

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME FOR ETHNIC
MINORITY STUDENTS IN GRADES 11 AND 12 IN NORTH-EASTERN
PROVINCES OF CAMBODIA
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FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of an independent review of a scholarship programme that supports ethnic minority students in Grades 11 and 12 in five north-eastern provinces of Cambodia. The scholarship programme under review began in the school year 2016/17 and is now in its second year of implementation. The review was conducted from February to May 2018 by an independent reviewer, Dr. Monica Biradavolu, contracted by UNICEF Cambodia's Education Section.

Cambodia has made rapid advances in education in recent decades at both primary and secondary levels, underpinned by a strong policy framework. The Education Law of 2007 enshrined the right to free public education of at least nine years' duration. The current Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018 goes a step further and aims to provide "all children [with] access to all types of early childhood education services, primary schools, secondary schools, and opportunities to continue learning".

Despite these rapid advances, concerns remain around high repetition and dropout rates. The situation is worse for Cambodia's 200,000 ethnic minority students. A proven strategy across developing countries, including Cambodia, to prevent dropout among disadvantaged children is to lower opportunity costs by providing scholarships.

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has implemented a secondary education scholarship programme for several years for poor children. Under this programme, students from disadvantaged backgrounds receive scholarships, provided they pass schools tests and have an 80 per cent school attendance record. Priority is given to girls to increase gender parity. In 2017, UNICEF, in close collaboration with MoEYS and with funding from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), supported MoEYS to provide additional scholarships to ethnic minority students in five north-eastern provinces considered at risk of dropping out for financial reasons. The scholarship support by UNICEF consists of: (i) a '*top-up*' scholarship – the MoEYS scholarship (US\$ 90 per year) plus an additional contribution from UNICEF of US\$ 60 per year, and (ii) a *full scholarship* (US\$ 150 per year) provided by UNICEF. The longer-term vision of this scholarship programme is to increase the potential pool of teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds who can teach in multilingual education (MLE) programmes.

At the time of writing, there were 1,095 scholarship recipients (546 female students) across 29 schools in five north-eastern provinces (Kratie, Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri and Stung Treng).

Purpose and objectives of the review: The review was not intended as a full-scale evaluation, rather the goal of the review was to foster learning for MoEYS and UNICEF to ensure that the programme is effective for the government and beneficial for the recipients. Specifically, the review intended to provide impartial and independent comment on the following four issues:

- Effectiveness of the scholarship programme in terms of: (i) transparent and equitable selection of most disadvantaged groups to the programme; (ii) the identification and promotion of gender parity in selection; (iii) delivery mechanisms that ensure timely payment of scholarships; and (iv) utilization of the scholarships to improve outcomes on enrolment, attendance and performance

- Effectiveness of the scholarship programme in inspiring students to pursue careers in MLE teaching, and to understand any barriers to achieving that goal
- Complementarity or overlap with other scholarship programmes, details of other scholarship programmes, such as selection criteria, delivery mechanisms and utilization, and possibilities for harmonization with the current UNICEF-supported scholarships
- Cost-effectiveness of the scholarship programme by comparing it with similar programmes in terms of the various inputs required for different degrees of achievement.

Intended users of the review: Key users of the findings and recommendations are MoEYS and UNICEF, government departments, such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Planning, donors such as SIDA and the European Union, and development partners, particularly those with a long history of implementing programmes in the education section in Cambodia. These include the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Care International, the World Bank and the World Food Programme (WFP).

Methodology: The review used a qualitative method, combining a document review and field research. It was divided into three phases. The first phase, in February 2018, involved: (i) a review of key documents related to the education sector in Cambodia, including scholarship programmes implemented by MoEYS and other development partners at the upper secondary level; (ii) consultations with UNICEF Cambodia’s Education Section to understand the background of the scholarship programme under review, to clarify the objectives of the review, to refine the questions to be answered by the review, and to design a research strategy to achieve the objectives; (iii) a literature review on scholarship programming in the Cambodian context; and (iv) the development of research tools tailored for different respondent types.

The second phase of the review was devoted to field research in March 2018. It included a week of 12 key informant interviews with government officials, donors and development partners in Phnom Penh, followed by a 12-day site visit to six schools in three north-eastern provinces. The visits involved key informant interviews with 19 scholarship committee members at the provincial, district and local levels and six teachers who were not members of a scholarship committee. There were 12 focus groups conducted with scholarship recipients. A total of 94 students participated (49 female and 45 male). The team also visited parents of scholarship students, covering 17 households across the three districts. The household visits included interviews with parents and other key observations, such as living circumstances and language spoken in the household.

The third and final phase involved data analysis, drafting the final report with key findings and recommendations, and a workshop with MoEYS and development partners for validation and prioritization of the findings and recommendations.

While not an evaluation, the review followed guidelines laid out in the United Nations Evaluation Group ‘Norms and Standards for Evaluation’, paying strict attention to rigorous and transparent methodology, use of the best available and reliable data, and sound analysis of evidence to provide credible recommendations. The values and principles of human rights and gender equality were integrated into all stages of the review. The review also followed the ethical guidelines laid out in the ‘UNICEF

Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis’, including respect, beneficence and justice.

Findings

SELECTION PROCESS

Students were selected primarily based on their ethnic minority status. Some (not all) respondents added that the selection criteria included the poverty status of the family. Some schools cast a wide net in absorbing students under this scholarship programme. For example, in Preah Vihear province, nearly all currently enrolled ethnic minority students in Grades 11 and 12 in the province are covered by the scholarship programme, including a school that has only one ethnic minority student. If parents are reluctant to reveal their ethnic minority status for fear of discrimination, the school relies on the commune or village chief for verification. With near unanimity, the parents said that they heard about the scholarship through their children. Students said that they applied to the programme and were given scholarships “because they passed”.

DELIVERY MECHANISMS

UNICEF scholarships are granted in two tranches. *Full* UNICEF scholarship students receive US\$ 80 in the first tranche and US\$ 70 in the second. *Top-up* UNICEF scholarship students receive US\$ 40 in the first tranche and US\$ 20 in the second. MoEYS scholarships are granted in either two tranches of US\$ 45 each, or three tranches of US\$ 30 each. In school year 2017/18, students received the first tranche of UNICEF scholarship funding (US\$ 80 for *full* scholarship recipients and US\$ 40 for *top-up* recipients). The MoEYS scholarship for the current school year had not yet arrived at the time of our visit at any of the schools. As UNICEF and MoEYS scholarships are operating on separate schedules, *full* and *top-up* scholarship recipients are receiving different amounts at different times of the year.

For MoEYS scholarships, delays are the norm. The reasons for delays include: (i) schools begin the scholarship recruitment process after the start of the school year to ensure that they do not include dropouts. School administrators say that it is an administrative challenge for schools to return unclaimed scholarship money, so schools want to guarantee that they only include students who are motivated and enrol in the new school year; and (ii) The government’s fiscal year runs from January to December, whereas the school year runs from November to August, and the mismatch causes delays.

The process of recruiting students at the local school to moving paperwork from the school to the District Office of Education, the Provincial Office of Education and MoEYS can take two months. Therefore, under the current bureaucratic set up for scholarship disbursement, the earliest that the students can receive the scholarship is late December or early January. The schedule of the UNICEF scholarship has improved during the current school year over the previous year, with the first tranche in 2016/17 arriving in April. However, this year the first tranche was disbursed in January.

Given the concerns of MoEYS over the inclusion of dropouts, it is worth considering whether dropouts are a serious problem. The data on dropouts show that in the school year 2016/17, only 2.7 per cent of the total UNICEF scholarship recipients had dropped out. Therefore, the majority of motivated scholarship recipients face late delivery of scholarships to avoid the risk and administrative challenges of dropouts of a small minority of students.

GENDER PARITY

While gender parity was not explicitly mentioned during interviews as an important selection criterion, data show that there is gender balance in the selection of scholarship recipients. The share of female students among scholarship recipients is 44.8 per cent in Ratanakiri, 46.8 per cent in Stung Treng, 48.6 per cent in Kratie, 53.9 per cent in Mondulakiri, and 61.2 per cent in Preah Vihear.

UTILIZATION AND COST EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

Students in focus groups participated in a listing exercise to identify all items they spend money on in order to go to school, and calculate an associated riel or dollar amount. Students are financially literate and have a good grasp of how much items cost. Students themselves, rather than their parents, have control over the allocation of scholarship funds, especially students who live away from their parents.

Three categories of items were common to all students: clothing, school supplies and extra classes. The same teachers who teach during regular school hours teach extra classes in the same subjects and in the same classrooms, albeit at different times, than the regular school hours set by the government, and for a fee. Extra classes should not be considered additional coaching classes, as teachers do not cover the full curriculum during regular school hours. Not taking extra classes means that a student is not taught the full curriculum or assisted in preparing for the national examinations. In other words, extra classes are an essential and necessary component of schooling and part of the 'shadow education' system in Cambodia. It is rare for students to take no extra classes. Most students take between two and four extra classes. The question about extra classes became an implicit way of determining which students were struggling financially. Students were embarrassed to admit that they could not afford to take extra classes. Assuming that students take three extra classes (the most common response) in the three most popular subjects (mathematics, physics and Khmer), they need an additional amount of approximately US\$ 153 per year, or approximately US\$ 15.3 per month for a 10-month school year. This is over and above the US\$ 137 per year needed for clothing and supplies. Therefore, the scholarship amount of US\$ 150 is inadequate to meet the basic minimum costs of schooling.

The cost of schooling for students who have to cover transportation or room and board is, in orders of magnitude, more than either the UNICEF or MoEYS scholarships provide.

IMPACT OF SCHOLARSHIPS ON ENROLMENT, ATTENDANCE AND PERFORMANCE

Scholarships have a direct impact on student attendance. Students and parents made this very clear by saying that the scholarships had eased the financial burden of covering daily transportation to and from school. The impact of the scholarship on student performance is beyond the scope of this review. However, some students reported that the scholarship had helped pay for extra classes, which they could not otherwise afford. It can be reasonably claimed that the scholarship has boosted some students' chances of covering the curriculum and being better prepared to take the national examinations. For other students who use the scholarship to cover critical expenses such as transportation, there is not enough left over to afford extra classes. These students remain at a disadvantage despite the scholarship.

PREFERRED CAREER PATH OF SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS

Ethnic minority scholarship recipients want to become teachers (71 per cent of focus group participants). They choose this option for one of four reasons: to train the next generation of students in

their communities, to get jobs near their families, to have a steady income, and because it is a good (or even only) option for those with limited financial means. Non-ethnic minority students also said that they wanted to become teachers, but they expressed other choices as well. There are two challenges for students who want to pursue higher education: lack of financial means and lack of information on next steps.

COMPLEMENTARITY AND HARMONIZATION WITH OTHER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMMES

There are three ongoing scholarship programmes besides the UNICEF and MoEYS scholarships. They are implemented by ADB, Care International and WFP. ADB has just begun to support MoEYS to implement a scholarship programme in Cambodia. The programme targets higher secondary students who are good at Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and provides US\$ 200 per year. Female students are given priority. Care International provides US\$ 310 per year for lower secondary students in Ratanakiri province. Students live in boarding houses that Care builds. Students are also trained in financial literacy. WFP is in the process of handing over a scholarship programme to MoEYS that provides US\$ 60 per year for students in Grades 4 to 6 in two provinces that are food insecure.

WFP's delivery modality is through mobile banking, an experience from which UNICEF can learn. The World Bank's mandate has shifted from scholarship programmes to a focus on school-based management systems. All scholarship programmes use government systems for selecting students. ADB, Care International, and previously the World Bank introduced a merit component to their selection criteria based on recommendations suggested by independent evaluations.

The UNICEF scholarship complements the Care scholarship by providing a continuum of support from lower to upper secondary for ethnic minority students in Ratanakiri province, with the caveat that UNICEF covers only Grades 11 and 12, but not Grade 10. Some ethnic minority students eligible for the UNICEF scholarship might be absorbed under ADB's programme, thus increasing the total number of students covered. However, there is a discrepancy in amounts and selection criteria. The Education Sector Working Group is a good forum to better harmonize and complement the various scholarship programmes.

Recommendations

1. Prioritize timely delivery of scholarships

For school year 2017/18, UNICEF scholarships were delivered in January 2018. The MoEYS scholarships had yet to be transferred. Even though UNICEF's payment schedule is faster than the MoEYS schedule, neither scholarship is transferred at the beginning of the school year. The scholarship selection process begins after the start of the new school year to prevent the inclusion of dropouts. It is an administrative challenge for schools to return unclaimed scholarship money, so schools want to guarantee that they only include students who are motivated to enrol in the new school year. A second cause of delay is that the government's fiscal year runs from January to December, whereas the school year runs from November to August. It seems that the majority of motivated scholarship recipients are being penalized to avoid the risk, and associated administrative challenges, of including a small minority of students who might dropout. The current system is failing students. **MoEYS and UNICEF must work on behalf of scholarship students and find an administrative solution to achieve a goal that concerned parties agree on, that is, the timely payment of scholarships to students in need. A workshop with key stakeholders from the**

central, provincial, district and school committees can be convened to examine the bottlenecks, understand the constraints at all levels, and work out a solution in a participatory manner.

2. Increase the scholarship amount across the board

The cost implications of the shadow education system of extra classes must be taken seriously. **Extra classes are a necessary component of schooling, without which students can neither cover the full curriculum nor prepare to take the national examinations. This is true of all 12 schools included in site visits for this report. MoEYS and UNICEF must include extra classes in their cost considerations and raise the scholarship amount to US\$ 300 to give all students an equal chance of improved learning outcomes.**

3. Vary scholarship amounts depending on specific student needs

The scholarships flatten out the considerable variation in student needs. Some students need a bicycle to travel to school, which involves a one-time cost, while others spend about US\$ 150 annually on gasoline for their motorbikes and parking. Some parents have spent US\$ 125 to US\$ 150 to build their children a dormitory on school premises. Students who live near the school in dormitories or rented homes rather than with their families need additional funds to cover food, drinking water and toiletries, which amounts to a cost more than the scholarship support. **MoEYS and UNICEF must consider the wide variation in the circumstances of students and provide support accordingly.**

4. Consider delivery mechanisms to individual student bank accounts

Focus groups revealed that the students were used to handling money, with many students already deciding how to use the scholarship funds. Delivering to individual bank accounts could possibly speed up the process. WFP has successfully implemented scholarship programmes using mobile banking, and this could be explored further.

