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## Cambodian Youth Perspectives

Edited by

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# The World We Want

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## Chapter 11 | The Future of GCED in Cambodia

Rath Daravuth SITHY

### Future Scenario

Ms. Voleak is a young female student hailing from a relatively underprivileged and marginalized family in Cambodia. She currently lives with her mother and aging grandmother in a very poor neighborhood in Phnom Penh. Her father, moreover, is a migrant worker in South Korea, working to support the family's essential needs through his remittances. Given the high cost of living in the new and highly developed Phnom Penh, Voleak's family regularly struggles to overcome their impoverished conditions even with her father's support from abroad.

Despite these economic hardships, Voleak is a passionate youth advocate for global citizenship in Cambodia. She firmly embraces the belief that grassroots actions for engendering positive changes can improve her local and international community in manifold ways. Supported by a full merit-based scholarship generously funded by the United Nations (UN), Voleak undertakes her formal education at a renowned public high school called Preah Sisowath. There, she enjoys taking subjects such as global history, international relations, sustainable development, and other topics that are essentially the fundamental components of the '*Global Citizenship Education (GCED)*' program which the school has extensively integrated into its academic management strategy to foster global citizenship values among young high school students in Cambodia. This is also, amongst others, a new policy priority for the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports (MoEYS) in its new *Education Strategic Plan 2030 - 2034*.

With an impeccable sense of social responsibility, Voleak also believes that the pivotal purpose of education should not be restricted to just exceptional performance on exams and other assessments per se. It is to also transform herself into a capable and productive citizen for the international community. In class, hence, Voleak speaks vocally about global matters and consistently encourages her peers to undertake solution-oriented and community-based actions when the opportunity arises. Thanks to the exhaustive variety of 'school-community partnerships' at Preah Sisowath High School, Voleak also volunteers actively with her teachers to initiate and lead community service projects on promoting global citizenship education to disadvantaged students in rural areas, as well as other projects to respond to the pressing challenges faced by residents and local authorities.

During her leisure hours, Voleak partakes in global conversations convened by international organizations like the United Nations and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to share best practices from her community experiences that could be replicated in other national contexts to address their development setbacks. She engages in these activities with support from the 'Preah Sisowath Global Citizenship Club', a newly established student-led group which informs and advises other students on opportunities to participate in international extracurriculars.

Owing to her stellar contributions to global citizenship mainstreaming in Cambodia at such a young age, Voleak was recently awarded the prestigious 'Reach Oxford Scholarship' to read a 3-year Bachelor of Arts in Politics, Philosophy, and Economics, combined with the world-renowned 'Rhodes Scholarship' to undertake a Master of Philosophy of her choosing at the University of Oxford in the United Kingdom. Acknowledging her exemplary achievement, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has also decided to sponsor her family's livelihood to ensure that they receive adequate financial support during her studies abroad. Concurrently, the Minister of Education has promised her a position in the Education Ministry after graduation, where she will be working in the Department of Education Planning to co-manage and accelerate the development, integration, and mainstreaming of GCED in underdeveloped Cambodian public high schools in line with the Ministry's national educational priorities. Nationwide, Voleak is now recognized as the youngest 'Model Global Citizen' in Cambodia.

Voleak is now preparing for her final high school exam and overseas education, while also knowing that she is ready to amplify her societal impacts upon her return, and that her family will soon escape the vices of poverty thanks to her laborious efforts in championing global citizenship in Cambodia.

## Introduction

Voleak's inspirational story provides a lucid illustration of my vision for the future of Cambodia's public education - to become a country widely renowned for its dynamic cohort of 'globally minded and socially engaged young citizens' playing instrumental roles in shaping and enacting national and international policy agendas via their meaningful grassroots activities. This vision resonates well with Cambodia's newfound national identity as a 'small country with a big heart', committed to invigorating global solidarity and collaborative international efforts for continued international progress (Xinhua, 2020; World Health Organization, 2020). The successful realization of this vision, however, hinges on a multitude of contributing factors, one being 'global citizenship education' – an approach to education which aspires to provide “the understanding,

skills, and values students need to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Menten, 2015, paragraph 3).

