy (simplify) 2.6C ↑National coverage 2.6.1A (as 2.5A-C) 2.6.2A LQU expansion strategy 2.6.3A ↑Performance appraisal 2.6.3B ↑Accountability for inspections / school self-assessment 2.6.4A Simplify/summarise documents 2.6.5A CPD modules 2.6.5B ↑Cluster funding (4.4.2) 2.7A (as 1.1.1C) 2.8A Review hardship allowance and publicise 2.8B ↑Dissemination 2.2.2/2.2.3 2.8C SMC and SCS structures 2.8.1A Mentoring support for NQTs	3.1A Review of mentoring documents 3.1B Identification of classroom practitioners (link 1.1.1B) 3.2A Establish criteria 3.2B Review TCP 3.2C Review quotas 3.2D ↑External appointment panels 3.3A GMSP MTR (2023) 3.3.1A ↑Digital distribution 3.3.1B Exec. summary 3.3.2A ↑Funding MoEYS and DPs (↑balance) 3.3.3A ↑Exclusive staff 3.4A Diagnostic on boys' disadvantage 3.4B1 Marginalised groups intersection with 3.4A 3.4B2 Analysis of migration and mitigation 3.5A Review findings of scholarship analysis 3.5B Disseminate with DPs/NGOs to align strategy 3.6A ↑School Feeding Programme and targeting 3.6.1A (as 4.13A)

## Annex 4 Summary of Cambodia's enabling factors

Enabling Factor	Priority Level	Identified bottlenecks	Planned activities to address bottlenecks in the partnership compact	How the priority reform will address bottlenecks within enabling factors	Remaining gaps
Data and evidence	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Low capacity at school level for continuous assessment of student learning outcomes and student needs (particularly for children with disabilities).</li> <li>Analytical report writing capacity is low at all levels (central level is highest capacity)</li> <li>National reporting pre-structures cannot disaggregate all relevant variables to target interventions, and are not effectively used for evidence-based decision-making</li> <li>Setting basic indicator targets in planning documents creates pressures that lead to false reporting (e.g., artificially high-grade promotion rates to meet targets, inflated start-of-year enrolment figures to deliver increased funding allocation, etc.)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure the accurate collation and effective use of data, starting from school level: identify students with low foundational skills, at all levels of education, for coordinated remedial support (teaching at the right level)</p> <p>Ensure harmonized and effective data collection systems, starting at school level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully develop school-level Classroom Assessment System (CAS) with central support and digital access to harmonize implementation and raise standards;</li> <li>Improve learning at school and pre-school levels to strengthen progression and retention rates, based on diagnostic needs assessments;</li> <li>Continued development of Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS) and integration/expansion of CPD data to support teacher reform;</li> <li>Update of EMIS to include CwD, ethnic minority and other key data: including health/nutrition data for student groups to identify vulnerabilities and increased use of attendance data for identification of vulnerabilities and analysis of effectiveness of interventions such as School Health and Nutrition (SHN) community initiatives</li> <li>Improve quality assurance of EMIS reports and data validation/verification: include cross-checks with other</li> </ul>	<p>SCG: Activities to improve the consistent use of data for planning and address the challenge of prioritizing reform efforts; also, to support efforts to identify and address gaps in monitoring systems (e.g., utilizing the SCG for reviewing and aligning EMIS reporting and integrating it with other MIS systems demonstrated an effort to strengthen existing system capacity).</p> <p>The incorporation of additional vulnerability criteria (disability, health, minorities, etc.) into the EMIS system, along with a commitment to diagnosing student retention issues, reflects an intersectional approach</p>	None