5. Provide scholarships to students to go to teacher training colleges

Scholarship recipients, particularly ethnic minority students, expressed a strong preference to become teachers. However, there may be financial constraints that impede them from pursuing this option. As one of the goals of the scholarship programme is to train a cadre of teachers who can teach MLE, **a logical next step is to help motivated students go to teacher training colleges. UNICEF can extend scholarships of current recipients to attend teacher training colleges.**

6. Provide information to students on career paths

Students in focus groups were not aware of the steps they needed to take to achieve their career goals. For example, they did not know whether they needed to take entrance examinations, whether there were admission fees, where the colleges were located, or how many years of training were required. **MoEYS and UNICEF should consider organizing information sessions in schools so that students are armed with information on available choices and can make informed decisions.**

7. Recognize parents who send their children to school

The household visits and interviews with parents were not only a window into the socioeconomic background of scholarship students; they also showed that some parents were making sacrifices to send

their children to school, while other parents in the same communities were making different choices. **UNICEF and MoEYS should consider organizing a community event where parents of graduating students are given a certificate or token gift in recognition of their efforts.** This could motivate other parents in the same communities to encourage their children to complete schooling.

8. Use the Education Sector Working Group to align scholarship modalities of different programmes

The current roster of available scholarships through UNICEF, MoEYS, ADB and Care are good complements. They are harmonized in their selection modality, as all are aligned with the government system. However, more can be done to harmonize the scholarships. A significant difference is in the amount of support. MoEYS provides US\$ 90 per year, UNICEF provides US\$ 150 per year, ADB provides US\$ 200 per year, and Care provides US\$ 310 per year. Differences in amounts are appropriate for different levels of need, for example more support for students who have to pay for room and board to go to school than for daily commuters who use a bicycle, but not due to differences in donor preference. As all the scholarships are aligned with the government system, **MoEYS must take a lead role in harmonizing the scholarships. The Education Sector Working Group appears to be an appropriate forum to achieve this goal.**

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
DSMC	District Scholarship Management Committee
LSMC	Local Scholarship Management Committee
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MLE	Multilingual Education
PB	Programme Budget
POE	Provincial Office of Education
PSMC	Provincial Scholarship Management Committee
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

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1. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

1.1 Introduction to the Report

This report presents the findings of an independent review of a scholarship programme that supports ethnic minority students in Grades 11 and 12 in five north-eastern provinces of Cambodia. The scholarship programme under review began in the school year 2016/17 and is now in its second year of implementation. The review was conducted from February to May 2018 by an independent reviewer, Dr. Monica Biradavolu, contracted by UNICEF Cambodia's Education Section.

The report has six sections. The first section provides a background of the review. The second section covers the purpose, objectives and intended users of the review. Section three details the methodological approach. The key findings around the main review questions as outlined in the Terms of Reference are presented in section four. Section five covers lessons learned, including strengths and weaknesses of the programme. The sixth and final section offers recommendations.

1.2 Background

Cambodia has made rapid advancements in education in recent decades at both primary and secondary levels, underpinned by a strong policy framework. The Education Law of 2007 enshrined the right to free public education of at least nine years' duration.¹ The current MoEYS Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018 goes a step further and aims to provide "all children [with] access to all types of early childhood education services, primary schools, secondary schools and opportunities to continue learning".²

In 2003, Cambodia adapted the eight universally agreed Millennium Development Goals that countries envisioned achieving between 2000 and 2015. For Goal 3, 'Achieve Universal Childhood Education', the country improved the Net Admission Rate, addressed regional inequities, and saw decreases in the rate of out-of-school children aged 6 to 14 years.³ Combining Goal 3 with Goal 4 ('Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women'), Cambodia aimed for gender parity in school enrolment. The momentum of the goals has continued into the Sustainable Development Goals, with Cambodia agreeing to participate in achieving these goals by 2030, including Goal 4 ('Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All').

To address learning gaps for Cambodia's ethnic minorities, the 2013 *Prakas* on the 'Identification of Languages for Khmer National Learners who are Indigenous People' allowed multilingual education (MLE) to be established in the five north-eastern provinces, which are home to the majority of

¹ Asian Development Bank (ADB). 2015. *Cambodia: Addressing the Skills Gap, Employment Diagnostics Study*. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/176283/cambodia-addressing-skills-gap.pdf>

² Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). 2014. *Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018*. Official document. Phnom Penh: MoEYS <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/images/moeys/policies-and-strategies/559-en.pdf>

³ UNICEF Cambodia Millennium Development Goals. (Undated). Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/overview_13102.html

Cambodia's ethnic minorities.⁴ The Multilingual Education National Action Plan 2015-2018 seeks to ensure that all ethnic minority students have access to quality and relevant education and is "unprecedented in the Southeast Asia region for its specificity. With this plan, MoEYS has...[given] MLE a secure position in primary education in the foreseeable future".⁵

Despite these rapid advancements, concerns remain around high repetition and dropout rates. The situation is worse for Cambodia's 200,000 ethnic minority students. The key reasons for under-representation of ethnic minority students in school are high numbers of incomplete schools⁶ in rural areas, the historical absence of MLE, a lack of qualified MLE teachers, high opportunity costs of education, and early marriage among both adolescent girls and boys, who are expected to privilege marriage over completing their education.

A proven strategy across developing countries, including Cambodia, to prevent dropout among disadvantaged children is to lower opportunity costs by providing scholarships.⁷ Ferreira, Filmer and Schady (2009) show that in Cambodia, scholarship recipients were 20 percentage points more likely to be enrolled in school and 10 percentage points less likely to work compared to their non-scholarship-eligible siblings.⁸ The authors suggest that in the absence of a scholarship, disadvantaged families would send neither child to school but when given the opportunity, they would enrol the eligible child. Other studies in Cambodia have found that there are positive short-term effects⁹ ¹⁰ and medium-term effects of scholarship programmes on school attainment.¹¹

For several years, MoEYS has implemented a secondary education scholarship programme for poor children. Under this programme, students from disadvantaged backgrounds receive scholarships

⁴ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). 2013. *Prakas on Identification of Languages for Khmer National Learners who are Ethnic Minority People*. Official document. Phnom Penh: MoEYS.

⁵ Benson, Carol and Kevin M. Wong. 2017. "Effectiveness of policy development and implementation of L-1 based multilingual education in Cambodia", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. http://docs.wixstatic.com/uqg/ff000a_940a8d45b1bc4037aa3cc77e6d153cd4.pdf

⁶ Incomplete schools are schools that offer fewer than all six grades of primary school. It may be one grade or more that is missing.

⁷ Ganimian, Alejandro J. and Richard J. Murnane. 2016. "Improving education in developing countries: Lessons from rigorous impact evaluations", *Review of Educational Research*, 86(3): 719-755.

⁸ Ferreira, Francisco, H. G., Deon Filmer and Norbert Schady. 2009. "Own and sibling effects of conditional cash transfer programs: Theory and evidence from Cambodia", Policy Research Working Paper No. 5001. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/4192>

⁹ Filmer, Deon and Norbert Schady. 2008. "Getting girls into school: Evidence from a scholarship programme in Cambodia", *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 56(2): 581-617.

¹⁰ Filmer, Deon and Norbert Schady. 2011. "Does more cash in conditional cash transfer programmes always lead to greater impact on school attendance?" *Journal of Development Economics*, 96(1): 15-57.

¹¹ Filmer, Deon and Norbert Schady. 2014. "The medium-term effects of scholarships in a low-income country", *Journal of Human Resources*, 49(3): 663-694.

provided they pass schools tests and have an 80 percent school attendance record. Priority is given to girls to increase gender parity.

In 2017, UNICEF, in close collaboration with MoEYS and with funding from SIDA, supported MoEYS to provide additional scholarships to ethnic minority students in five north-eastern provinces considered at risk of dropping out for financial reasons. The scholarship support by UNICEF consists of: (i) a *'top-up' scholarship* – the MoEYS scholarship (US\$ 90 per year) plus an additional contribution from UNICEF of US\$ 60 per year; and (ii) a *full scholarship* (US\$ 150 per year) provided by UNICEF (for those not covered by the MoEYS scholarship).¹²

The rationale behind these two approaches (top-up and full) is threefold. First, ensure that the hardest-to-reach children can access secondary schools, as they live far away and either need to board or travel long distances to get to school. Second, while MoEYS secondary school scholarships are implemented nationwide, they are limited in number and have strict quotas. The UNICEF-supported scholarship aims to increase the number of students covered by scholarships to improve enrolment and attendance rates and reduce dropouts. Third, UNICEF's support of both approaches (top-up and full) functions as a point-of-advocacy on the need for MoEYS to increase the per student allocation for upper secondary scholarships. The longer-term vision of this scholarship programme is to increase the potential pool of teachers from ethnic minority backgrounds who can teach in MLE programmes.

The programme is in its second year. Therefore, there are students in both Grades 11 and 12 who are currently receiving the scholarships, but the first graduating class will be at the end of the current school year (2017/18). At the time of writing, there were a total of 1,095 scholarship recipients (546 female) across 29 schools in five north-eastern provinces (Kratie, Mondulkiri, Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri and Stung Treng). For the 2017/18 school year, UNICEF has disbursed a total of US\$ 174,599 to support the scholarship programme, which includes both the funds disbursed to students and the administrative costs of implementing and monitoring the programme.

¹² Note that an amount of \$ 15 per top-up and full scholarship is used by MoEYS for administering and monitoring the UNICEF-supported scholarships. This may include covering costs for monitoring by central level and sub-national level MoEYS, and scholarship review meetings at sub-national level.

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

2.1 Purpose of the Review

The review was not intended as a full-scale evaluation, rather the goal of the review was to foster learning for MoEYS and UNICEF to ensure that the programme is effective for the government and beneficial for the recipients. The recommendations based on the findings of the review are to ensure accountability of government programmes, inform the future design of scholarship support for ethnic minorities, and assist in the development of a sustainable and harmonized scholarship programme. While the review was primarily for internal use by MoEYS and UNICEF, the report is publicly available through UNICEF's Evaluation and Research Database.

2.2 Objectives of the Review

The overall objective of the review was to generate information to inform future programming. Specifically, the review intended to provide impartial and independent answers on the following four issues:

- Effectiveness of the scholarship programme in terms of:
 - i. Transparent and equitable selection of most disadvantaged groups to the programme
 - ii. The identification and promotion of gender parity in selection
 - iii. Delivery mechanisms that ensure timely payment of scholarship amounts
 - iv. Utilization of the scholarships to improve outcomes on enrolment, attendance and performance
- Effectiveness of the scholarship programme in inspiring students to pursue careers in MLE teaching, and to understand any barriers to achieving that goal
- Complementarity or overlap with other scholarship programmes, details of other scholarship programmes, such as selection criteria, delivery mechanisms and utilization, and possibilities for harmonization with the current UNICEF-supported scholarships
- Cost-effectiveness of the scholarship programme by comparing it with similar programmes in terms of the various inputs required for different degrees of achievement.

2.3 Intended Users of the Review

While the primary audience for the review is MoEYS and UNICEF, the findings are also relevant to a secondary audience of government departments, such as the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Ministry of Planning, donors such as SIDA and the European Union, and development partners, particularly those with a long history of implementing programmes in the education sector in Cambodia, such as ADB, Care International, the World Bank and WFP.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Approach

The review used a qualitative method, combining document reviews and field research. Qualitative methods were used to ensure that the review combined existing documentation and literature with in-depth interviews with all key stakeholders, including government officials, development partners, donors, teachers, scholarship students and parents. As the review was not intended as a full-scale evaluation, qualitative methods were deemed suitable due to the possibility of obtaining richer insights and unexpected findings that could then inform a more formal evaluation.

The review was divided into three phases. The first phase, in February 2018, involved: (i) a review of key documents related to the education sector in Cambodia, including on scholarship programmes implemented by MoEYS and other development partners at the upper secondary level; (ii) consultations with UNICEF Cambodia's Education Sector to understand the background of the scholarship programme under review, to clarify the objectives of the review, to refine the questions to be answered by the review, and to design a research strategy to achieve the objectives; (iii) a literature review on scholarship programming in the Cambodian context; and (iv) the development of research tools tailored for different respondent types. The first phase led to an inception report.

The second phase of the review was devoted to field research in March 2018. It included a week of key informant interviews with government officials, donors and development partners in Phnom Penh followed by a 12-day site visit to schools in three north-eastern provinces. The visits involved key informant interviews with scholarship committees at the provincial, district and local levels, teachers and parents of scholarship students, as well as focus group discussions with scholarship recipients. More details on the methods are outlined in Section 3.3. A one-week gap between interviews in Phnom Penh and the site visits in the north-eastern provinces allowed another round of refinement of the review questions, research tools and site visit plan.

The third and final phase involved data analysis, drafting the final report with key findings and a set of recommendations, and a validation workshop on 23 May 2018 with representatives of MoEYS, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Planning, development partners and donors.

3.2 Research Team

Dr. Monica Biradavolu led the three-person research team, which included Ms. Elizabeth Fisher as note-taker and Ms. Horm Sreynich as translator.

3.3 Site Selection

The Ethnic Minority Scholarship programme is currently being implemented in five north-eastern provinces of Cambodia, covering 1,095 students (546 female) of 12 different ethnic backgrounds, across 29 schools in 23 districts. The five provinces are Kratie, Mondulhiri, Preah Vihear, Ratanakiri and Stung Treng.

Three sites – Ratanakiri, Mondulhiri and Preah Vihear – were selected for field visit after consultations with UNICEF in the first phase of the review period. The site visits were conducted between 18 March

and 29 March. Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri were selected as these two provinces have large ethnic minority populations: 64 per cent of the population in Ratanakiri province is from an ethnic minority. Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri are also the two provinces with the largest number of scholarship recipients – 451 and 263 respectively (see Annexes 2 to 4 for relevant information).

Preah Vihear presents an important difference from the other four provinces. It is the only province where MLE is currently not being implemented. MLE is implemented in five languages: Prov, Phnong, Kavet, Kroeung and Tumpuon, however Kuoy, which is spoken in Preah Vihear, has not been approved yet for MLE.¹³ This presents an important contrast that can be explored further to understand the importance of MLE in the effectiveness of the scholarship programme. Further, in Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri, ethnic minority populations make up the larger proportion of the total population relative to Khmer, whereas in Preah Vihear, ethnic groups are the minority. This also presents an important difference in terms of classroom interactions that ethnic minority students have with fellow classmates and teachers.