Recognizing its centrality in driving international development, Cambodia has made significant strides in placing Global Citizenship Education (GCED) at the heart of its educational reforms, particularly on priorities pertaining to the improvement of the quality of education at public schools nationwide. Nevertheless, this process is still mired in a host of challenges. As the analysis below will demonstrate, these impediments can range from socially complex dilemmas such as resistance from school authorities to integrating GCED-related activities in their educational environment to technical challenges associated with limited teachers’ capacities to deliver its components (Vicheanon, 2016). In fact, the 2020 INSEAD Global Competitiveness Index – a globally recognized benchmarking study which measures countries’ talent/human capital and their determination of national competitiveness - ranks Cambodia at 112 out of 132 countries in terms of ‘global knowledge skills’ (Lanvin and Monteiro, 2020). This indicator clearly suggests that Cambodian educational providers, particularly publicly funded institutions, need to improve GCED mainstreaming to accelerate the process of internationalizing public education.

Notwithstanding these challenges, the future I want for Cambodia’s public education system, as reflected in Voleak’s story, is to witness more public schools in both urban and rural communities, capably, actively, rigorously and with great innovation, delivering GCED for the benefits of all Cambodians and international citizens. Hence, this chapter will outline the potential opportunities for the realization of this vision combined with the possible policy interventions and activities which would need to be implemented to achieve it. Firstly, the chapter will briefly discuss the contested definitions and characteristics of GCED. Secondly, it will deliberate the envisioned scenarios focusing on the ‘improved and expanded functions’ of Cambodian public schools in pioneering GCED and some practical means to facilitate the process. Finally, it will outline policy recommendations for the Cambodian government to consider adopting to enhance its progress in this educational reform agenda.

### **Defining Global Citizenship and Global Citizenship Education**

The notion of global citizenship is not a nascent concept for many international policymakers and educational practitioners. For years, there has been continuous debates on the common characteristics with which most global citizens associate themselves (UNESCO, 2017). Perceptions of their inherent attributes and values also differ substantially across various socio-cultural contexts (Pak, 2013; Horey et al., 2018). Despite these complications, there are articulations common to most definitions. According to UNESCO (2017, p.2), global citizens are commonly characterized as individuals embracing a “heightened sense of belonging to the global community

and a common sense of community” underpinned by “solidarity and collective identity among themselves”. As such, they encompass a remarkable degree of “global competence, social responsibility, and global civic engagement”, constantly reinforced, and recalibrated throughout their lives both academically and professionally (Morais and Ogden, 2010; Trede et al., 2013). Therefore, the personal identities of global citizens extend beyond the well-travelled and multilingual culture gurus or the highly privileged students at lucrative and elitist international schools (Bunnell, 2014; Hughes, 2020). In general, they vigorously embody shared communitarian values and an enduring commitment to bettering the world via their philanthropic actions (Cabrera and Unruh, 2012; Rinne, 2017). In its instructive *‘Education for Global Citizenship: A Guide for Schools’* document, Oxfam GB (2015, p. 24) views global citizens as someone who:

- Is aware of the wider world and has a sense of their own role as a world citizen.
- Respects and values diversity.
- Understands how the world works.
- Is passionately committed to social justice.
- Participates in the community at a range of levels, from the local to the global.
- Works with others to make the world a more equitable and sustainable place.
- Takes responsibility for their actions.

There are myriad approaches and policies which are central to nurturing the values of global citizenship in the public consciousness. Amongst them is the robust integration of GCED within existing national educational systems. Since 2012, the concept has been a crucial priority for progressive educational reforms within diverse international institutions, particularly after its inclusion in the ‘Education 2030’ vision at the World Education Forum in 2015 (Landorf and Feldman, 2015). At present, UNESCO is regarded as the lead implementation agency, promoting the fundamental principles of GCED with many other partner organizations, including the Asia-Pacific Centre for International Understanding (APCEIU) and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (UNESCO, 2018a).

