



Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

Policy
on
Child Protection in Schools

September 2016

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Preface

The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport has developed this comprehensive Child Protection in School Policy to ensure all children are given protection as well as an equitable and safe learning environment in public and private education establishments.

This policy supports the rights of all children to receive an education, free from physical, psychological and emotional harm. Children will be protected from acts that pose negative impacts on their educational opportunities, health and welfare and as well as respect, dignity and freedom from any form of punishment. This policy also enables the development of schools as “child safe” organizations to prevent violence and other forms of harm to children, identify challenges, provide children with strategies to keep themselves safe and support students who have experienced harm and discrimination. Schools and communities should be supported and motivated to work together, in collaboration with all stakeholders, to build effective child protection systems.

MoEYS hopes and believes that this Child Protection in School Policy will enable every child to be protected so that they will become active and successful members of society. MoEYS would like to thank all ministries/institutions and development partners for their support and continued contribution, in terms of services and technical assistance, to promoting the quality of education, especially in the area of child protection in schools.

Phnom Penh, Sep 15, 2016

Minister of Education Youth and Sport

Dr. Hang Chuon Naron

1. Introduction

Violence against children¹ is a serious human rights, social and public health issue in all countries and the consequences of such violence will harm these countries socially, culturally and economically. No country, poor or rich, is immune from such consequences. Violence weakens the strong foundation needed for children to survive with well-being and high productivity and constitutes violation of fundamental rights of children in accessing a safe childhood. Every child has the right to education and protection as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2, Paragraph 2, “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions...”; Article 28 “States Parties recognize the right of the child to education... on the basis of equal opportunity”; Article 36 “States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child's welfare”.

The majority of Cambodian population are children, of which 35% are younger than 15 years of age. Unfortunately, violence against children in Cambodia remains high and imposes many consequences on children and the nation as a whole. According to the report on findings of a research on violence against children conducted by UNICEF in 2013, more than 50% of children experience physical violence, 25% psychological violence and around 5% sexual violence.

Violence against children poses impacts on the development of children throughout their life. In addition to short-term impacts, such as physical injuries and emotional trauma, experience of violence during childhood is a factor contributing to behavioral and mental problems during adulthood. Experience of violence may lead to discrimination against children and their families in the society, especially in the case of sexual violence. Violence brings about serious consequences on each and every child as well their families and communities and ultimately the society as a whole.

To address these challenges, the Royal Government has put in place commitments on the prevention of, and response to, violence against children and has formulated a National Plan on Childhood Development, 2016-2018, National Action Plan on Elimination of Violence Against Children in Cambodia, etc. Meanwhile, MOEYS also has committed to including positive parenting and enforcing education law to ensure that every education officer will adhere to teachers' code of conduct, enforcing sanctions against criminal offenses and violation of teachers' code of conduct, especially sexual violence. MOEYS also promotes non-violent learning and teaching approaches and puts in place child-friendly, especially girl-friendly mechanisms for reporting and referring grievances related to child abuse in all schools, etc. The purpose of this Policy on Child Protection in School is to promote safe learning environments, which ensure well-being and support for all children who are learning in public and private education establishments. It is a document which promotes commitment and engagement of communities to provide protection to children in line with legal provisions on the protection and promotion of the rights of the child of the Kingdom of Cambodia as well as child protection approaches at national and international levels. This policy puts emphasis on strategies for prevention and early interventions to support children who have suffered abuses and children at risk. This policy also serves important roles to help schools to eliminate child abuse, exploitation and neglect and to

¹ According to Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, forms of violence against children refers to all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.

take responsibilities for children. Children have the right to safe and violence-free learning environments. This policy does not tolerate violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect against children.

This policy applies to each and every child, regardless of their sex, disabilities, ethnicity, belief, religion or affiliation and respects the principles of confidentiality, privacy, voice and participation of children.

2. Vision

Every child enjoys physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual growth and is free from any form of violence to become human resources for sustainable country development.

3. Goal

To develop systems and mechanisms for providing protection and welfare to children by ensuring that public (formal and non-formal) and private educational establishments become safe for children and free from any form of violence.

4. Objectives

- Ensure that all (public and private) schools are a safe place for every child, especially children with disabilities, orphans and other vulnerable children.
- Mainstream and reinforce roles and responsibilities for child protection into existing mechanisms and networks including School Support Committees and Children's Councils and promote coordination among and between these mechanisms and networks with each Commune/Sangkat Committee for Women and Children.
- Strengthen effective enforcement of child protection related laws and regulations.
- Promote awareness on child protection among education workers, communities and stakeholders.
- Enhance cooperation among relevant ministries/institutions to address issues associated with childhood care and development.

5. Strategies

5.1 Develop Laws and Mechanisms

- Develop regulations and mechanisms to ensure that every school child is given full legal protection and all types of assistance and support so that they can stay free from harm.
- Promote and speed up the implementation of the legal framework as well as existing and new relevant mechanisms.
- Formulate action plans by identifying indicators, specific activities, timeframes, resources and responsibilities.
- The Policy on Child Protection in School will be reviewed after a specific period of time to reflect societal changes associated with child protection.