			<p>reporting systems (e.g., on WASH provision)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that reports become more analytical and used for evidence-based policymaking: ensure that disaggregate data is used for policy and planning, not just descriptive reports</li> </ul>		
<b>Volume, Equity, and efficiency of domestic public expenditure on education</b>	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocation of domestic financing for education dropped each year 2020, 2021, 2022; this drop cannot be entirely attributed to COVID-19 additional expenses</li> <li>Low level of evidence-based input and proposals for funding to Ministry of Economy and Finance</li> <li>Lack of funding availability to cluster-level funding (primary school sub-sector) prevents full co-operation of schools (e.g., in mentoring and effective resource sharing)</li> <li>Financial systems and legislation require review and revision for simplicity: school-level users should not need to be financial specialists</li> <li>PFM requires additional support in funding and capacity strengthening input</li> <li>SOF formula not fully equity based</li> </ul>	<p>Improve volume and efficiency of education sector non-salary recurrent expenditure (increase flexible funding sources), including through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong evidence-based funding use and allocation</li> <li>Realistic projection modelling (using simulation model)</li> </ul> <p>Simplify financial legislation, and FMIS/EFMS systems, with emphasis on access and reduced administrative load for non-financially trained users</p> <p>Strengthen Department of Finance central capacity to ensure systems development and ICT capacity strengthening.</p> <p>Review SOF allocation and guidelines for use by schools (align with SBM guidance), including possible increased SOF allocation for areas of additional needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster school additional allowance for EGL implementation, mentoring and remedial support</li> <li>Complete the scholarship programme review and implement recommendations for priorities in post-COVID situation with additional vulnerabilities of students</li> <li>Review of possible new scholarship models, such as merit-based scholarships</li> <li>Ensure that related social assistance programs, including school feeding programs, are fully included</li> </ul>	<p>STG: inclusion of top-up triggers to incentivize efforts to improve equity of domestic financing through the STG</p> <p>EOL: support NGO Education Partnership (NEP) to enhance their capacity in influencing government education policy, budget, and program development (e.g., promoting the inclusion of NEP in budget development)</p>	<p>The shift in priority rating from medium to high in domestic financing in the compact as a result of the ITAP assessment did not lead to any significant changes in the identified policy actions in the compact compared to those in the self-assessment, and there was no greater emphasis or urgency resulting from the increased rating.</p> <p>We were not able to confirm if this is because the LEG deemed the identified solutions to be sufficient, or if the need to conduct further analysis to address domestic financing bottlenecks was overlooked.</p> <p>Areas for improvement around stakeholder alignment with respect to domestic finance include more integrated involvement of the MoEYS Department of Finance and increased multilateral discussions</p>

					between GPE, MoEYS, and MEF
<b>Sector coordination (coordinated financing and funding)</b>	Low / Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding gap in EGL support to full national roll-out of two core subjects over three grades: around \$25m additionally required for full literacy provision; around \$30m for full mathematics provision</li> <li>SBM implementation and alignment requires full harmonization under MoEYS leadership: SBM requires further adaptations to reduce administrative load on schools; SBM requires improved accessibility and continuity in online access</li> <li>SBM and financial systems are not yet fully aligned with actual or realistic expected capacities of school management</li> <li>Pooled funding mechanisms are not properly harmonized and lead to increased administrative load at national and sub-national levels</li> <li>Gap in funding support for cluster-level support in primary education sub-sector</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure continuation of MoEYS key reform areas with harmonized/aligned ESP/ESP-MTR, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Teacher and School Leader Reform implementation strategies for CPD and PRESET with coordinated support from partners</li> <li>Continue harmonization of school-level support, such as Early Grades Learning (EGL) strategy and SBM implementation</li> <li>Improve harmonization, transparency, and accountability of consultative stakeholder groups at all levels with aligned indicators and measures across sub-sectors</li> <li>Complete needs analysis survey of Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) to improve 'soft infrastructure' and consideration of facilities upgrades</li> </ul> <p>Improve co-ordination of financing from development partners to identify best practice, remove duplication and align more fully with ESP/ESP-MTR overarching policy documents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All development partners contributions should be fully reflected in AOPs of MoEYS entities</li> <li>Strengthen long-term approach to handover of funding mechanisms to country systems</li> </ul> <p>Consultation on consolidation of pooled funding mechanisms, including potential co-financing</p> <p>Harmonized of SBM, including budget management guidelines, to be accessible to relevant stakeholders</p>	<p>Already effective mechanisms for sector coordination and review, including the Annual Congress and regular JTWG-Ed meetings.</p> <p>SCG: commitment to reinstate the TWG-Ed annual retreats, although suspended since 2019 due to COVID-19 has the potential to strengthen tools for improved sector coordination and accountability.</p> <p>Recommendations from the ITAP report suggest shifting the focus of these occasions from information sharing to discussions on key strategic issues, implementation challenges, and factors impeding progress</p>	<p>Stakeholder alignment could be further improved in balancing representation and incentives for more coherent cooperation.</p> <p>Relationships among development partners became less cooperative after starting the grant application process, potentially impacting the successful implementation of the reform.</p> <p>A more comprehensive assessment of sector coordination, considering the quality of stakeholder relations (cooperative vs. competitive), incentives for engagement, and power dynamics, might have offered a more nuanced understanding of the education sector alignment's effectiveness</p>