According to UNESCO (2018b, p.1), GCED (or ‘Education for International Understanding/Education for Global Citizenship’) is a form of transformative education which “empowers learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, and secure societies.” Pak (2013) further articulates that GCED aims to “engage intercultural dialogue and promote understanding of diverse cultures of the world in its practice and form thereby enhancing self-reflection and embracing differences” (p.33). Given such strengths in recalibrating the social functions of traditional civic education, GCED is widely regarded as imperative for both local and international development in many respects (Chung and Park, 2016). Policy-wise, it is a salient priority in SDG 4.7, which focuses on nurturing the necessary knowledge and competencies among citizens to achieve the wider 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development (Stenbock-Fermor, 2017). To improve consistency in its application across diverse national contexts, UNESCO (2015) also recommends educational institutions structure their pedagogical and educational practices around three ‘conceptual dimensions/domains of learning’ (see Figure 1) which can serve as a basis for guiding the design, planning, and delivery of GCED through both formal and informal approaches.



**Figure 1: Conceptual Dimensions of GCED**

Source: UNESCO, 2015

Within the existing literature on GCED implementation mechanisms, it has been widely accepted that schools (particularly primary and secondary educational institutions) are critical agents for enacting GCED. This is because the core values of GCED are aligned with their fundamental social obligations in creating well-informed and thoughtful citizens with the necessary intellectual and participatory skills to partake in domestic political and socio-economic life (Caruana, 2015; Torres, 2017; Hughes, 2020).

### **The State of GCED Mainstreaming in Cambodia**

In Cambodia, there has been a plethora of policy actions and programs laid out to embed the central features of GCED in school curricula and other pertinent educational strategies. In the *Education Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023*, for example, a strategy to bolster the quality of academic management reform in public schools involves increasing government support for integrating ‘good and global citizenship education’ into school curricula and textbooks in line with the *National Curriculum Framework* (MoEYS, 2019a, p.91). In pursuit of this priority, MoEYS partnered with a local NGO called Kampuchea Action to Promote Education (KAPE) to establish

New Generation Schools (NGSs) in four provinces and at Preah Sisowath High School (operating under a ‘School in a School Model’ in Phnom Penh)<sup>1</sup>. As part of the broader national reform to modernize public educational institutions, the NGSs embrace modern educational standards ranging from curriculum and teaching/learning innovations to robust governance and accountability frameworks for nurturing staff professionalism at all levels (Donaher and Wu, 2020). Minister of Education Dr. Hang Chuon Naron also considers the NGS program as central to advancing global citizenship given its partial emphasis on improving knowledge of global issues among students (in addition to its intensive STEM curriculum) (Sacker, 2017).

The setup of the NGSs was a crucial starting point for GCED integration in Cambodia. However, there are still shortcomings to address. From a technical standpoint, GCED implementation in Cambodian public schools is still fraught with various conundrums including the unwillingness of particular school staffs/authorities to embrace the globalization of education (due to personal unreadiness/unfamiliarity or particular vested interests), the lack of quality teacher training and issues with professionalism (e.g. teacher absenteeism and classroom corruption), limited access to digital education, and insufficient strategic planning, amongst others (Tibbitts, 2016; Vicheanon, 2016; Browes, 2017). In terms of GCED delivery, moreover, Cambodia’s present public education system still places a strong emphasis on traditional exams and assessments. As such, the promotion of extracurricular activities for GCED mainstreaming has not been gaining much traction in public schools. Indeed, this issue is also partially reflected in the current *Education Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023*, where most, if not all, of the core policy agendas on improving the quality of primary education are still centered on teacher training, curriculum enhancement, and other teaching-based rather than student-centered educational approaches (MoEYS, 2019a).