5.2 Prevent All Forms of Violence Against Children

- Create open learning environment² for children, particularly through identifying do's and don'ts for schools, education workers and stakeholders in the creation of such open learning environment.
- Prevent all forms of child victimization, neglect or negative behaviors of all people in school.
- Raise awareness on the rights of the child, all forms of violence against children and positive discipline among stakeholders, especially among teachers and school workers.
- Put in place administrative procedures for school visitors to ensure safety for children.
- Strengthen recruitment procedures for school personnel, by ensuring that teachers who have been suspended, dismissed, reprimanded or prosecuted are recorded in the register to prevent them from being recruited as teachers by other establishments.

5.3 Response to All Forms of Violence Against Children

- Develop mechanisms and systems for reporting different of violence against children. Such mechanisms should be easy to accept, child friendly and gender sensitive.
- Put in place procedures for reporting and identifying authorities with power to suspend or dismiss any wrong-doing teacher.
- Put in place supporting services to ensure respect for privacy, confidentiality and safety for children experiencing abuses.
- Seek solutions for children when they are exposed to physical and psychological/mental harm for their wellbeing.
- Ensure that staff members/individuals committing offenses are punished according to the laws.
- Create systems for tracking child abuse cases and perpetrators.

5.4 Education and Communication (Dissemination of Information)

- Develop information materials on protection of child abuse.
- Disseminate information on materials and activities to prevent all forms of child abuse to schools, communities, parents or guardians, local authorities and stakeholders by mainstreaming child protection awareness into school curricula, plans and policies.
- Disseminate information on positive discipline among education workers and parents or guardians.
- Cooperate with authorities and stakeholders to broadly disseminate laws and penalties for abuses of the rights of the child and broadcast case studies (best practices) through the media to keep the public informed.

5.5 Coordination, Cooperation and Motivation

- Strengthen cooperation between education workers, parents or guardians, communities, competent authorities and relevant agencies in providing support on child protection.
- Motivate education workers to participate in, and take responsibility for the prevention of child abuse.

² Criteria of open learning environment will be determined by implementation supporting documents.

- Coordinate and engage development partners and civil society organizations in the implementation of this policy.
- Reward outstanding education workers who have taken part actively in preventing child abuse.

5.6 Promote Gender

- Ensure the protection of children, especially girls
- Provide opportunities to girls or women to join child protection committees.
- Eradicate discrimination against child survivors of violence, especially girls.
- Promote participation of girls, especially girl survivors of violence, in abuse prevention activities.

6. Action Plan

To effectively implement the Child Protection for School Policy, an action plan is required for implementation in all public and private education establishments as follows:

6.1 Creating Mechanisms

- Create child protection committees in the education sector at national, provincial and district levels.
- Define responsibilities for implementing this policy, especially responsibilities of relevant departments at all levels of MOEYS.
- Create child protection focal groups at school level to be responsible for accepting complaints and addressing concerns and problems
- Ensure effective functioning of protection mechanisms, strengthen the collection and management of data related with child abuse and child protection.
- Report the number of cases (happened or did not happen) at school level and share the information broadly with stakeholders

6.2 Creating Legal Framework

- Formulate guidelines to support the implementation of child protection in school.
- Develop Prakas on child protection committees in education sector at national and sub-national levels.
- Create a child protection framework including how to report violence against children, case management.

6.3 Providing Financial Support

- All stakeholders can use funds from MOEYS as part of annual School Development Fund and funds from other sources.
- Encourage national and international development partners working with MOEYS to allocate their resources to support the implementation of this policy.

6.4 Capacity Strengthening on Child Protection

- Formulate documents to support the implementation and trainings by cooperating with development partners and schools.

- Provide capacity trainings to national trainers, DTMTs, teachers, students and other stakeholders.

6.5 Project Implementation Process

Action plan for implementing the Child Protection in School Policy for medium and long term can be developed through participation from all stakeholders, especially students/children, to ensure effectiveness and sustainability. This plan will reflect the vision of MOEYS in developing this policy and align with ESP.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

To ensure that this policy can bring about child protection in school, it is necessary to put in place M&E system, which focuses on:

- Targets and strategies provided by the Child Protection in School Policy.
- Indicators of the Child Protection in School Plan.
- Involvement of committees, focal groups and communities.
- Safety and learning environment for children in school are improved as a result of the policy implementation.
- Results against targets.

8. Conclusion

The Child Protection in School Policy plays a critical role in promoting, supporting and providing children with rights as well as entitlements stated in the Constitution and International Conventions to ensure that children will be free from all forms of violence, make school a safe place and enable children to achieve learning outcomes.

MOEYS hopes and believes that stakeholders and development partners will be actively involved in training, dissemination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and contributing to addressing problems and providing interventions so that this policy can become a success.