<p><b>Gender-responsive sector planning, policy, and monitoring</b></p>	<p>Medium</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESP internal coherence is insufficient to deliver clear and aligned monitoring</li> <li>• GMSP not sufficiently resourced for effective implementation, with a lack of: awareness, exclusive officials, 29 and funding</li> <li>• Plans and policies are not accessible to school-level due to length, complexity and need to receive electronically</li> <li>• Promotion for females within MoEYS faces barriers, such as: closed appointment panels that lack transparency on selection criteria; socio-cultural attitudes towards gender roles</li> <li>• Females are under-represented in senior/master mentoring positions for supporting the mostly female workforce in EGL classroom practice</li> <li>• No funding or strategic plan is currently in place to review GMSP to achieve a realistic and fully funded implementation plan</li> </ul>	<p>Review ESP format with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate ToC into ESP document to strengthen internal coherence and align strategies with AOPs</li> <li>• Improve quality of M&amp;E and results framework aligned to ToC</li> </ul> <p>Streamline policies for increased accessibility and harmonize alignment with ESP/ESP-MTR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure implementation through realistic planning and identification of gaps for gender policies to increase dissemination and mainstreaming at all levels</li> <li>• Implement mid-term review of GMSP 2021-2025 to address identified gaps and ensure a realistic and effective path forwards</li> <li>• Improve female representation at decision-making level in MoEYS starting from SMC and positions of responsibility such as female mentors (identification of female talent pool)</li> <li>• Increase focus on marginalized and vulnerable groups in MoEYS core planning documents</li> <li>• Ensure all teachers (including contract teachers) have improved working conditions, professional status, and career progression in line with teacher reform policies</li> </ul> <p>Strengthen TE provision at upper secondary to motivate students to continue beyond basic education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve harmonization with other programmes, e.g., with life skills and entrepreneurship programmes in SBM implementation from various programmes</li> </ul>	<p>Not eligible for a Girls' Education Accelerator grant.</p> <p>STG: aims to strengthen the Student Tracking System (STS) to support gender-responsive education policy and planning, advocating for access to professional development, promotion opportunities, and equitable working conditions for both male and female professionals; supports gender-related reforms within education, emphasizing gender-responsive pedagogy. (e.g., curriculum reviews aimed at eliminating gender stereotypes, biases, and discrimination)</p> <p>SCG: activities to improve planning harmonization and integrate a Theory of Change to identify exclusionary practices; efforts to enhance evidence-based planning and refine M&amp;E systems are underway, with the Ministry of Women's Affairs supporting sectoral planning through a national policy review; support to conduct studies and diagnostics to complement the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) in order to deepen the analysis and understanding of gender in the education sector at both student and educator levels.</p> <p>KIX: Support to applied research projects focusing on gender inequalities in secondary education (e.g. key studies such as "Analysis of Gender Parity in Lower-Secondary Education using Geospatial Data: A Case Study of Cambodia" (2022) and "Diagnostic Tools for Improving Education Policy and Planning: A Case Study on Dropouts in Early Secondary Schools in Cambodia" (2023) provide crucial insights for a comprehensive diagnosis of gender inequalities in</p>	<p>GPE's mechanisms like KIX and EOL provided tangible support for improving gender equality in Cambodia, but the Transforming Education Summit initiative's impact might be limited in this regard. The resulting National Statement of Commitment<sup>31</sup> may have a limited direct impact on gender equality in the country. Indeed, while including indirect measures that may also improve gender equality (such as investments in health infrastructure at schools, social safety nets for children, food safety and security, school meals, and scholarships for vulnerable and poor children), the National Commitment does not present specific commitments to improve this area.</p> <p>Lack of specific strategies to address the widening gender gap in secondary school and the absence of compulsory education.</p> <p>The compact partially aligns with gender analysis, emphasizing</p>
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<sup>31</sup> MoEYS, *National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education System in Cambodia*, 2022.