With regards to the equality of educational opportunities, there is also still an evident disparity in access to high-quality GCED curricula between public and private schools, particularly within the capital city. According to Flynn (2020), GCED curriculums are more widely available in the latter like the International School of Phnom Penh and others, most of which are based in Phnom Penh. Private schools can also offer more multifaceted and distinctive activities including global cultural festivals and other international events to foster global learning while GCED implementation within public schools remains limited to traditional moral and civic education from grades 7 to 12 (The Phnom Penh Post, 2021). Compared to state-funded public schools, however, their tuition fees are largely unaffordable for many Cambodians, especially the poor

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Education Ministry’s ‘New General School Operational Policy Guidelines’, this model, which currently operates only at Preah Sisowath High School, ‘sets up new structures within the school but are nevertheless separate from the school’. Thus, the management is able to ‘engage in competitive recruitment of managers and teachers, selective student identifications (e.g. examinations), setting new curricula, and other measures that are inherent in the NGS model (MoEYS, 2019b, p.4).



and underprivileged. In fact, a recent study by the International Schools Database found that the tuition fees for private international schools in Phnom Penh range between US\$1,855 and US\$25,000 per year (Boken, 2021). Although this was the lowest among several major cities in Asia, most families from poor households would still prefer free public schools given their limited finances (Flynn, 2020; Boken, 2021).

## Context Analysis

### Vision One - ‘Whole-School Approaches’ to GCED in Cambodian Public Schools

The above-mentioned issues clearly underscore the need for more coordinated and calibrated efforts from both public and private entities in pushing forward the project of GCED mainstreaming in Cambodia. Therefore, the first vision I have for this aspiration is to witness more public educational institutions like Preah Sisowath High School moving beyond their conventional curriculum-based approaches to adopt more comprehensive and systematic ‘whole-school approaches’ to foster a learning environment more conducive for young Cambodians to acquire and responsibly practice the essential values of global citizenship. According to Henck (2018), a whole-school approach seeks to embed GCED across “every aspect of school life (e.g. governance policies and procedures, teaching practices, curriculum, physical and social environment, extracurricular activities, teacher training, and community engagement)” (p.75). This approach also mentions that “all members of the school have a key role to play in promoting a global school culture” (Henck, 2018, p.75). Such an approach is a more holistic, integrated, and multi-faceted model of school management, relevant for fostering global learning, owing to its focus on empowering collective efforts towards GCED, its flexible learning approaches, and its community-focused educational strategies (Hunt and King, 2015; Centre for Global Education, 2017). Figure 2 illustrates some of its essential components.



**Figure 2: Components of Whole-School Approach to Global Learning**

Source: Centre for Global Education, 2017

In the context of Cambodia’s education system, public schools can work towards a Whole School Approach by making several institutional changes. The first one is through improved school

leadership. Principals of public schools should be instrumental in transforming the identity of their schools into internationally focused institutions which are ready for 21<sup>st</sup> century developments. This could be achieved through rechartering the mission, purposes and values of the school with greater integration of GCED principles, and the configuration of school charters and development plans that feature more comprehensive policies on promoting anti-discrimination, anti-corruption, eco-friendly classroom and facility management, and other behavioral norms which reinforce essential global citizenship values like respect for diversity, social responsibility, and others (Centre for Global Education, 2017). In a similar vein, school leaders should strive to define themselves as model global leaders within their own institutions, working to inspire global citizenship among their staff and students via regular GCED-related speeches and assemblies, empowerment of lead staff and students who display exemplary global consciousness and social responsibility within the school and local communities, and active participation in international dialogues on improving GCED, to name just a few. Doing so can help them set the right tone and create an enabling environment for the continued practice and mainstreaming of global citizenship within their school (Henck, 2018).

At Preah Sisowath High School, for example, the overarching vision of the NGS is to “prepare and produce Cambodian twenty-first century citizens through the provision of a high-quality learning and teaching workforce” (KAPE, 2020). Lamentably, STEM-related subjects are highly prioritized over GCED components given the greater focus on readying students for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in the present educational reform agenda (Bo, 2021). As such, there is a need for more globally conscious school leaders who can play central roles in positioning GCED as one of the cornerstones of the educational development program in both Preah Sisowath and other high schools across the country.