In each province, we selected two schools, one in an urban setting and one in a rural setting, to reach maximum variation in the sample. By urban setting, we refer to a provincial town. Secondary schools are generally not in very rural and remote locations. Therefore, by rural setting, we refer to schools attended by students who live in remote villages.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The data collection relied on the following methods:

Document review: About 40 documents were reviewed, including policy and programmatic documents, operational manuals, evaluation reports, trip reports, presentations, relevant donor reports and data from MoEYS on scholarships and dropout rates.

Key informant interviews at the national level: Key informant interviews were conducted between 5 March and 9 March, with representatives of the government (primarily MoEYS), donors and other development partners. The interviews were semi-structured, face-to-face and lasted up to one hour. The interview guides were modified for different respondents based on their expertise and the degree of detail they were likely to provide. For example, interviews with respondents in leadership positions focused on the policy direction of the education sector in Cambodia and overall management of scholarship programmes. Interviews with respondents who had detailed knowledge of the scholarship programme were asked about the rationale, inclusion criteria, delivery mechanism and complementarity between various scholarship programmes, implementation processes and observed outcomes. All respondents were asked to suggest improvements. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with government, donor and development partner respondents in Phnom Penh (see Table 1).

¹³ Benson, Carol and Kevin M. Wong. 2017. "Effectiveness of policy development and implementation of L-1 based multilingual education in Cambodia", *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*. http://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/ff000a_940a8d45b1bc4037aa3cc77e6d153cd4.pdf

TABLE 1: NATIONAL LEVEL KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Respondent Type	Number
Government	6
Development Partners	4
Donors	2
Total	12

Key informant interviews at the sub-national level: Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives of the Provincial Scholarship Management Committee (PSMC), District Scholarship Management Committee (DSMC) and Local Scholarship Management Committee (LSMC). The interviews were semi-structured, and face-to-face and lasted up to one hour. The questions covered the implementation of the scholarship programme, including the inclusion criteria, monitoring processes, delivery mechanism, complementarity between various scholarship programmes, use of scholarship funds, observed outcomes and future career paths for scholarship students. All respondents were asked to suggest improvements. In addition to committee members, we also conducted interviews with teachers who were not members of the local scholarship committee to ensure triangulation of data between committee and non-committee members. A total of 19 interviews were conducted with scholarship management committee members and non-committee teachers (see Table 2 for a breakdown by respondent type).

TABLE 2: SUB-NATIONAL KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS WITH SCHOLARSHIP MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES AND TEACHERS

Respondent Type	Number
PSMC	3
DSMC	5
LSMC	5
Teachers (non-committee members)	6
Total	19

Key informant interviews with parents of scholarship students: The research team visited parents of scholarship students in their homes. The questions covered family background, inclusion criteria for the scholarship programme, delivery mechanisms, utilization of scholarship funds, observed outcomes and future career paths available to their children. The team visited 17 households across the three provinces (see Table 3). Children from nine of the 17 households lived away from their parents as the schools were far away. In seven cases, we visited parents of students who had participated in the focus groups. The homes were between 2 km and 35 km from the schools their children were attending.

TABLE 3: HOUSEHOLD VISITS DURING SITE VISITS IN THREE NORTH-EASTERN PROVINCES

Province	Number of households visited
Mondulkiri (Urban)	3
Mondulkiri (Rural)	2
Preah Vihear (Urban)	3
Preah Vihear (Rural)	4
Ratanakiri (Urban)	3
Ratanakiri (Rural)	2
Total	17

Observational data from household visits: The household visits allowed the research team to understand the socioeconomic background of scholarship recipients, the distances students need to travel to reach the nearest schools, and to observe the language spoken within the parental home.

Focus group discussion with scholarship students: Focus groups are considered a useful methodological strategy with adolescent research subjects who may not be forthcoming with their views in one-on-one interview situations.¹⁴ The focus groups ensured gender parity by inviting equal numbers of girls and boys to participate. There were 12 focus groups conducted with scholarship students, four per province. In each school, we conducted two focus groups, one with ethnic minority students receiving UNICEF scholarships and the second with non-ethnic minority students receiving the MoEYS scholarship. Every focus group had a mix of participants from Grades 11 and 12, and a mix of female and male students. The focus groups were the key source for questions related to utilization of scholarship funds, teaching as a career path, and challenges to achieving their goals.

A total of 94 students (49 female and 45 male) participated in the focus groups, with 52 students belonging to ethnic minority groups and 42 non-ethnic minorities. The ethnic minority students skewed slightly older than the non-ethnic minorities. Table 4 provides the total numbers of participating ethnic minority and non-ethnic minority students, and a breakdown by gender and age range. See also Annex 5 for information on the total number of scholarship students in the schools selected for site visits.

¹⁴ Peterson-Sweeney, Katherine. 2005. "The use of focus groups in paediatric and adolescent research", *Journal of Paediatric Healthcare*, 19(2): 104-110.

TABLE 4: TOTAL NUMBER OF ETHNIC MINORITY AND NON-ETHNIC MINORITY SCHOLARSHIP STUDENT PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS, AND A BREAKDOWN BY GENDER AND AGE RANGE

	Ethnic minority students	Non-ethnic minority students
Number of focus groups	6	6
Total number of participating students	52	42
Number of males	27	18
Number of females	25	24
Age range of Grade 11 students	15-20 years	15-19 years
Age range of Grade 12 students	17-22 years	17-20 years

3.5 Data Analysis

All data were in the form of typewritten notes. Notes taken during the interviews and focus groups were finalized within a 24-hour window. The research team maintained strict confidentiality throughout the review process. All notes were stored in password-protected computers. Research notes were only shared between the team leader and the note-taker. No identifying information was used in the reporting of findings that could be traced back to individual respondents. In the use of photographic evidence, no individuals are identifiable.

Notes were read and re-read for emerging themes and common patterns of responses across respondent type. Data was triangulated by seeking common information presented by different respondent types. Information gathered in interviews or documents was validated by asking the same question across respondents and respondent types. Only the most common responses were included in the analysis.

The numbers generated from the costing exercise during focus groups with students were entered into an Excel file, which was used to calculate average costs of various items required for schooling.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

While not an evaluation, the review followed the guidelines laid out in the United Nations Evaluation Group ‘Norms and Standards for Evaluation’.¹⁵ The researchers paid strict attention to a rigorous and transparent methodology, used the best available and reliable data, and sound analysis of evidence to provide credible recommendations. The values and principles of human rights and gender equality were integrated into all stages of the review.

The review followed the ethical guidelines laid out in the ‘UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis’.¹⁶ All research participants, especially children under the age of 18 years, were respected as autonomous agents, while keeping in mind that autonomy rests on age, circumstances, capabilities and power differentials. The principle of beneficence was followed by

¹⁵ United Nations Evaluation Group. 2016. *Norms and Standards for Evaluation*. New York: UNEG.

¹⁶ UNICEF. 2015. *UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis*. https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.

respecting the principle of 'do no harm' for all study participants, ensuring that research findings promoted wellbeing while maintaining research participants' confidentiality at all times. Every interview began by explaining the purpose of the visit, introducing all team members, assuring respondents that their participation was voluntary, no harm would come to them if they refused, and they could stop the interview at any time. There were no one-on-one interviews with students. The selection of participants followed the principle of 'justice' to ensure that undue burden was not placed on study participants due to their social class, race or gender, or due to socio-cultural biases.

4. FINDINGS

The findings are presented in three sub-sections that follow the order of the key questions identified for this review. Section 4.1 details the effectiveness of the scholarship programme in terms of equitable selection into the programme, gender parity, delivery mechanisms, cost effectiveness and outcomes on attendance and performance. Section 4.2 considers whether the scholarships' intended long-term goal of inspiring students to pursue careers in MLE teaching is realistic, and to understand any barriers to achieving that goal. Section 4.3 presents findings on complementarity or overlap with other scholarship programmes. Note that the issue of cost effectiveness of the scholarship programme (one of the key questions that the review set out to answer) is covered under Section 4.2.

4.1 Effectiveness of the Scholarship Programme

To understand scholarship effectiveness, the analysis focuses on the following questions:

- How are students selected for the scholarship programme? Is the process equitable and transparent in selecting the most disadvantaged groups?
- What is the delivery mechanism? Does the scholarship arrive in a timely manner? If not, why?
- Is there gender parity in the selection of students?
- How do students use the scholarship funds? Does the scholarship help the enrolment, attendance and performance of students?

4.1.1 Student Selection

The evidence on student selection for the scholarship programme relies on three sources. First, triangulating the interview data on inclusion criteria from different sources – government respondents at the central, provincial, district and local levels, and parents of scholarship students. Second, observational and interview data from visits to students' homes to understand the parental household context. Third, interviews with PSMC and DSMC members on the administration and monitoring of the scholarship programme.

What are the criteria of selection?

Students were selected primarily based on their ethnic minority status. Some (not all) respondents added that the selection criteria included ID Poor¹⁷ status. A central level government official said that while both criteria were included, *“The priority is ethnic minority status. We look at ID Poor status, but all students meet the first criteria.”*

Some schools have cast a wide net in absorbing students under this scholarship programme. A Grade 12 student in Mondulkiri province said that there were very few students in her class who were of ethnic minority background, and all had been awarded the scholarship. In a school in Ratanakiri province, there are 39 students in Grades 11 and 12 combined, of which nine were ethnic minority students (five in Grade 11 and four in Grade 12). All nine students were scholarship recipients. A scholarship committee in Preah Vihear said that nearly all currently enrolled ethnic minority students in Grades 11 and 12 in the

¹⁷ A family identified and certified by the commune as poor is given an ID Poor card.

province were covered by the scholarship programme, including a school that has only one ethnic minority student.

Sometimes, schools adjust to accommodate students whose parents do not reveal that they are ethnic minority. For example, a PSMC member said, *“Most ethnic minority people are shy about identifying themselves as ethnic minority because they face discrimination.”* In such cases, the school relies on the commune or village chief for verification.

LSMC member: Yes, they are still offered the scholarship even if they do not have documents that state that they are ethnic minority. In such cases, we meet with the parents and rely on the commune or village chief to verify that they are ethnic minority.

With near unanimity, the parents said that they heard about the scholarship through their children. Students said that they applied to the scholarship programme and were given scholarships “because they passed”.

Are the selected students from the most disadvantaged groups?

In the focus groups, we asked whether the students were prior recipients of scholarships. Of 43 ethnic minority students¹⁸, four students had received scholarships in Grade 10, five in Grades 7 to 9, and five in primary school. Thus, most (67 per cent) of the current scholarship recipients through the UNICEF programme were first-time scholarship holders. One reason for this could be that these students did not belong to the most disadvantaged groups, and that other students were selected because they were poorer.¹⁹ While it is beyond the scope of this review to answer this question, we present evidence from visits to the parents of scholarship students to give important contextual information on the socioeconomic backgrounds of scholarship recipients.

We visited 17 households in the three provinces; 14 of the 17 families (83 per cent) were living in visibly difficult circumstances. For a more in-depth look, we present three case studies below: the first two cases draw a portrait of the struggles that parents must face to send their children to school. The third provides an example of a family that is relatively better off than the others.

CASE STUDY 1

We met the father of a female scholarship student. Both he and his wife are farmers who grow cassava and sweet potato. Neither parent went to school. They have three children. The Grade 12 scholarship student is the oldest child in the family, while the younger children are in Grades 9 and 7, respectively. There is no paved road leading to the village, the roads are dusty, and as seen in the image below the

¹⁸ Fifty-two indigenous students participated in six focus groups. However, we did not ask the question on previous scholarships in one focus group, hence the total number is 43.

¹⁹ There are several competing explanations as to why most students have not received scholarships before. It is possible that their lower secondary or primary schools were not included in any scholarship programme, for example: the students did not receive the information or did not apply even after receiving the information; the students applied but did not ‘pass’ the selection criteria, which includes an 80 per cent attendance criterion; or there is systematic discrimination against indigenous students. The answer to this question is beyond the scope of this review.

house is very basic, consisting of one room for a family of four (the scholarship student lives in a dormitory at her high school).



The home of a scholarship recipient in Ratanakiri province
Photo credit: Monica Biradavolu, 2018

We climbed up the steps, which were unstable, to sit in an open area in front of the room. In the middle of the interview, the father stepped away, saying that he was feeling unwell and there was something bothering him in his eye. We realized that he was embarrassed that his eyes had welled up with tears when talking about his family's financial situation.

"Talking about money is difficult because I cannot earn enough to support my daughters to study. Compared to other families I am very poor because my parents died when I was 6. Without the scholarship, I can send the children to school, but it is very difficult because I have to borrow money from my neighbours." [Father of a scholarship student]

He is proud of his daughter and his ambition is for her to get a job so that she can support herself.

"My daughter is a good student. She was fourth in her class. She is great. She does not come home; I go every week to see her. She works hard because she sees us in difficult circumstances, so she tries so hard to study to fulfil my dreams. Whatever job she gets is okay, as long as she can support herself." [Father of a scholarship student]

The images below are of the same village. The first image is of the house across the street from where we met the father mentioned above. There is a Grade 12 scholarship student from this house as well. The second photograph is taken from the street to show a glimpse of the street these houses are on.



The home of a scholarship recipient in Ratanakiri province
Photo credit: Monica Biradavolu, 2018



Street view of a village in Ratanakiri province where parents of scholarship students live
Photo credit: Monica Biradavolu, 2018

CASE STUDY 2

A Grade 12 scholarship student in a district town accompanied us to her parents' home, 38 km from her school. She has eight siblings, and is the first in her family to study in high school. She has five older siblings and three younger. Two of her younger siblings are in school, while one younger brother is already married.

The parents told us that they are cassava farmers who sell through a middle-man. They can only earn money for six months of the year, as they cannot farm in the rainy season when there is a lot of flooding. There are no other jobs in the village. The older children send them money. The father said that he built a dormitory for his daughter on the school premises after seeking permission from school authorities. The parents paid for the dormitory, which cost between 500,000 and 600,000 riels (US\$ 125 to US\$ 150). The parents send between 120,000 and 200,000 riels per month (US\$ 30 to US\$ 50) for food, gasoline, etc. The student mentioned on the drive over that her father found it financially difficult to send her to school and asked her to stop her schooling, but she persisted because she likes going to school.