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secondary education, supporting evidence-based policy planning)

The ongoing KIX-funded project, "Adapting, testing and scaling a proven summer pre-primary education model in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Tanzania," places capacity strengthening at the core of cross-regional applied research, aiming to enhance the quality and inclusiveness of early childhood education. This involves workshops for various stakeholders, including teachers, parents, community teaching assistants, community leaders, and government officials at all levels.

EOL: capacity building support to NGO Education Partnership (NEP) with a primary focus on gender and inclusion (e.g., promoting the representation of marginalized groups in policy and budget development initiatives)

leadership imbalances but overlooks boys' education access challenges and falls short of directly addressing the available evidence of a further widening gender gap between boys and girls in secondary school. This represents a missed opportunity for improved evidence-based gender planning.

While the compact and grant applications outline pertinent indirect measures for improvement, additional direct activities are necessary to address this situation and act as a buffer until more precise data becomes available, enabling the design of targeted policies

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## Annex 5 Stakeholder map and list of respondents

Table 1. Stakeholder map

Type/ group of stakeholders	Stakeholder (names, specific titles, and roles)	Role played in system (including role played in the compact development process, where applicable)
<b>Government</b>	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)	The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in Cambodia oversees educational policies, youth affairs, and sports development. It is responsible for formulating education policies and plans and managing and implementing them across the country through the institutions under it.
	Policy and Planning Department	Responsible for developing and coordinating educational policies and plans aligned with national development goals. This department led the compact development process.
	Primary Education Department	Responsible for developing and implementing educational programs and policies specifically targeted at primary school education.
	General Secondary Education Department	Responsible for policies and programs enhancing the quality and accessibility of secondary education across Cambodia.
	Education Quality Assurance Department	Responsible for ensuring the quality and standards of education through monitoring and evaluation.
	Administration and Finance Department	Responsible for administrative functions and financial management within MoEYS to support its operational efficiency.
	Ministry of Economy and Finance	Responsible for budget allocation to the education sector.
<b>Local Education Group</b>	Joint Technical Working Group (for) Education (JTWG-Ed)	Chaired by HE Minister for MoEYS, with three vice-chairs: UNICEF Representative, Permanent Secretary of State, Secretary of State. JTWG-Ed includes MoEYS leadership, Director Generals, Departmental Directors, leadership representatives of eight other ministries and the Council for Development of Cambodia (CDC), and 11 DPs including NEP (NGO group representative).
<b>Other consultative bodies</b>	GPE2025 Task Force	Working group responsible for GPE2025 decision-making. Formed by two bodies: 1) Main Task Force MoEYS: Chaired by HE Minister, with the Secretary of State as vice-chair. Under-Secretary of State; Directors General; Departmental Directors (18 members). Development partners (12 members). 2) Secretariat MoEYS Directorate General of Policy and Planning (DGPP) (17 members); One facilitator from ESWG; One technical assistant to support process (additional member).
	Education Sector Working Group (ESWG)	ESWG is the main consultative body for DPs and open to any DPs, private sector partners and NGOs contributing significantly to the education sector. Chaired by the Representative for UNICEF, membership is restricted to a core group of 20. NEP represents NGOs as a permanent member and four NGOs participate in rotation for a two-year term. Each province has a Provincial ESWG (P-ESWG), some of which are active to varying degrees.