### **Vision Two - ‘Global Learning Villages’ within Cambodian Public Schools**

Cambodian public schools can also help to foster global citizenship through the promotion of GCED-related extracurricular activities. In light of this, my second vision is to see more Cambodian public schools becoming ‘ideal villages for global learning’, where one can witness students engaging with diverse forms of international educational activities such as model global summits, student-led cultural festivals and performances, global arts exhibitions, debate and public speaking competitions on global issues, digital video competitions on GCED, and other events tailored to foster a schoolwide culture of inclusion and respect for global consciousness. Concurrently, public schools should also establish their own ‘international student/education clubs’ to disseminate information on scholarships, study trips, competitions, exchange programs, and other opportunities for students to participate in international fora to improve their global understanding. According to Jarkiewicz and Leek (2016), these formal and informal platforms for

augmenting youth participation in global learning can provide manifold benefits to students becoming global citizens, such as developing necessary skills and knowledge and consolidating their awareness of and commitment to global citizenship. Public schools should also design innovative incentive mechanisms to encourage global citizenship behaviors within their institutions. A possible example is registering to receive a nomination for the Rights Respecting School Award – a globally renowned initiative by UNICEF UK to award schools which have adopted and promoted the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child within their broader ethos and curriculum (UNICEF UK, 2016). This will be beneficial for not only boosting the reputation of the schools as capable providers of GCED but also establishing legacies which are needed to further inspire GCED implementation efforts nationwide (Hunt and King, 2015).

While teacher training is indeed significant for underpinning continued educational reforms, there are also many existing programmatic activities which could be further expanded to promote GCED in the context of Cambodian public schools. As part of its efforts to formulate common primary school standards for clean and safe learning environments, MoEYS is convening a monthly Cleanest School contest to encourage students and staffs to maintain high standards of hygiene and cleanliness on campus (Kimmarita, 2021). A few schools like Chea Sim Angkor Chey (located in the outskirts of Phnom Penh) have also been in ‘Eco-School’ competitions where students are partaking in climate-related activities including resilient farming, tree plantation, and others (The Global Climate Change Alliance, 2020). As promoting sustainable development and environmental protection are also core values of global citizenship, it would be desirable to witness more of these events combined with other extracurricular activities in Cambodia’s public schools to realize the wider aims of GCED.

### **Vision Three - School-Community Partnerships for GCED**

A third vision I have is to witness more Cambodian public schools institutionalizing and leveraging more school-community partnerships in pursuit of their broader schoolwide GCED integration strategies. According to many GCED experts, these arrangements provide platforms for students to constantly practice and solidify their civic engagement skills in addition to their formal GCED attainment (Goren and Yemini, 2017; Horey et al., 2018; Noh, 2018). Active participation from local communities in the design and implementation of GCED initiatives is also central to the effective mainstreaming of its fundamental values within public spheres (APCEIU, 2019).

Although the current Education Strategic Plan endorses the use of public-private partnerships to enhance educational delivery in Cambodian high schools, the adoption of school-community partnerships for widespread GCED mainstreaming has not gained much interest. While these

partnerships have been institutionalized in the development plans of some existing programs like multilingual education, they are often either ad-hoc or temporary arrangements (Noh, 2018). Most private educational providers, in fact, are more instrumental in arranging these social outreach programs for their students. An example is Northbridge International School Cambodia, which regularly organizes unique extracurricular activities like the ASEAN Sports and Activities Conference or the online 'global campus' system which enables students to interact with others from many schools across the world, amongst others (Northbridge International School Cambodia, 2021).

The current framework of school-based management, which MoEYS is championing in many schools to decentralize decision-making processes from central authorities to local stakeholders, can be seen as creating many opportunities for focal community members and parents to participate in school planning and management, particularly within designated School Support Committees (Thida, 2011). An issue to highlight, however, is that community participation is still predominantly focused on operational works such as budget monitoring, infrastructure development, prevention of irregularities, and others, while GCED-related partnerships such as the implementation of community projects co-designed between students and local stakeholders remains unpopular or otherwise unnoticed (Fata and Kreng, 2015).