"In lower secondary, her school was 3 km away, so she rode a bicycle to school. In Grade 10, it would take her two hours each way. Still, she never missed school. Now she lives in a dormitory that we built for her. She stays there with three other students who are all related to us and are younger than her. We had to take the wood from here to build the dorm, but we had to build it three times because twice the school said it was not in the right place, so we had to relocate it. They cook in the dormitory and sometimes take the raw materials from here. Sometimes they buy from the market near the school...she never got a scholarship before. In Grade 10 she applied and passed, but she was put on the waiting list." [Parents of a scholarship student]

The dormitory is a shack that is approximately 15 feet by 7 feet, shared by four students. There is an area cordoned off for sleeping and relaxing. There is a desk in one corner shared by all four students, and another corner is for cooking with a small burner and basic utensils. It struck us as we walked up the wooden steps that while they were sturdy, the steps were not flat, and it required some deftness and practice to go up and down the steps with ease. The students fetch water from a nearby tap on the school premises, but sometimes if there is no water there. They need to walk 15 minutes to the nearest available water source. See image below for a typical dormitory built by the parents of students who live too far to commute to school every day.



Dormitory on school premises shared by four students, one of whom is a scholarship recipient, Preah Vihear province

Photo credit: Monica Biradavolu, 2018

Both cases presented above are typical of the parents we met in all three provinces. The scholarship students often come from impoverished circumstances, might be the only child in the family who has reached high school or received a scholarship, and the parents struggle to send their children to school. The evidence strongly suggests that the scholarship is targeting students in need. There were exceptions, but these were in the minority, and Case Study 3 gives the reader a contrasting scenario encountered during the field visit.

[CASE STUDY 3](#)

A Grade 11 scholarship student is one of five siblings. Her mother is the director of the local primary school and her father is a farmer. They live in a modest but well-kept and sturdy house with a fence (see image below). The house is full of wooden furniture. The mother is well spoken, especially in comparison to the other parents we met. Overall, this house stands in sharp contrast to the homes described earlier.

Like the students described in Cases 1 and 2, this student also lives too far to commute daily from her home. However, she lives in a dormitory run by an international NGO, which provides rent-free, all-utilities paid accommodation. She lives with 35 other students from ethnic minority backgrounds. There is a kitchen in the dormitory where the students can cook. The parents send US\$ 50 per month to cover for food, gasoline, etc.



Parental home of a scholarship student, Preah Vihear province
Photo credit: Monica Biradavolu, 2018

How is the selection process monitored?

The PSMC and DSMC are responsible for ensuring that the selection of students is done in an equitable and transparent manner. The committee members were clear on the guidelines and their responsibilities. UNICEF provides committees an annual budget to conduct monitoring visits. However, committee members at both provincial and district levels said that the budget was insufficient to monitor all schools under their charge.

An example from one PSMC interview illustrates the concerns around budgetary shortfalls. According to the members, the guidelines require two visits per year to each school, and this committee must cover six schools. The school in the provincial capital is easy to monitor but two are at a considerable distance. One school is 90 to 100 km away and the other is 120 to 130 km away. It takes three days, including travel time, to complete monitoring visits to far-off schools. The female committee member added that she prefers not to go alone because the places are remote, and she does not feel safe. Therefore, the stipulated budget for these visits is inadequate to cover three days of travel, room and board for two people.

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON SELECTION PROCESSES

- The primary criterion for inclusion is ethnic minority background. Some committee members said that they use ID Poor status as well.
- Schools with fewer students have cast a wide net by absorbing all ethnic minority students who are currently enrolled in Grades 11 and 12.
- School verification from the village or commune chief on students' ethnic minority status.
- Most scholarship recipients are first-time scholarship holders.
- Visits to scholarship students' parental homes indicate that with a few exceptions, the scholarship is targeting students in need.
- The PSMC and DSMC members said that the administrative budget is inadequate to perform their monitoring role.

4.1.2 Delivery Mechanism

What is the delivery schedule?

There are two types of UNICEF scholarship students: (i) recipients of *'top-up' scholarships*, which are the MoEYS scholarship (US\$ 90 per year) under the Programme Budget (PB) plus an additional contribution from UNICEF of US\$ 60 per year; and (ii) recipients of a *full scholarship* (US\$ 150 per year) provided by UNICEF. The UNICEF scholarships are awarded in two tranches. Students who receive the *full* UNICEF scholarship get US\$ 80 in the first tranche and US\$ 70 in the second. Students who receive the *top-up* scholarship get US\$ 40 in the first tranche and US\$ 20 in the second.

According to a central government respondent, the MoEYS scholarships are awarded in three US\$ 30 instalments: the first between November and January, the second just before the vacation for Khmer New Year in April, and the third instalment one month after Khmer New Year. The reality is different in two ways. First, some schools receive the MoEYS scholarship funds in two tranches of US\$ 45, while others receive three tranches of US\$ 30 each. Second, delays in payment seem to be the norm, for example members of one LSMC said that the delay in the MoEYS scholarship for their school spilled over into the next school year: "The first round came in 2016/17, but the second and third tranches came together this year [in the 2017/18 school year]."

Who receives the scholarship funds?

The scholarship funds are credited to the school bank account and withdrawn by the LSMC. Parents generally accompany their children to the school to receive the scholarship. In a few cases, schools hand the amount to the student if the parent lives far away or is unable to come in person. In Section 4.1.4, we explore who decides how the funds are used.

When do the students receive the scholarship funds?

At the time of our field visit in late March 2018, students across all three provinces had received the first tranche of the UNICEF scholarship. They received US\$ 80 and US\$ 40, depending on whether they were full scholarship recipients or top-up recipients. The MoEYS scholarship had yet to arrive at any of the

schools we visited. The delivery schedule of the scholarships for the current and previous school year is detailed in the Table 5, below.²⁰ The delivery of the first tranche of the UNICEF scholarship for the current school year 2017/18 arrived three months earlier than in the school year 2016/17.

TABLE 5: DELIVERY SCHEDULE OF UNICEF AND MOEYS SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SCHOOL YEARS 2016/17 AND 2017/18

SCHOOL YEAR 2016/17		
	UNICEF	MoEYS (PB)
First tranche	April 2017	May 2017
Second tranche	July 2017	August 2017
SCHOOL YEAR 2017/18		
	UNICEF	MoEYS (PB)
First tranche	January 2018	Awaiting
Second tranche	Awaiting	Awaiting

What are the reasons for the delay?

To understand bottlenecks that cause delays, we asked scholarship committee members to explain the process, from selection of students to disbursement of awards. Committees gave slightly different schedules for when the paperwork was moved from one level to the next. Therefore, the process identified below is a composite representation of the responses.

The school year begins in November. In October, the Provincial Office of Education (POE) sends instructions to schools to begin preparing lists of selected students. The LSMC waits to see which students enrol in November. In the remainder of the month, students fill out and return forms, schools conduct verification checks, and there is a waiting period to redress any complaints about the selection process.

When probed about why the committees wait until after the school year starts to begin the recruitment process, members said that they needed to ensure they did not include dropouts. It is an administrative challenge for schools to return unclaimed scholarship money. Schools want to guarantee that they only include students who are motivated and enrol in the new school year.

In early December, the schools send the lists to the POE after gaining the required signatures from the District Office of Education. The POE needs some time to verify that the selection has been conducted fairly and as per the guidance, after which the list is sent to MoEYS. The POE must wait for all schools to send their lists; if any LSMC is delayed this delays all the others. Once MoEYS approves the list, the POE communicates with the LSMC to prepare the document to request that the funds be released. This document moves through the same chain of LSMC to POE (with the signatures of the District Office of

²⁰ While the dates of the UNICEF scholarship funds transfer are consistent across schools in all provinces, this is not the case with the MoEYS scholarship, where we found different dates for when the funds were transferred. The dates in this table for the MoEYS scholarship for school year 2016/17 reflect the dates from only one school, and are used in the table for comparison.

Education) to MoEYS. This paperwork takes all of December. Thus, the earliest the funds can be released is late December or early January, which is when the UNICEF scholarship amount was credited to the school bank account for the current academic year.

Another administrative hurdle for the MoEYS scholarships is that the fiscal year for MoEYS is from January to December, whereas the school year runs from November to August. The start of the school year does not match the start of the fiscal year, thereby causing delays.

The delays have consequences for students, who rely on timely payment to pay for school expenses.

After the PB scholarship students had left the classroom at the end of our focus group discussion in a school, and as we were gathering up our materials to leave, we noticed a female student still waiting at the door. When we asked what she wanted, she hesitatingly stepped back inside and said, *“Can you please tell the Ministry to send the scholarship money? I need the money.”* [Female PB scholarship student]

We told her it was beyond our capacity to ensure timely payment but promised that her request would be conveyed in our report and during the validation meeting with MoEYS where we would present the findings.

Committee members agree that it would be better for students if the money arrived on time, and some (not all) said that it would also be beneficial if the funds were transferred all at once instead of in multiple tranches. Two committee members gave an example of the benefits of a one-time transfer of funds.

“We don’t know why they transfer the money twice a year, it all depends on the policies of MoEYS. It’s better if they send the money just once a year... the Ministry is afraid that students will drop out if they get the full money at one time...but one-time transfer is better...students can buy a bicycle...if it comes twice, they don’t have enough money to buy a bicycle...”

Are dropout rates among scholarship students a serious concern?

Schools worry that if they begin the selection process before the start of the school year, they will include dropouts (students who do not intend to enrol in the upcoming school year or who dropout during the year after enrolling). Is the dropout rate a significant enough concern to warrant the procedural delays that penalize most students who *are* motivated and would benefit greatly by receiving the funds on time?

Table 6 shows that for school year 2016/17, the dropout rate among ethnic minority scholarship students supported by UNICEF was 2.7 per cent in all five provinces. There were no dropouts in Preah Vihear or Stung Treng. It is worth considering whether the concerns around 14 dropout cases across five

provinces warrant the delays in payments for the 507 scholarship students who were motivated to complete the school year.

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF DROPOUTS AMONG SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS IN THREE PROVINCES FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2016/17

	Q1 Enrolled at the start of school year	Q1 Dropout	Q2 Enrolled	Q2 Dropout	Students remaining at the end of the school year	Percentage dropout
Ratanakiri	211	2	209	6	203	3.8%
Mondulkiri	138	5	133	0	133	3.6%
Kratie	43	0	43	1	42	2.3%
Preah Vihear	79	0	79	0	79	0%
Stung Treng	50	0	50	0	50	0%
Total	521	7	514	7	507	2.7%

Source: MoEYS

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON DELIVERY MECHANISMS

- UNICEF scholarships are granted in two tranches. *Full* UNICEF scholarship students receive US\$ 80 in the first tranche and US\$ 70 in the second. *Top-up* UNICEF scholarship students receive US\$ 40 in the first tranche and US\$ 20 in the second.
- MoEYS scholarships are granted in either two tranches of US\$ 45 each, or three tranches of US\$ 30 each.
- In school year 2017/18, students had received the first tranche of the scholarship funding (US\$ 80 for *full* scholarship recipients and US\$ 40 for *top-up* scholarship recipients).
- As UNICEF and PB scholarships are operating on separate schedules, *full* and *top-up* scholarship recipients are receiving different amounts at different times of the year.
- The MoEYS scholarships have not arrived for this year.
- The first tranche of the UNICEF scholarship arrived three months earlier in school year 2017/18 than in school year 2016/17.
- Reasons for delays include: schools begin the scholarship recruitment process after the start of the school year to ensure they do not include dropouts; and it is an administrative challenge for schools to return unclaimed scholarship money, so schools want to guarantee that they only include students who are motivated and enrol in the new school year. The government's fiscal year runs from January to December, whereas the school year runs from November to August.
- The data on dropouts show that in school year 2016/17, only 2.7 per cent of UNICEF scholarship recipients had dropped out.
- Therefore, the majority of motivated scholarship recipients are penalized by late delivery of scholarship amounts in order to avoid the risks and administrative challenges of a minority of students dropping out.

4.1.3 Gender Parity

None of the respondents at the central level, or members of the scholarship committees at the provincial, district or local (school) levels stated explicitly in the interviews, without prompts, that gender parity was a criterion of selection. However, the data below show that there is gender balance in the selection of scholarship recipients.

TABLE 7: SHARE OF FEMALE SCHOLARSHIP HOLDERS IN GRADES 11 AND 12 COMBINED IN FIVE NORTH-EASTERN PROVINCES WHERE UNICEF-SUPPORTED SCHOLARSHIPS ARE BEING IMPLEMENTED, SCHOOL YEAR 2017/18

Province	Number of students receiving scholarships (including Grades 11 and 12)	Number of female students (including Grades 11 and 12)	Scholarships for females as a percentage of total
Ratanakiri	451	202	44.8%
Mondulkiri	263	142	54%
Preah Vihear	152	93	61.2%
Stung Treng	124	58	46.8%
Kratie	105	51	48.6%

Source: MoEYS

KEY TAKEAWAY

While gender parity was not explicitly mentioned during interviews as an important selection criterion, the data show that there is gender balance in the selection of scholarship recipients.

4.1.4 Costs of Schooling

Taking a step back: What does schooling cost?

To understand the impact of the scholarship or how funds are utilized, it is important to take a step back and ask what schooling costs. In this section, we present findings on a question posed in every focus group with scholarship students: “Tell us all the things you spend money on in order to go to school.”

We used a free listing approach in the focus group discussions with students, where researchers ask participants to generate a list of items that correspond to a particular topic. In this case, we asked students to list all items that students spend money on. Once the list was created, students were asked to write a corresponding riel or dollar amount for every item. Free listing allows researchers to detect issues that had not previously been considered but which are important to respondents, and for

researchers to note consistencies or mismatches in lists generated across groups.^{21 22} The image below is a typical example of the list generated during the focus groups with students.

Category	Cost / Frequency	Notes
Notebooks	20-25 n'books /yr	\$5.5 for 10 n' books
Textbooks	10,000 - 15,000 r/yr	
Uniform	40,000 - 70,000 r/yr	[Some buy 4 uniforms, some buy 2] 4,000 r/yr for 10
Sports uniform	15,000 - 20,000 r/yr	[buy one for whole year]
Shoes	30,000 - 40,000 r/yr ; 2-3 pair /yr	
Bag	30,000 - 40,000 r/yr	
Gasoline	\$ 3 week for to go to extra class / state school / visit parents	
Room rent	150,000 - 200,000 r/mo ; share bet ⁿ 2-3 people	
Parking	500 - 1000 r/day dep. on how many times they come to school MON-SAT ; might share parking costs w/ friends w/ vehicles	
Pen	500 - 1000 r/pen ; 10 - 20 pens /yr	
Pencil	2-3 /yr ; 500 - 1,000 per pencil	
Ruler	10 per year ; 500 per ruler ; 'coz lose it or friends borrow & don't return	
Erasers	2,000 - 2,500 /eraser ; 3-4 erasers incl. pen + pencil eraser	
Food	4,000 - 5,000 /meal ; 3 meals /day / 7 days a week	
Extra Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 40,000 r/mo → 3 teachers in 912 Physics 30,000 r/mo Chemistry 25,000 - 28,000 r/mo Maths 30,000 r/mo Biology 30,000 r/mo English 25,000 r/mo Computer \$18-20 / 3 mos. 	
Photocopy	2,000 r/mo	
Printing	4,000 - 5,000 /yr	
Utensil	15,000 - 70,000 r / yr	
Toiletries	50,000 /mo.	
Answer book	1-7 books /yr ; 5,000 - 6,000 /book	
Novel	2-10 novels /yr 3,500 - 10,000 r /book	
Lesson Paper	3,000 /mo.	