<b>Grant Agents</b>	World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO	Key role in ensuring that GPE support is adequately managed and aligned with broader education sector developments.
<b>Coordinating Agency</b>	UNICEF	Key role in facilitating and ensuring harmonized support in the education sector.
<b>Other Development Partners</b> (not exhaustive)	EU USAID ADB VVOB Embassy of France WFP JICA UNFPA NEP	Participate and contribute to LEG meetings. Implement GPE-funded or other activities in the education sector, in alignment with ESP priorities.

**Table 2. List of respondents**

#	First Name / Last Name	Role / Division	Organization
<b>Government</b>			
1.	H.E. Nath Bunroeun	Secretary of State and National SDG4 Coordinator	MoEYS
2.	H.E. Lim Sothea	Director General of Planning Department	MoEYS
3.	Mr. Onn Sivutha	Former Deputy Director of Planning Department	MoEYS
4.	Mr. Sar Sopheap	Director of Monitoring and Evaluation Department	MoEYS
5.	H.E. Chan Sophea	Director of Primary Education Department	MoEYS
6.	Mr. Chea Vuth	Deputy Director of General Secondary Education Department	MoEYS
7.	Mr. Chhun Ramy	Deputy Director Primary Education Department	MoEYS
8.	Dr. Kann Puthy	Deputy Director of Primary Education Department	MoEYS
9.	Mr. Ngor Penglong	Director of Teacher Training Department	MoEYS
10.	Mrs. Puth Nessay	Director of Education Quality Assurance Department	MoEYS
11.	Mr. Meak Sophea	Deputy Director of Education Quality Assurance Department	MoEYS
12.	Mr. Khou Hav	Chief of Office of Education Quality Assurance Department	MoEYS
13.	H.E. Tep Phyorith	Director General of Administration and Finance Department	MoEYS
14.	Chhun Bunnary	Chief Office Multilateral Cooperation	MEF
<b>Joint Financing Partners</b>			
15.	Dr. Hiroyuki Hattori	Chief of Education	UNICEF
16.	Mr. Sem Peeon	GPE and ESWG Coordinator	UNICEF
17.	Ms. Linda Jonsson	Education Specialist	UNICEF
18.	Mr. Sardar Umar Alam	Head of Office	UNESCO
19.	Ms. Esther McFarlane	Programme Manager	UNESCO
20.	Mr. Tsuyoshi Fukao	Senior Education Specialist	WB
21.	Dr. Fata No	Education Specialist	WB
<b>Development Partners</b>			
23.	Élodie Wynar	Education Attaché	French cooperation
22.	Ms. Flora Bertizzolo	Education Officer	EU

24.	Ms. Matsuda Noriko	JICA expert	JICA
25.	Mr. Marc Bonnenfant	Deputy Director of Public Health and Education	USAID
26.	Mr. Sereisatya Ros	Senior Education Advisor	USAID
27.	Mr. Sophea Mar	Senior Social Sector Officer	ADB
28.	Mr. Vutha Phon	Programme Specialist	UNFPA
29.	Mr. Yohan Chambaud	School feeding operation manager	WFP
<b>CSOs / INGOs / Associations</b>			
30.	Mr. Chetra Khieu	Executive Director	NEP
31.	Ms. Merel Luichies	Programme Manager	VVOB

## Annex 6 List of references

### GPE 2025 Operating Model Documents

- Global Partnership for Education, Country analytics: Country Summary Template, November 2021.
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