To improve this situation, the membership and mandate of School Support Committees should also involve student leaders consulting local stakeholders to identify their needs and possible project-based solutions to effectively address them. Both Cambodian public schools and the community can benefit from promoting community partnerships to provide a variety of extracurricular opportunities for students to partake in community development with local authorities while also improving their global consciousness. These partnerships can entail activities such as assisting local service providers with the delivery of essential social services like protecting the community environment or delivering community education, working with relevant stakeholders to advocate for GCED through various awareness-raising initiatives either virtually or offline, and actively contributing to the deliberation and execution of key priorities in existing Commune-Sangkat development plans and other related sub-national plans. For local authorities, partnerships can provide an array of benefits ranging from institutionalizing a culture of burden sharing with sub-national administrations to expanding the platform for citizen participation (especially for passionate and innovative young people) to generate locally driven solutions to pressing community matters (Sokunkolyan et al., 2016). For the students, these types of community activities serve as a venue for them to expand their social participation and express their opinions on active citizenship, both of which constitute civic engagement processes within the pursuit of global citizenship identity-formation.

As a starting point, the newly revised Safe-Village Commune Policy instituted by the Cambodian Government in early 2021 contains several new priorities for advancing socio-economic development for local communities, such as improving sanitation and environment and the quality of sub-national public service delivery (Dara, 2021). In Phnom Penh, for instance, students and staff from schools like Preah Sisowath and Baktouk High School can begin by cooperating actively with Phnom Penh Capital Hall to organize activities centered on reducing littering or managing solid waste for the national Clean Phnom Penh Campaign, which aims to promote healthy urban living habits in the capital (Bunthoern, 2020).

### Policy Recommendations

While these visions are imperative for fostering an environment conducive for global citizenship mainstreaming, they will remain aspirational without the right policies and strategies to actualize them. As mentioned earlier, the Cambodian government has already instituted a few policy measures to integrate GCED into the national education system. However, there are additional measures which could further accelerate its progress.

#### **National Action Plan for GCED Mainstreaming**

The Education Ministry should continuously strengthen its commitment to mainstreaming GCED at all educational institutions (alongside other priorities like STEM education) as part of its present package of targeted reforms to improve the national education system. In this regard, government efforts need to move beyond the current broad provisions within the Education Strategic Plan to more targeted, strategic, and comprehensive policy frameworks needed to continuously reinforce the development significance of GCED to all educational policymakers and providers within the country.

As a starting point, therefore, the Education Ministry can explore the option of developing a National Action Plan for GCED Mainstreaming to guide and impel all public schools nationwide to adopt and institutionalize some of the above suggestions (e.g., whole-school approach, community partnerships) within their school development plans which are in line with the broader priorities of the Education Strategic Plan. To achieve this objective, the National Action Plan can contain these fundamental policy priorities and actions:

**A comprehensive set of guiding strategies underpinned by a robust implementation framework for schools to apply ‘whole-school approaches’ in transforming themselves into hubs for global learning.**

Policymakers can look to novel guiding frameworks like Oxfam’s Education for Global Citizenship: A Guide for Schools or lessons from other countries for inspiration. An exemplary case is South Korea, where its Ministry of Education is working on formulating national GCED models that are fitting for its educational context in pursuit of its ‘Korean Education that Harmonizes with the World’ agenda (Ministry of Education, 2021). Cambodian educational policymakers can therefore seek to explore best practices from Korea (or elsewhere) in initiating their own models for localizing GCED within the context of the public education system. A crucial priority, however, is to ensure that the model can effectively transition the traditional exam-based education method to a more student-centered and activity-oriented empowerment method, as mentioned above, with a strengthened focus on promoting greater participation from students in meaningful community actions at both the national and international level.