A chart completed in a focus group with a free listing of categories on which students spend money annually, and associated costs.

Photo credit: Elizabeth Fisher, 2018

In each focus group, we obtained a price range for every item to account for variation in what students were willing or able to spend. For example, students buy more or less expensive shoes or school bags, or purchase one or more uniforms for the school year. We calculated the average cost for every item for every school. Then we calculated the average cost across all 12 focus groups. For items that were priced on a daily or a monthly basis, we calculated annual costs for a nine-month period, as the 10th month of the school year is for examinations and is an atypical month.

²¹ Ellsberg, Mary and Heise, Lori. 2005. *Researching Violence Against Women: A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists*. Washington D.C. United States: World Health Organization and PATH. https://www.path.org/publications/files/GBV_rvaw_front.pdf

²² Krueger, Richard A. and Mary Ann Casey. 2015. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research (Fifth Edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

The free listing exercise revealed three points worth remarking on. First, students are financially literate. Across all groups students had a sound grasp of what things cost and had no trouble calculating how much they spent on items on a daily, monthly or annual basis (depending on the item under consideration). Second, unit costs were consistent across locations (while accounting for variations between provincial centres and district towns). Third, there was considerable variation in student spending. Students whose homes were far from school either paid for daily transportation if they were commuters, or for room and board if they moved to live near the school. This variation will be discussed in more depth later.

We begin by focusing on three categories that are common to all students: clothing, school supplies and extra classes.

A word of caution: The numbers generated through the listing exercise should be thought of as reasonable but rough approximations. They represent cost categories that students themselves think are important.

Costs common to all students: Clothing, school supplies and extra classes

All students need funds to purchase clothing and school supplies, and to pay for extra classes. Tables 8 and 9 show that the average annual costs for school clothing and school supplies are US\$ 74 and US\$ 63.5 respectively.

TABLE 8: AVERAGE ANNUAL COSTS FOR SCHOOL CLOTHING

	Riel	US\$²³
Shoes	121,375	30.00
Sport uniform	38,000	9.00
Uniform (with school logo, which is required and costs extra)	138,854	35.00
Total	298,229	74.00

Two categories in Table 9 need further explanation. Answer Books refer to guide books that help students learn the material in the curriculum. This was listed by nine out of 12 focus groups. Lesson papers refer to teacher-prepared hand outs that aid student learning. They are specifically designed to help students be better prepared to take exams. For example, a history teacher might prepare a lesson paper with a clearer timeline of historical events than the textbook. One student explained, *“The teacher does not write on the whiteboard, but they write on the paper and then they sell the papers to students so that they can review it at home to prepare for the exam.”* Four out of 12 focus groups listed this item. Students also said they paid for textbooks because the free textbooks arrived late. In some groups, students said they only paid out-of-pocket for textbooks for English class.

TABLE 9: AVERAGE ANNUAL COSTS FOR SCHOOL SUPPLIES

²³ Exchange rates are calculated using www.xe.com. The decimals are rounded off to the lower number under 5 and to the higher number for 5 and over.

	Riel	US\$
Answer books	22,000	5.00
Bag	72,452	18.00
Eraser	5,714	1.00
Lesson papers	15,187	4.00
Notebooks	44,468	11.00
Novels	25,937	6.00
Pencils	1,656	0.50
Pens	14,636	4.00
Photocopies	33,166	8.00
Rulers	14,328	4.00
Textbooks	6,611	2
Total	256,155	63.50

To cover both clothing and supplies, students pay approximately US\$ 137 per year. If these were the only cost categories that students had to cover, a scholarship of US\$ 150 per year would be adequate. However, students in all focus groups listed ‘extra classes’ as a category. The following section examines what extra classes are, how much they cost, and whether they are a necessary or optional part of schooling.

What are ‘extra classes’?

The same teachers who teach during regular school hours teach extra classes in the same subjects and in the same classrooms, albeit at different times than the regular school hours set by the government, and for a fee. For example, one student explained that her regular school hours were from 7 am–11 am and from 2 pm–4 pm. Extra classes are taught from 6 am–7 am, 11 am–1 pm, and from 4 pm–7 pm.

Table 10 highlights that the most popular subjects for extra classes are mathematics, physics, Khmer, English and chemistry. The annual cost per subject ranges from US\$ 41 to US\$ 62. English is the most expensive.

TABLE 10: AVERAGE ANNUAL COSTS FOR EXTRA CLASSES AND THE NUMBER OF FOCUS GROUPS IN WHICH STUDENTS LISTED THE SUBJECT

Subject	Number of focus groups in which students listed the subject	Cost in Riels	Cost in US\$
Mathematics	12	197,541	48.00
Physics	10	188,000	46.00
Khmer	10	239,750	59.00
Chemistry	9	182,888	45.00
English	9	248,333	61.00
Biology	6	170,833	42.00

Computer	4	213,375	52.00
Total	60	1,440,720	353.00

How many extra classes do students take?

It is rare that students do not take extra class. One teacher said in an interview, “If there are 50 students in a class, 40 students take extra classes.” As seen in Table 11, most students take between two and four extra classes.

TABLE 11: NUMBER OF EXTRA CLASSES STUDENTS ATTEND (BY FOCUS GROUP)²⁴

	No extra class	One extra class	Two extra classes	Three extra classes	Four extra classes	Five extra classes	Six extra classes
FG1	0	2	3	4	0	0	0
FG2	0	0	0	0	7	1	0
FG3	1	1	4	1	0	0	0
FG4	0	0	0	2	2	1	3
FG5	0	0	2	6	2	0	0
FG6	1	1	0	4	3	0	0
FG7	0	1	2	0	4	0	0
FG8	1	3	2	2	0	0	0
FG9	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
FG10	0	0	2	1	1	1	0
Total	3	8	15	20	20	4	6

Why do students take extra classes? Are they the same as coaching classes?

In a recently published article, Bray et al. (2018) write about shadow education in Cambodia. The authors conclude that, “Particularly in the cases of teachers who did not complete the curriculum during government classes, or who did so at great speed, tutoring was perceived as necessary to complete the whole of the government curriculum on which the national examinations would be based” (2018: 16).²⁵ This corroborates our findings.

²⁴ The question of how many extra classes students take was not asked in two focus group sessions.

²⁵ Bray, Mark, Magda Nutsa Kobakhidze, Wei Zhang and Junyan Liu. 2018. “The Hidden Curriculum in a Hidden Marketplace: Relationships and values in Cambodia’s shadow education system”, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2018.1461932.

The extra classes identified by students in the focus groups differ from private coaching found in other countries, including low-income countries.²⁶ Private coaching usually implies tutoring offered by commercial enterprises (or commercially minded tutors) in addition to regular schooling. As private tutors are different from school teachers, there is no conflict of interest. Moreover, there is an expectation that the full curriculum will be covered in schools. Private tuition or coaching aims to boost a student's abilities, but it is not a replacement for regular schooling. Extra classes in Cambodia are not an addition, but a necessary component of schooling, as teachers do not cover the full curriculum during regular school hours. Both teachers and administrators stated that extra classes were necessary for students to perform well.

Teachers said that extra classes were necessary as the textbooks were not clear, or the time allocated for government classes was inadequate to cover materials.

Interviewer: How does the extra class help the student?

Teacher: The extra class is important because the textbook from the government is not clear, it is not in depth...so the teacher needs to do extra research and prepare lessons to teach the students.

Interviewer: If a student does not take an extra class, does it put them at a disadvantage?

Teacher: Yes, they don't know how to write in the exam.

Parents and administrators said that extra classes were needed due to unsatisfactory teacher performance during regular school hours, and because there was not enough time for students to ask questions or seek clarification.

"In the class, teachers do not teach enough, they do not perform well...that is why students need to go to extra class...Most indigenous students need to go to extra class because they are behind in their studies and they need to catch up with the others."

[DSMC member]

"Extra classes help my daughter get a better education because the teacher in the public school doesn't teach students enough...the teachers are busy teaching extra classes, so they don't put much effort on teaching in public school."

[Parent]

²⁶ Williams, Timothy P., Pamela Abbott and Alfred Mupenzi. 2014. "Education at our School is not Free: The hidden costs of fee-free schooling in Rwanda", *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 45(6): 931-952.

“We study the subject for six hours per week and it is not enough. If we do not go to extra class, we cannot keep up. If you do not understand something you cannot ask during regular class because there is not much time.”

[Student]

Some teachers allow students to delay payments until the scholarship funds arrive, others allow very poor students to attend for free, and still other students negotiate a better deal for themselves. Setting aside the individual kindness of teachers or individual display of wit by students, payment for extra classes amounts to paying school fees. It belies the promise of free and inclusive education for all.

Under what circumstances do students NOT take extra classes?

In the focus groups, the question about extra classes became an implicit way of determining which students were struggling financially. Students were embarrassed to admit that they could not afford to take extra classes. A teacher put the issue in very stark terms:

“It depends on the student, some decide to take extra classes and not eat. They will give up their food so that they can pay. Some give up extra classes so that they can eat.”

Factoring in extra classes to the cost of schooling

Assuming that students take three extra classes (the most common response) in the three most popular subjects that emerged from the focus groups (mathematics, physics and Khmer), they need an additional amount of approximately US\$ 153 (above the US\$ 137 needed for clothing and supplies). This brings to US\$ 290 the amount needed to cover the most basic requirements to attend class and engage in learning.

The other categories that emerged as a necessary expense for some (not all) students were transportation costs for daily commuters and room and board for those who did not have the option of commuting.

Costs borne by students who live far from school: Transportation, and room and board

Living far from school adds significantly to the cost of going to school. Some students commute to school every day from their homes, traveling by bicycle or motorcycle, depending on the distance. Others pay for room and board, as their schools are too far to cover the distance from home to school every day.

Transportation Costs

Some students buy bicycles. Others live too far for a bicycle to be practical. They use motorcycles and pay recurring costs for gasoline and parking. For example, in one focus group all eight participants said they travelled to school on motorbikes and it took between 20 and 30 minutes each way. In one school, students travelled first by boat to cross the river, and then used their motorcycles. Table 12 provides the average cost of purchasing a bicycle, and average annual costs for gasoline and parking if traveling by motorcycle.

TABLE 12: AVERAGE ANNUAL²⁷ COSTS FOR TRANSPORTATION TO SCHOOL

	Number of focus groups that listed this item	Riel	US\$ ²⁸
Bicycle (one-time cost)	4	210,000	52.00
Gasoline	7	484,714	120.00
Parking	6	66,533	16.00
Total for gasoline and parking		551,247	136.00

Room and board

Students in only three focus groups paid rent out-of-pocket. All students paid for food, but there was wide variation in this category and the average figure reported in Table 13 is a significant undercount for some students. This is because some students only purchase lunch, others return home for lunch if they live close enough, while others have to pay for every meal, as they live away from home. Several students said that they cooked for themselves in their dormitories or rented rooms, buying raw materials from the nearest market.

TABLE 13: AVERAGE ANNUAL²⁹ COSTS FOR ROOM AND BOARD

	Number of focus groups that listed this item	Riel	US\$ ³⁰
Rent	3	399,000	98.00
Food	11	1,795,923	445.00
Drinking water	3	130,500	32.00
Toiletries	6	237,375	58.00
Total		2,562,798	633.00

²⁷ Annual costs refer to 20 days of schooling per month, and 9 months of schooling in total.

²⁸ Exchange rates are calculated using www.xe.com. The decimals are rounded off to the lower number under 5 and to the higher number for 5 and over.

²⁹ Annual costs refer to 20 days of schooling per month, and 9 months of schooling in total.

³⁰ Exchange rates are calculated using www.xe.com. The decimals are rounded off to the lower number under 5 and to the higher number for 5 and over.

The cost of schooling for students who have to cover transportation or room and board more than either the UNICEF or MoEYS PB scholarship provides.

Is the scholarship amount adequate?

According to central level officials, the US\$ 150 scholarship amount is “not too high, not too low”. The calculation was made thus: “US\$ 150 means that they spend US\$ 15 per month for a 10-month academic year. With US\$ 15 per month they can afford school supplies, uniforms, a bicycle. They can get funds for other expenses from their family.” When school administrators and teachers were asked during our site visits whether the scholarship amount was adequate, the response was overwhelmingly negative. Common responses included, “It only covers a small part of the total costs.” The respondents also said that, “Scholarships are just to motivate the student.”

The scholarship amount is adequate if the costs borne by student are limited to school supplies, uniforms and the one-time purchase of a bicycle. The cost of paying for the shadow education system of extra classes and lesson papers, transportation costs of gasoline and parking, and room and board for non-commuters far exceeds what the scholarship provides.

A student spoke up at the end of a focus group and said:

“I want to thank UNICEF for offering the scholarship because it helps me pursue my studies. My family is very, very poor and cannot support me. My last message is to ask if it is possible for UNICEF to give more scholarship money because right now it helps with only a little part of the total expenses. I request UNICEF to raise the amount to US\$ 300 to US\$ 400 per year for Grades 11 and 12.”

[Scholarship student, Ratanakiri province]

Writing about scholarships at the lower secondary level, Filmer et al. (2011) point out that the scholarship amounts in Cambodia are very small compared to scholarships offered in other countries, particularly Latin America. Whereas the scholarship offered in Cambodia was 2 per cent of consumption of the median recipient household, comparable values were 22 per cent in Mexico, 29 per cent in Nicaragua, 17 per cent in Colombia and 6 per cent in Ecuador.

Who decides how to use the scholarship funds?

Students who live far from home have control over their scholarship funds and are sole deciders on the allocation of resources. Parents confirmed this. Parents of commuter students are more likely to have a say in their children’s use of scholarship funds.

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON UTILIZATION AND COST EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS

- Students in focus groups participated in a listing exercise to identify all items that they spend money on to go to school and calculate an associated riel or dollar amount.
- Students are financially literate and have a good grasp on how much items cost.
- Students themselves, rather than their parents, have control over the allocation of scholarship funds, especially students who live away from their parents’ homes.

- Three categories of items are common to all students: clothing, school supplies and extra classes.
- The same teachers who teach during regular school hours teach extra classes in the same subjects and in the same classrooms, albeit at different times than the regular school hours set by the government, and for a fee.
- Extra classes should not be considered additional coaching, as teachers do not cover the full curriculum during regular school hours. In other words, extra classes are an essential and necessary component of schooling and part of the shadow education system in Cambodia.
- It is rare that students do not take extra classes. Most students take between two and four extra classes.
- In the focus groups, the question about extra classes became an implicit way of determining which students were struggling financially. Students were embarrassed to admit that they could not afford to take extra classes.
- Assuming that students take three extra classes (the most common response) in the three most popular subjects that emerged from the focus groups (mathematics, physics and Khmer), they need an additional amount of approximately US\$ 153 (above the US\$ 137 needed for clothing and supplies) to cover the most basic requirements to attend class and engage in learning.
- The cost of schooling for students who have to cover transportation or room and board is more than either the UNICEF or MoEYS scholarship provides.
- The scholarship amount of US\$ 150 is inadequate to meet the basic minimum costs of schooling.

4.1.5 Impact on Enrolment, Attendance and Performance

Scholarships have a direct impact on attendance. This finding has been corroborated in several studies: an analysis of impact evaluations of educational initiatives finds that nearly every conditional cash transfer (also labelled scholarship) that has been evaluated has increased student enrolment and attendance (Ganimian and Murnane 2016). Students and parents in our review confirm this. For example, scholarship funds affect whether a student can pay for transportation. No money for gasoline can result in an involuntary break from schooling.

“Scholarship is very important because it helps to fill the gasoline in my motorbike to go to school. Previously I did not always have the money for gasoline, so I needed to stop studying temporarily and go to work.”

[Scholarship student]

Parents borrow money to send their children to school. The mother of a scholarship student said their home was 6 km away. On days when she did not have the money for gasoline, her daughter cried, and the mother borrowed from the neighbours.

“My daughter likes school. She cries when there is no money for gasoline and does nothing at home and she tells me that she will stop coming to school because she feels embarrassed. I borrow the neighbour’s gasoline to help her go to school and pay them later.”

[Mother of a scholarship student]

Parents of very poor households sometimes have no choice but to stop children going to school.

LSMC member: *The PB money comes so late.*

Interviewer: *What is the impact of that on students?*

LSMC member: *It impacts their study. Children miss school. Parents use their own money, but if they are very poor, there is no choice for them.*

LSMC members at one school shared that at the beginning of the school year (November 2017) there were 24 students in Grade 11. Five of the 24 students were UNICEF scholarship recipients. By March 2018 (at the time of the interview), seven students had dropped out. None of the seven were scholarship recipients, suggesting that the scholarships were instrumental in keeping children in school.

The literature on the impact of scholarships on student performance is less positive. Ganimian and Murnane (2016) report: *“Only one type of CCT [conditional cash transfer] has improved student achievement: merit scholarships.”* While it is beyond the scope of this review to determine whether the scholarships for ethnic minority students helped improve their performance, students reported that the scholarship funds could be utilized for extra classes, which are critical for student learning.

“I take extra class because the teacher told me that I can perform better if I join extra class. For example, in Khmer language, I can learn in extra class how to write really well in Grade 12 exam so that I can pass. When the scholarship money came, I could pay for extra classes.”

[Scholarship student]

However, for some students, the scholarship helps to cover other critical costs and there is nothing left over to pay for extra classes. We describe a case below of a student who is unable to afford extra classes.

A single mother from a district town, who earns very little, is raising a Grade 11 student. She has two other children to feed. The student loves going to school and spends approximately \$5 per week on gasoline. Assuming nine months of schooling annually, she needs \$ 180 per year to cover transportation costs. She said that the scholarship had helped ease the financial burden of traveling to school. It could be reasonably claimed that the scholarship has helped improve this student’s attendance record.

However, it is harder to gauge whether the scholarship assistance is improving her performance. When we asked in the focus group how many students did not take extra classes, she hesitated to raise her hand. The numbers were not adding up and we repeated the question. This time, she hesitatingly said she did not take extra classes. She was too embarrassed to admit that she could not afford them. Given the use of the scholarship to cover transportation costs, she remained at a disadvantage, as she could not complete the full curriculum and prepare for examinations on par with other students, who do both through extra classes.

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON THE IMPACT OF SCHOLARSHIPS ON ENROLMENT, ATTENDANCE AND PERFORMANCE

- Scholarships have a direct impact on student attendance. Students and parents make this very clear by saying that the scholarship has eased the financial burden of covering daily transportation to and from school.
- The impact of the scholarship on student performance is beyond the scope of this review.
- Some students report that the scholarship has helped pay for extra classes, which they could not earlier afford.
- It can be reasonably claimed that the scholarship has boosted some students’ chances of covering the curriculum and being better prepared to take the national examinations.
- For other students who use the scholarship to cover critical expenses such as transportation, there is not enough left over to afford extra classes. These students remain at a disadvantage despite the scholarship.

4.2 Career Paths of Scholarship Students

“The focus with the Millennium Development Goals was on access and quantity. With the Sustainable Development Goals, the focus is now on inclusive and equitable access to education for all, with an emphasis on quality. Therefore, the ministry’s first priority is on teachers, the second priority is on teachers, and the third priority is on teachers.”

[Official, MoEYS]

Some 71 per cent of ethnic minority scholarship recipients want to become teachers, as seen in Table 14.

TABLE 14: PREFERRED CAREER PATH OF ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS IN FOCUS GROUPS

Preferred career	Number	Percentage
Teacher	37	71
Police	4	8
Manager in a company	2	4
Manager in a hotel	2	4
NGO worker	1	2
Military	1	2

Doctor	1	2
Degree in business	1	2
N/A	3	6
Total	52	

Students gave different reasons for their choices. Some students expressed a higher purpose in their desire to become teachers. They want to train the next generation of students, be a successful example to other ethnic minority children, teach their community about their history, and encourage their community members to pursue higher education. Two students said that they already taught young children in their village and would like to continue to do so.

“There are children living around my village who are also ethnic minority like me, but they are not really studying. The teachers are also not giving them much attention. I feel sad and I want to be a teacher to educate them and encourage them to have more education.”

Others had more practical concerns, such as remaining close to their families and communities.

“Being a teacher means that I can stay with my family and remain in my community. If I work for a company, I have to relocate for my job.”

Others wanted to earn money quickly, get a fixed income, and get a pension.

“Becoming a teacher is about earning money quickly after graduation, getting a fixed salary, and it is good because you get a pension after you retire.”

Still others said that given their lack of financial means, it was the best, or only, option available.

“I don’t have any money, so becoming a teacher is the best choice for me.”

To see if students had the potential to become MLE teachers, we asked what language they spoke to each other, and at home with their parents and siblings. In all three provinces, students said that they were comfortable in both Khmer and their home language. In Mondulkiri, they spoke a mix of Khmer and Phnong with each other, while in Preah Vihear the students said that they spoke a mix of Kuoy and Khmer. In Ratanakiri, the students were a mix of Prov, Kroeung and Jarai. They all said that they spoke their native languages, but often the only common language between them was Khmer.

Among non-ethnic minority students, teacher remained a top choice, but students mentioned other career paths as well, such as going into public administration.

TABLE 15: PREFERRED CAREER PATH OF NON-ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS IN FOCUS GROUPS

Preferred career	Number
Teacher	7
Public administration	2
Police	2
Doctor	2
Accountant	1
Total	14

Note: This question was posed in three out of six focus groups.

Students faced two challenges in the pursuit of their goals. The first was financial. Several students said that they needed financial support to go to teacher training colleges.

“I want to be a teacher, but I do not have the money to go to teacher training college. If I get a scholarship, I could.”

A second challenge emerged during the focus group discussions. It appears that students do not have full information on what they need to do to pursue higher education. They were not clear when we asked whether they needed to take admission tests, where the colleges were located, or how much the courses cost.

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON PREFERRED CAREER PATHS OF SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

- Ethnic minority scholarship recipients want to become teachers.
- They choose this option for one of four reasons: to train the next generation of students in their communities, to get jobs near their families, to get a steady income, and because it is a good (or even only) option for those with limited financial means.
- Non-ethnic minority students also said that they wanted to become teachers, but they expressed other choices as well.
- There are two challenges for students who want to pursue higher education: lack of financial means and lack of information on next steps.

4.3 Complementarity and Harmonization with other Scholarship Programmes

The findings presented in this section are based on key informant interviews with development partners and relevant programme documents shared by them. Besides the UNICEF and MoEYS scholarships, there are three on-going programmes that offer cash scholarships to students.

Asian Development Bank

ADB is implementing a programme targeting 6,000 students in seven disadvantaged provinces. These are merit-based scholarships that provide US\$ 200 annually to Grade 11 and 12 students in STEM subjects. Female students are given priority. The goal is to create a skilled workforce in science and

technical fields. This programme has just begun implementation and uses MoEYS systems for student selection and disbursement.

ADB has a long history of scholarship programming in Cambodia, dating back at least a decade. The earliest scholarship programme was a pilot for upper secondary students in north-eastern provinces that focused on low enrolment, high dropout and low completion rates. The programme showed a positive impact on attendance and enrolment and was eventually handed over to MoEYS. One reason for the success of the programme was that an NGO was funded to conduct Information Education Communication activities to promote education in communities. ADB then shifted its mandate to a specific focus on STEM. The first iteration of this programme built 36 'resource schools' (laboratories and equipment) in 25 provinces and offered a US\$ 90 annual scholarship, with an emphasis on the inclusion of female students. The programme increased access to science learning and improved enrolment in STEM subjects, but dropout rates were high. There were three lessons learned: US\$ 90 per year was insufficient, the lack of a merit component fostered a lack of commitment, and unlike the first pilot programme, there were no Information Education Communication activities conducted. In its current iteration, a merit component has been added and the scholarship amount has been increased to US\$ 200.

CARE International

Care Cambodia implements a scholarship programme in Ratanakiri province for ethnic minority students in lower secondary schools (Grades 7 to 9) and provides US\$ 310 annually for students to live in a boarding house that Care builds for them. The students are also provided training on financial literacy. Initially, the scholarships were provided to all eligible students, however the dropout rate was 30 per cent.

In response, Care commissioned an independent review of the programme, which found that an environment of less competitiveness for the scholarship fostered a lack of commitment. One of the recommendations of the review was to include a merit criterion. Another recommendation was to have an ethnic minority leader as part of the selection committee. A third was to align the programme with the government's systems. Based on these recommendations, students are required to write a motivational letter about why they think they should get the scholarship, and a merit component in the selection process ensures that they are well prepared to move from primary to secondary education. The scholarship programme also now uses the government's system for selecting students. Seven cohorts of 300 students have thus far received the scholarship.

World Food Programme

WFP offers a cash scholarship of US\$ 60 annually to students in Grades 4 to 6 in two provinces. The goal is to increase enrolment and attendance in schools in food insecure areas. After a review conducted by an international consultant, WFP decided to implement this programme via mobile banking. The programme has been running successfully from 2011 and WFP is now in the process of handing it over to the government.

World Bank

The World Bank implemented scholarship programmes in previous years for lower secondary and upper primary school students. The first programme provided US\$ 45 per year scholarships in lower secondary levels. While the programme reduced dropout rates, it did not improve enrolment, as students had already dropped out in the upper primary levels. Learning from this, the next programme targeted students in upper primary grades. This programme improved enrolment and reduced dropout rates, but there was no impact on learning outcomes. As a result, the third iteration continued to target upper primary level students, but added a merit criterion, which reduced dropout rates and improved learning outcomes. Currently, the World Bank is not implementing any scholarship programmes. The focus has shifted to developing school-based management systems.

Complementarity with the UNICEF scholarship

The UNICEF scholarship complements the Care scholarship by providing a continuum of support from lower to upper secondary for ethnic minority students in Ratanakiri province, with the caveat that UNICEF covers only Grades 11 and 12, but not Grade 10.

ADB's focus on STEM subjects also complements the UNICEF scholarship. Presumably, some ethnic minority students eligible for the UNICEF scholarship might be absorbed under ADB's programme, thus increasing the total number of students covered. However, there is a discrepancy in amounts and selection criteria. UNICEF offers US\$ 150 and ADB offers US\$ 200. ADB includes a merit criterion, while UNICEF does not. In one school visited, the ADB programme had just been announced. The LSMC members said that students eligible for multiple scholarships (ADB, UNICEF and MoEYS) would be asked to choose one. However, it is not clear why a student would choose a scholarship that provides a lesser amount.

Harmonization with the UNICEF scholarship

Since UNICEF and MoEYS scholarships are operating on separate schedules, *full* and *top-up* scholarship recipients are receiving different amounts at different times of the year. Greater harmonization would benefit both students and administrators. The ADB and UNICEF scholarships complement each other, but could benefit from greater harmonization on total amounts and clearer guidelines for sub-national scholarship management committees on the selection process. WFP has successfully implemented a scholarship programme using mobile banking, and there is an opportunity for UNICEF to learn from this experience.

Government and development partner respondents mentioned that the Education Sector Working Group, set up by MoEYS, is an important and active forum for bringing such issues to light.

KEY TAKEAWAYS ON COMPLEMENTARITY AND HARMONIZATION WITH OTHER SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMMES

- There are three on-going scholarship programmes besides the UNICEF and MoEYS PB scholarships. They are implemented by ADB, Care International and WFP.
- ADB has just begun implementing a programme in seven provinces that provides a US\$ 200 per year scholarship for STEM subjects in Grades 11 and 12. Female students are given priority.
- Care International provides US\$ 310 per year for lower secondary students in Ratanakiri province. Students live in boarding houses that Care builds. Students are also trained in financial literacy.
- WFP is in the process of handing over a scholarship programme that provides US\$ 60 per year for students in Grades 4 to 6 in two provinces that are food insecure.
- WFP's delivery modality is through mobile banking, an experience that UNICEF can learn from.
- The World Bank's mandate has shifted from scholarship programmes to a focus on school-based management systems.
- All three programmes use government systems for selection of students.
- ADB, Care International and previously the World Bank introduced a merit component to their selection criteria, based on recommendations suggested by independent evaluations.
- The UNICEF scholarship complements the Care scholarship by providing a continuum of support from lower to upper secondary for ethnic minority students in Ratanakiri province, with the caveat that UNICEF covers only Grades 11 and 12, but not Grade 10.
- Some ethnic minority students eligible for the UNICEF scholarship might be absorbed under ADB's programme, thus increasing the total number of students covered. However, there is a discrepancy in the amounts and selection criteria.
- The Education Sector Working Group is a good forum to better harmonize and complement the various scholarship programmes.