Wherever relevant, existing partnerships with key educational development partners from Australia, Japan, and other countries should also be effectively explored and utilized to contribute to designing the key components and strategic directions of the National Action Plan. At present, UNESCO Clearinghouse on Global Citizenship Education also provides a litany of tools and resources to help inform the formulation of the plan. Yet, engagement with several stakeholders during the policy design process is useful for building the momentum of collaboration at the early stage, which could be effectively harnessed in the future and potentially transformed into enduring institutional partnerships for long-term benefits in GCED implementation in Cambodia.

Finally, sufficient national consultations, dialogues, and roundtable discussions must also be conducted to ensure that the design process is inclusive, participatory, and representative of diverse inputs and viewpoints from the public and relevant experts, particularly those already working to advocate for and mainstream GCED through both formal and informal channels. In this process, priority should be given to independent youth groups and associations in Cambodia (e.g. AIESEC, YouthStar Cambodia, etc) that have been active in pioneering community service projects across the country. Policy-wise, their extensive experience and expertise will provide valuable contributions to the National Action Plan particularly in ensuring that its proposed policy direction on GCED integration and implementation is responsive to local context and needs.

### **Establish an inter-ministerial National Council to oversee the implementation of the National Action Plan.**

To promote greater political willingness in advancing national GCED mainstreaming, the Cambodian government should also consider setting up an inter-ministerial National Council on GCED Mainstreaming to function as a policymaking and coordinating institution with a mandate to 1) oversee the implementation of the above National Action Plan, 2) define and align the

relevant policies and legal frameworks on GCED mainstreaming with existing educational reform priorities, 3) work with technical working groups to execute certain policy-relevant programmatic activities, and 4) forge partnerships and cross-sectoral cooperation with relevant national and international stakeholders from key development partners, NGOs, academia, and the public and private sectors. In terms of providing analytical support to key policymakers, especially on critical actions required to actualize the above National Action Plan and other key policies, the National Council should also coordinate policy-relevant and evidenced-based research, monitoring, and evaluation with various stakeholders to generate crucial insights for current reform efforts and future policy directions particularly on GCED integration and mainstreaming. In principle, the establishment of this national council can signal to other countries and institutions in the international community that Cambodia is firmly committed to internationalizing its education system through GCED. Thus, this can attract more stakeholders and partners to assist Cambodia with the process, thereby reducing the burden of kickstarting the process in its early phase. Nonetheless, it is still imperative for the relevant government officials and educational authorities to remain actively involved in the implementation work of the plan to ensure that they can effectively acquire sufficient understanding and skills to take ownership of external contributions.

**Provision for capacity building and proper incentive schemes for teachers and staffs to deliver GCED components, formally and informally.**

In 2016, the APCEIU and MoEYS signed a Memorandum of Understanding to pioneer its GCED Curriculum Development and Integration Project 2016 – 2018' (APCEIU, 2016). This project introduced capacity-building workshops for urban and rural educators in Cambodia to strengthen their pedagogical skills in integrating GCED principles in their schools' curriculums via curriculum revision and textbook writing, particularly in history and civic subjects (Browes, 2017). Although this was vital for kick-starting GCED implementation, its emphasis, again, is still limited to curriculum-based approaches. The new Action Plan should, therefore, lay out innovative guidelines to expand teacher and staff training beyond curriculum development to other pertinent skills for leading community service projects and researching innovations in GCED delivery and advocacy. As Chung and Park (2016) contend, these attributes are vital for transforming teachers into passionate GCED agents suited to guiding students in championing GCED values beyond the classroom. To carry out this piece of work further, the government can consider establishing a dedicated national institute for GCED to provide curated trainings on GCED to the relevant government officials, educational practitioners, school leaders, and other key people. Doing so helps to ensure that GCED capacity building will perpetually underpin the overarching GCED integration and mainstreaming work, which is essential for averting implementation failures.

### **Strengthening partnerships and collaborations for national GCED mainstreaming**

Educational policy implementers must build partnerships with various in-country and international organizations to collaboratively execute the national work on GCED mainstreaming. Given their multifaceted mandates and technical expertise, these organizations (i.e. public, private, and third sector) could not only assist school authorities with improving GCED delivery but also expand GCED-related activities to the non-formal education sector (Browes, 2017). In this process, policymakers can draw on the successful lessons from the Education Ministry's existing partnership with the local KAPE NGO (on NGS reforms) to inform future decisions on initiating collaboration for GCED-related activities.

### **Public Campaigns for incentivizing and promoting GCED activities**

Effective implementation of GCED within school environments also requires ample public support. As a result, it is also imperative for MoEYS to institute multifaceted measures to gauge greater public recognition of the contributions of Cambodian public schools in delivering GCED for educational and societal development. Some possible recommendations include the following:

1) The Education Ministry should work with relevant stakeholders and partners to launch a nationwide public campaign to strategically rebrand Cambodian public schools not only as state-funded providers of education but also as ideal institutions for enriching global consciousness. Here, the goal is to ensure that public schools become the preferred alternative for parents from all socio-economic classes to enroll their children to obtain an education that is relevant for evolving global realities and for them to become active change agents for their societies accordingly. This endeavor will not only amplify the importance and visibility of their social impacts stemming from GCED but also reinforces parental trust in their capacity to deliver relevant education for their children. This can help to minimize the public-private school dualism in Cambodia's education system by empowering public institutions to become competent education providers for all rather than the last resort for poor and vulnerable students (Chea and Chen, 2021).

2) The government should also introduce national incentive programs to reward and encourage not only students but also other citizens to become 'model global citizens' based on their efforts in mainstreaming global citizenship in public settings. For example, Smart Axiata recently launched its Good Citizen Award 2020 to "reward the unsung heroes in the country who went out of their way to do positive contributions, work, or deeds for the country, neighbors, village, or province" (Soco, 2020). The reward offers 10,000 USD to the winner through a rigorous public



nomination and selection process (Smart Axiata, 2020). Such an initiative is a good example for the Education Ministry to replicate as a potential 'Global Citizen Award' to incentivize GCED activities from citizens of all backgrounds. To allow for diverse participants to be recognized, this award should also be classified based on three categories: students, teachers, and public citizens. Recently, the Education Ministry and the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) recognized three teachers from different high schools in Cambodia as Best Teacher in STEM as part of the Teachers' Capacity Building for STEM and ICT Innovative Education in Cambodia project (David, 2021).

## Conclusion

In summary, the heightened promotion of GCED in Cambodia should not be prioritized only within the purview of policy agendas and strategic action plans at the central level. Without continuous robust commitment and joint efforts from the relevant educational institutions at the local level, the above endeavor will not succeed in generating the necessary systemic change that is needed to revolutionize the education system in Cambodia with an expanded and increased focus on promoting international understanding amongst students from all walks of life. In light of this observation, this chapter articulates my vision for an enhanced, expanded, and amplified GCED ecosystem in Cambodia's public education system based on three desirable scenarios. Firstly, GCED implementation in Cambodia's context can gain greater momentum should its public schools adopt more innovative, systemic, and holistic 'whole-school approaches' to guide the direction and institutionalization of GCED in their school environments. This is achievable once the right model of leadership is in place, supported by a willingness to reform from key staffs at the operational level. Secondly, GCED integration can only flourish when public schools transform themselves into quintessential villages for global learning brimming with students engaging in copious extracurricular activities to strengthen their global consciousness and responsibility. This is a much-needed change to complement the existing conventional educational activities. Finally, GCED implementation can produce more profound societal and educational impacts when unique and distinctive 'school-community partnerships' are harnessed to complement their broader educational and developmental objectives. These combined scenarios can ultimately transform Cambodia into a nation with a large cohort of passionate and capable global citizens, particularly young ones, working to advance global development through their joint local actions. The story of Voleak above is the perfect reflection of this future reality.

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