5. LESSONS LEARNED: Strengths and Weaknesses of the Programme

The scholarship programme under review has several strengths and has accomplished critical goals.

- The programme has targeted ethnic minorities in disadvantaged provinces, a group that is particularly at risk of dropouts and low completion rates.
- The programme has cast a wide net in absorbing students. While this could potentially mean that not all recipients are in financial need, our data on utilization of funds show that several students' enrolment, attendance and possibly performance rates are dependent on receiving UNICEF support. Students use the funds for transportation to school and for much-needed extra classes that are critical to cover the curriculum and pass the national examinations.
- The UNICEF support gives financial relief to parents who are motivated to send their children to school but who struggle to do so, and who take on debt.
- The programme has included administrative costs for scholarship management committees to track and monitor the progress of scholarship recipients.
- The scholarship programme has made consistent efforts across all five provinces to recruit female students and achieve gender parity among recipients.
- The scholarship amount of US\$ 150 is an improvement over the MoEYS US\$ 90 scholarship, as the costing exercise revealed that students spent at least twice the UNICEF-supported amount (US\$ 290) on three items that are common to all students: clothing, supplies and extra classes.
- The scholarship's longer-term goal of helping train the next generation of teachers of ethnic minority backgrounds is realistic, as the majority of students (71 per cent in the focus groups) indicated that they would like to pursue a career in teaching.
- The scholarship is harmonized with MoEYS systems for selecting students and distributing funds, thereby avoiding the creation of parallel systems.

There is room for further improvement.

- MoEYS scholarships are never given at the start of the school year and are routinely delayed. As the selection of students is dependent on MoEYS systems, and as the payment of funds for *top-up* students is tied to the disbursement of MoEYS scholarships, UNICEF-supported scholarship recipients are also subject to the same delays as MoEYS scholarship students.
- Given that the student selection process does not begin until the start of the school year and the paperwork has to move from the school to offices at the district, provincial and central levels, the best case scenario for the timing of the delivery of the first tranche of the scholarship is late December or early January. This is too late for some students who need the funds to cover basic costs such as uniforms, supplies and transport.
- The scholarship amount of US\$ 150 covers only approximately half of the stated required needs of all students (clothing, supplies and extra classes).
- The scholarship flattens out variations in student needs by providing a uniform sum to all recipients. There is considerable variation in costs, depending on how far a student has to travel to school from remote areas. Students may need to buy a bicycle, pay for gasoline to travel by motorcycle, or pay room and board if they must live away from their parents.

- The scholarship does not cover all levels of upper secondary school, as only Grade 11 and 12 students are eligible. Grade 10 is currently not covered.
- Scholarship students are interested in attending teacher training colleges but will be financially unable to do so. Current UNICEF support only goes half way in achieving its goal of producing the next generation of teachers, as ethnic minority students who finish upper secondary schooling successfully still might not be able to attend teacher training college without additional support.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented below were shared and validated with MoEYS and other stakeholders at a validation meeting on 23 May 2018.

1. Prioritize timely delivery of scholarships

For school year 2017/18, UNICEF scholarships were delivered in January 2018. The MoEYS scholarships had yet to be transferred. Even though UNICEF's payment schedule is faster than the MoEYS scholarship, neither scholarship is transferred at the beginning of the school year. The delay in payment defeats the express purpose of providing students with funds to cover up-front costs of schooling, for example uniforms, school supplies or a bicycle. The MoEYS scholarships had not arrived four months after the start of the school year, and sometimes delays can even spill over into the next school year. As the UNICEF *top-up* scholarship is tied to the MoEYS scholarship, the two different types of UNICEF scholarship recipients are not receiving funds in a uniform manner.

The scholarship delivery system is set up in such a manner that means a delivery date in January, two months after the start of the school year, is considered a quick payment schedule. The scholarship selection process begins after the start of the new school year to prevent the inclusion of dropouts. It is an administrative challenge for schools to return unclaimed scholarship money, so schools want to guarantee that they only include students who are motivated to enrol in the new school year. A second cause of delay is that the government's fiscal year runs from January to December, whereas the school year runs from November to August. It seems that the majority of motivated recipients are not receiving scholarships at the start of the school year to avoid the risk, and associated administrative challenges, of including a small minority of students who might dropout.

The current system is failing students. **MoEYS and UNICEF must work on behalf of scholarship students and find an administrative solution immediately to achieve a goal that concerned parties agree on, that is, the timely payment of scholarships to students in need. A workshop with key stakeholders from central, provincial, district and school committees can be convened to examine the bottlenecks, understand the constraints at all levels, and work out a solution in a participatory manner.**

2. Increase the scholarship amount across the board

While this review could only produce rough estimates of the costs of schooling, it is notable that the cost categories were similar across six sites in three provinces. The cost implications of the shadow education system of extra classes must be taken seriously. **Extra classes are a necessary component of schooling, without which students can neither cover the full curriculum nor prepare to take the national examinations. This is true of all six schools included in our site visits.** If extra classes are included in the basic costs of schooling along with uniforms and school supplies, the US\$ 150 scholarships fall short of the total required, and the US\$ 90 scholarships even more so. In the absence of a complete overhaul of the educational system, at the minimum **MoEYS and UNICEF must include extra classes in their cost considerations and raise the scholarship amount to give all students an equal chance of improving learning outcomes.**

3. Vary scholarship amounts depending on specific student needs

The scholarships flatten out the considerable variation in student needs. Some students need a bicycle to travel to school, which involves a one-time cost, while others spend about US\$ 150 annually on gasoline for their motorbikes and parking. Some parents have spent US\$ 125 to US\$ 150 to build their children a dormitory on school premises. Students who live near the school need additional funds to cover food, drinking water and toiletries, which amount to costs in orders of magnitude more than the scholarship support. **MoEYS and UNICEF must consider the wide variation in the circumstances of students and provide support accordingly.**

4. Consider delivery mechanisms to individual student bank accounts

The focus groups revealed that the students are used to handling money. Many scholarship students already decide how to use the scholarship funds. Delivering to individual bank accounts could possibly speed up the process. WFP has successfully implemented scholarship programmes using mobile banking methods. MoEYS could further explore either this or similar mechanisms for implementation in the near future.

5. Provide scholarships to students to go to teacher training colleges

Scholarship recipients, particularly ethnic minority students, expressed a strong preference to become teachers. However, there may be financial constraints to their ability to pursue this option. As one of the goals of the scholarship programme is to train a cadre of teachers who can teach MLE, **a logical next step is to help motivated students go to teacher training colleges. UNICEF can extend scholarships of current recipients to attend teacher training colleges.**

6. Provide information to students on career paths

Students in focus groups were not aware of the steps they needed to take to achieve their career goals. For example, they did not know whether they needed to take entrance examinations, whether there were admission fees, where the colleges were located, or how many years of training were required. **MoEYS and UNICEF should consider organizing informational sessions in the current school year so that students have full information on available choices and can make informed decisions.**

7. Recognize parents who send their children to school

The household visits and interviews with parents were not only a window into the socioeconomic background of scholarship students, they also showed that parents were making sacrifices to send their children to school, while other parents in the same communities were making different choices. **UNICEF and MoEYS should consider organizing a community event where parents of graduating students are given a certificate or token gift in recognition of their efforts.** This could motivate other parents in the same communities to encourage their children to complete schooling.

8. Use the Education Sector Working Group to align scholarship modalities of different programmes

The current roster of available scholarships through UNICEF, MoEYS, ADB and Care complement each other well. They are also harmonized in their selection modality, as all are aligned with the government

system. However, more can be done to harmonize the scholarships. A significant difference is in the amount of support. MoEYS provides US\$ 90 per year, ADB provides US\$ 200 per year, UNICEF provides US\$ 150 per year, and Care provides US\$ 310 per year. Differences in amounts are appropriate for different levels of need, for example, more support for students who have to pay for room and board to go to school compared to daily commuters who use a bicycle, but not due to differences in donor preference. As all the scholarships are aligned with the government system, **MoEYS must take a lead role in harmonizing the scholarships. The Education Sector Working Group appears to be an appropriate forum to achieve this goal.**

Annex 1: Terms of Reference



United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Individual Consultancy:

Independent review of scholarship programme for children of ethnic minorities

Terms of Reference (1 October 2017)

1. Background and Rationale

Over the last few decades, Cambodia has seen a rapid increase in student enrolment in all education levels. Net student enrolment in primary education increased from 87 per cent in 2001/02 to 97 per cent in 2012/13,³¹ while at secondary education level, gross enrolments improved from 33 per cent in 2001/02 to 54 per cent in 2012/13. This progress was underpinned by a strong commitment to equity and inclusion in education prioritized in the Education Strategic Plan introduced from the early 2000s, stronger policymaking and planning processes at central and sub-national levels linked to the Education Strategic Plan implementation, and greater budget prioritization for the sector.

Despite these rapid improvements, student enrolment rates have stagnated in recent years, particularly at the secondary level where gross enrolment rates have remained at 55 per cent for the last three years. At both primary and secondary level, education is characterized by high repetition and dropout rates, with a large share of over-age students. For example, more than half of all lower secondary students (54 per cent) were still attending primary school in 2012.³² Lower secondary education student dropout rates have remained high, at approximately 20 per cent since 2007/08, and as a consequence, access to upper secondary education is even further constrained, with an urban net enrolment of 30 per cent and a rural net enrolment of just 14 per cent in 2015/16.

Among those most likely to miss out on formal education are the country’s ethnic minority populations. Cambodia’s ethnic minorities are mainly based in the five north-eastern provinces, the largest being Kuy, Tampuan, Jarai, Bunong, Kavet and Kreung, with over 200,000 native language speakers. The percentage of children from these groups who have never attended school is high, especially in Ratanakiri province, where 64 per cent of Cambodia’s ethnic minorities reside. Key factors for this lack of school attendance

³¹ All enrolment data is taken from the MoEYS Education Management and Information Statistics (EMIS) unless referenced otherwise.

³² UNICEF. 2017. Cambodia Out-of-School Children Report.

include: (i) high numbers of incomplete schools in rural areas; (ii) the historical absence of province-wide MLE for the majority of children who do not speak the national language of Khmer, the main language of instruction; and (iii) a lack of qualified MLE teachers.

To address the significant gaps in school attendance, MoEYS first introduced MLE in 2002, with the support of partners including CARE International and UNICEF. The MLE programme enables pre-primary and primary-age children from ethnic minorities to learn in their mother tongue, while being progressively introduced to Khmer language as they advance through their education. MoEYS also took care to establish the institutional framework for the MLE programme, with the development of the first Multilingual Education National Action Plan, enabling full institutionalization of MLE and its incremental expansion. Through this plan, the ministry has established clear development targets, including increasing the number of MLE pre-schools by 88 per cent and the number of MLE primary schools by 100 per cent by 2018. As a result, enrolments in MLE have increased significantly, with nearly 5,000 primary students enrolled in 2016, an increase of 22 per cent in one year.

While MLE is expanding access to some of the hardest-to-reach children, ensuring these children complete secondary education remains a challenge. Indeed, gross enrolment for lower secondary education in Ratanakiri province was 41 per cent in 2015/16, well below the national average of 55.7 per cent for the same period. In rural areas of this province, only 68 per cent of students transitioned to lower secondary school and only 11 per cent of students completed upper secondary education in 2015/16. These high student dropout rates are largely associated with the high opportunity costs of education. Opportunity costs of education are felt particularly strongly among families in the poorest quintiles, many of whom reside in the northeast of Cambodia. The World Bank's Cambodia Poverty Assessment (2013) found that economic considerations (the need to work or education costs) were major reasons for children not enrolling in school. The high opportunity costs of education are reflected in national statistics: the out-of-school rate for children in the poorest quintile, for example, is seven times that of the richest quintile. By age 16, more than half of children in the poorest quintile have left school.³³

Without children from ethnic minority communities completing a full course of education, there are few from ethnic minority groups able to pursue careers in teaching, MLE teaching in particular. A lack of qualified MLE teachers is already an obstacle to education for many children from ethnic minorities, as noted above. Thus, without targeted interventions addressing the causes of student dropout, swelling numbers of MLE students in the years to come will face a shortfall of qualified teachers to educate them.

One intervention for keeping children in school is the provision of scholarships. MoEYS has implemented a lower secondary education student scholarship programme since 2002 as part of its Education Strategic Plan pro-poor priority interventions to defray the cost of schooling for poor students. As part of the initiative, poor families receive a conditional cash transfer, provided their children enrol in school, pass school tests and have an 80 per cent school attendance record. Priority for scholarships is given to girls if there is gender disparity, and the academic performance of poor students is also taken into consideration. With new enabling legislation introduced in 2015, the scholarship scheme was expanded

³³ UNICEF, 2017, Cambodia Out-of-School Children Report.

to reach a large number of lower secondary students. The legislation targets poor students, ID Poor cardholders or populations with similar living standards.

The expansion of the lower secondary scholarship programme has seemingly had a positive effect on improving student attendance in school. One study (Cambodian Economic Association, 2015) simulating the effects of scholarships on the probability of drop out found that increased expenditure on education positively affected students' decision to stay in school. The simulation showed that with a scholarship of US\$ 90 for lower secondary-aged students, the probability of dropout reduced by over 10 percentage points, while with a scholarship of US\$ 135 the probability reduced by over 13 percentage points. Further expansion of the scholarship programme (for both primary and secondary education) is envisaged in the National Social Protection Policy Framework, prepared under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy and Finance and adopted by the Council of Ministers in March 2017. The policy framework, however, foresees a phased approach to expansion, with activities up to 2020 aimed at reinforcing the implementation mechanisms of the scholarship programmes and at the preparation of research for the eventual expansion of coverage and level of benefits.

In 2017, UNICEF, with funding from SIDA, supported MoEYS to provide additional scholarships for upper secondary students from ethnic minority groups in the five north-eastern provinces considered at risk of dropping out for financial reasons. Following a careful selection process, students from grades 11 and 12 received a scholarship of US\$ 150 twice per year, partially funded through the MoEYS programme budget and topped up with funds from UNICEF.³⁴ In coordination with the MoEYS General Secondary Education Department, provincial and district authorities, scholarship recipients are monitored to ensure compliance with agreed conditions. In 2016/17, 521 students (243 girls) from ethnic minority communities received the joint MoEYS-UNICEF scholarship support. In the school year 2017/18, a second cohort of students will be selected to receive MoEYS-UNICEF scholarship support for a total number of 1,090 students (539 girls).

It is anticipated that this scholarship programme will help ensure that some of the hardest-to-reach children are able to stay in school and complete a full course of education. Furthermore, by ensuring students from ethnic minority backgrounds complete their formal education, it is envisioned that a larger pool of graduates will pursue teaching as a career in their communities, given their niche linguistic skills. If this assumption proves correct, the sustainability of the MLE programme will be secured for future generations.

2. Purpose of the Review *(how the review will be used)*

The purpose of this review is to foster learning among MoEYS and UNICEF, with a view to understand the extent to which the scholarship programme is effectively used by students and their families and whether it is contributing to reducing dropout rates among children from ethnic minority groups. UNICEF needs to continually ensure that programmes are effective to the government, development

³⁴ While MoEYS provides US\$ 90, UNICEF contributes an additional US\$ 60 to equal US\$ 150. There are, therefore, two streams of scholarships for students: a MoEYS scholarship of US\$ 90 and a separate MoEYS-UNICEF scholarship of US\$ 150. These two streams are being provided to different students simultaneously. Both are provided twice per year. CARE International Cambodia is also providing scholarships to a separate stream of students from ethnic minorities in the northeast of Cambodia.

partners and the general public, implying a secondary focus on accountability as well as learning within this review. The review will be managed by the Education Section within UNICEF, but externally conducted by an independent, qualified consultant. It is primarily intended for internal consumption and action, with MoEYS and UNICEF as the main users, and other potential users (including the Ministry of Economy and Finance and other development partners).

3. Objectives (*what the review will answer*)

To achieve this purpose, the objectives of the review will be:

- Determine, as systematically and objectively as possible, the overall effectiveness of the MoEYS-UNICEF scholarship programme on the retention and academic performance of ethnic minority students (i.e., attendance, dropout and exam results for girls and boys).
- Assess the effectiveness of the scholarship in ways it is perceived by respondents in leading students from ethnic minority groups to consider teaching as a profession and identify opportunities to further support ethnic minority students to pursue MLE teaching.
- Examine how the scholarship programme complements or overlaps with other similar scholarships provided by MoEYS and other development partners, such as CARE International.
- Provide a comparative assessment of the functionality of each scholarship programme (i.e., management structure, time taken to select students, targeting and the mode of delivery of each scholarship programme, costing, utilization) and potential opportunities for harmonization into a unified approach.

The recommendations should be designed to inform MoEYS and UNICEF scholarship support from 2018 onwards.

4. Scope of Work

The review will not constitute a formal full-scale evaluation of the full range of UNICEF's work. Rather, it will focus narrowly on the effectiveness of the scholarship programme for children of ethnic minorities implemented since November 2016 in the five north-eastern provinces and provide a comparative assessment with other programmes. Similarly, the review will not aim to measure impact in terms of whether or not there is a causal link between the scholarship programme and the programme outcomes, nor long-term effects.

Although not an evaluation, the review will take an evaluative approach according to the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) norms and standards³⁵ and UNICEF's Evaluation Policy.³⁶ The review will also aim for maximum independence, impartiality and objectivity so as to generate credible findings and recommendations.

5. Primary Review Questions

The primary research questions indicatively cover the following aspects:

- Based on the available data, how far has the scholarship programme contributed to: (i) school retention; (2) academic performance; and (3) considering teaching as a profession for ethnic minority students?

³⁵ <http://uneval.org/>

³⁶ https://www.unicef.org/about/execboard/files/2013-14-Revised_Evaluation_Policy_UNICEF-18Apr13.pdf

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarship programme for children of ethnic minorities?
- Are there any factors facilitating or hindering the utilization of the scholarship to support children of ethnic minorities in actual practice (e.g., access to bank accounts)?
- To what extent does the scholarship programme complement, add value to and/or overlap with other scholarships supported by MoEYS or other development partners?
- What are the opportunities for harmonization of the approach for future sustainability?

One of the key tasks to be initiated at the proposal stage will be to interrogate these questions and determine if all key issues have been given due prominence. Improvements and/or refinements to the draft questions may be offered at the proposal stage, however the expectation is that the inception process will yield to the final set of review questions.

6. Approach and Methodology

Based on the objectives above, this section indicates a possible approach, methods and processes for the review. Methodological rigour will be given significant consideration in the assessment of proposals. Hence applicants are invited to interrogate the approach and methodology proffered in the Terms of Reference and improve on it, or propose an approach they deem more appropriate. Applicants are encouraged to also demonstrate methodological expertise in reviewing scholarship programmes.

It is expected that the review will employ a mixed-methods approach and follow the following phases:

- 1) Consult with national and sub-national education authorities, scholarship management committees and development partners to assess the effectiveness of scholarship implementation by MoEYS, MoEYS-UNICEF, and other development partners; and opportunities to strengthen implementation.
- 2) Meet with recipients of the scholarship, their families, school communities, district, provincial and national education authorities, as well as NGO partners to assess the effectiveness of the scholarship programme for ethnic minorities.
- 3) Provide preliminary feedback to UNICEF and MoEYS staff on the initial results of the MoEYS-UNICEF scholarship programme, the effectiveness of implementation and opportunities to strengthen it, as well as its future sustainability.
- 4) Provide findings on MoEYS-UNICEF scholarship effectiveness and recommendations to strengthen support to ethnic minority students.

At a minimum, the review will draw on the following methods:

- Desk review of programme documents and other relevant data
- Review and analysis of secondary quantitative data
- Key Informant Interviews (including MoEYS, POEs, District Offices of Education, scholarship management committees at the national and sub-national level, etc.)
- Focus groups with students and their parents
- Most-significant change
- Cost-effectiveness analysis.

The review is expected to purposively sample a selection of 27 schools supported by the scholarship programme for key informant interviews and focus groups. The sampling criteria and specific schools

will be determined during the inception phase of the review, but at a minimum they should reflect, for instance, diversity in ethnicity, language and socioeconomic status.

The review should incorporate equity, gender equality and human rights considerations and be based on Results Based Management principles. UNICEF will provide background documents providing further detail on how this can be achieved, including the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation and Data Collection and Analysis and UNICEF's Evaluation Reporting Standards.³⁷

7. Qualifications or Specialized Knowledge/Experience Required

The review is expected to be conducted by an independent consultant, with support from a translator if needed, to be recruited by the consultant.

Qualifications and Experience

- Advanced university degree in education, social sciences, international development or related technical field in relation to scholarship programmes
- At least seven years of professional work experience in education, social protection or other related discipline; particularly in inclusive education
- Experience in conducting evidence-based analysis using mixed-method approaches
- Experience working with the Cambodian Government and counterparts providing technical support on equity-based interventions
- Experience working with UN or other international or national development organizations
- Demonstrated experience providing written inputs into final reports
- Demonstrated experience in equity, gender equality and human rights analysis is a distinct advantage.

Competencies, Knowledge and Skills

- Familiarity with the education sector in Cambodia and MoEYS policies and programmes, including MLE strongly preferred
- Strong interpersonal skills, including the ability to work in a multi-cultural environment and establish harmonious and effective working relationships, both within and outside the work place
- Excellent command of English, including report writing skills

8. Location

The consultant will need to work in Cambodia for the duration of the assignment. S/he will work closely with education colleagues and MoEYS officials at national and sub-national levels. Thus, the consultant will need to work both within Phnom Penh and in the north-eastern provinces. A maximum of 10 travel days are required to complete the deliverables attached to this assignment.

9. Duration

The period of the consultancy is 35 days, with an expected commencement date of 1 December 2017 until 28 February 2018.

10. Deliverables

³⁷ <http://childethics.com/>

- 1) Inception report (in English), including a literature review of key documents,³⁸ detailing proposed methodology, key research questions, data collection tools, work plan for completion of deliverables and travel plan (maximum 15,000 words, excluding annexes). Annexes may contain references, consultation list, supporting documents relating to methodology, data collection tools (to be translated in Khmer), etc.
- 2) Draft and Final Report (in English) assessing scholarship effectiveness and implementation, including recommendations for UNICEF and MoEYS in strengthening scholarship interventions for ethnic minority students (maximum of 25,000 words, including an Executive Summary in both English and Khmer, excluding annexes).
- 3) Preparation of a succinct PowerPoint (in English and Khmer) presentation (maximum 20 slides) outlining initial findings and recommendations from the review; and presentation and participation in a dissemination meeting. The PowerPoint presentation will need to be updated for the final dissemination meeting with MoEYS, UNICEF and other development partners.

11. Reporting Requirements

As per deliverable above.

12. Payment Schedule linked to Deliverables

1st Payment for satisfactory completion of deliverable 1: 30 per cent of assignment fee

2nd Payment for satisfactory completion of deliverable 2: 60 per cent of assignment fee

3rd Payment for satisfactory completion of deliverable 3: 10 per cent of assignment fee.

13. Administrative Issues

- The consultant will need to travel to provinces in the north-east of Cambodia for a maximum of 10 days, and will be responsible for all travel arrangements
- The consultant will need to have his/her own working space and his/her own resources and facilities, such as laptop, access to printer, etc.
- The consultant will be expected to hire any needed translation support while in country, including during travel to provinces in the northeast.

14. Contract Supervisor

Under the immediate supervision of UNICEF Cambodia's Education Specialist (review manager) and under the overall direction of UNICEF's Chief of Education, the consultant will work closely with the General Secondary Education Department, the Department of Policy, and provincial and district offices of education in the five north-eastern provinces, UNICEF staff in Education, Social Inclusion and Governance, and NGO partners working in education in north-eastern Cambodia.

³⁸ MoEYS Department of Policy is finaling a review of the primary education scholarship programme containing recommendations for improvement. The review findings and recommendations have not yet been shared, however every effort should be made by the consultant, under UNICEF direction, to consult with the Department of Policy at the beginning of this assignment.

The review manager will consult on all major decisions with three representatives from the UNICEF Research and Evaluation Steering Committee. The role of the Research and Evaluation Committee will be to help further bolster the utility of the review by advising the review manager and the UNICEF Chief of Education of the overall strategic direction of the exercise and on other specific issues in relation to its relevance and credibility.

15. Penalties for Underperformance

Payment of fees to the contractor under this contract, including each instalment or periodic payment (if any), is subject to the contractor's full and complete performance of his or her obligations under this contract, with regard to such payment to UNICEF's satisfaction, and UNICEF's certification to that effect.

Performance indicators: Consultant's performance will be evaluated against the following criteria: timeliness, quality and relevance/feasibility of recommendations for UNICEF Cambodia.

16. Termination of Contract

This contract may be terminated by either party before its specified termination date by giving notice in writing to the other party. The period of notice shall be five (5) business days (in the UNICEF office engaging the contractor) in the case of contracts for a total period of less than two (2) months and fourteen (14) business days (in the UNICEF office engaging the contractor) in the case of contracts for a longer period; provided however that in the event of termination on the grounds of impropriety or other misconduct by the contractor (including but not limited to breach by the contractor of relevant UNICEF policies, procedures and administrative instructions), UNICEF shall be entitled to terminate the contract without notice.

17. Submission of Applications

Interested candidates are kindly requested to apply and upload the following documents to:

<http://www.unicef.org/about/employ/>

- Letter of Interest (cover letter) with indication of applicant's ability and availability to conduct the work, including articulation of an approach to the work. In the cover letter, the applicant should clearly identify any potential ethical issues and approaches, as well as the processes for ethical review and oversight of the review process
- CV or resume
- Example of applicant's performance evaluation reports or references of similar consultancy assignments (if available)
- Financial proposal (or expectation fee from the applicant): Lump-sum offer with the cost breakdown: consultancy fee, travel costs (economy class), per-diem to cover lodging, meals, translation and any other cost related to the consultant's stay in Phnom Penh, including transport inside/outside the city as per work assignment. The international travel (if applicant is outside Cambodia) shall be based on the most direct economy fare.

18. Assessment Criteria

A two-stage procedure shall be utilized in evaluating the candidates, with evaluation of the technical qualifications being completed prior to any price proposal being compared.

The contract shall be awarded to the candidate obtaining the highest combined technical and financial scores, subject to the satisfactory result of the verification interview.

NOTE: For evaluation and selection method, the Cumulative Analysis Method (weight combined score method) shall be used for this recruitment:

- a) Technical qualification (max 100 points), weight: 70 per cent
 - Education (20 points)
 - Relevant work experience (20 points)
 - Competencies, knowledge and skills (20 points)
 - Quality of past work (e.g. relevant previous written work) (20 points)

- b) Financial proposal (max 100 points), weight: 30 per cent
 - The maximum number of points shall be allotted to the lowest financial proposal that is evaluated and compared among those technical qualified candidates who have attained a minimum 60 points score in the technical evaluation. Other financial proposals will receive points in inverse proportion to the lowest price.

The contract shall be awarded to the candidate obtaining the highest combined technical and financial scores, subject to the satisfactory result of the verification interview.

Annex 2: Population and number of scholarship recipients from each ethnic minority in five north-eastern provinces

Province	Total population of province ³⁹	Ethnic minority group	Number of scholarship recipients from each ethnic minority group in the 2016/17 school year
Kratie	344,195	Phnong	17
		Stieng	15
		Kuoy	10
		Khraol	1
Preah Vihear	235,370	Kuoy	76
		Tumpuon	1
		Por	1
Ratanakiri	183,699	Tumpuon	74
		Kroeung	63
		Jorai	39
		Prov	30
		Kaveth	3
		Kachak	2
Stung Treng	122,791	Kuoy	37
		Jarai	8
		Khe	3
		Kaveth	1
		Tumpuon	1
Mondulkiri	72,680	Phnong	138

³⁹ http://www.stat.go.jp/info/meetings/cambodia/pdf/ci_fn02.pdf

Annex 3: Total number of schools included in the UNICEF scholarship programme and number of schools receiving both types of UNICEF scholarship in 2017/18

Province	Number of schools included in programme	Number of schools receiving scholarships under both NPB⁴⁰ + PB⁴¹ programmes
Ratanakiri	7	1
Preah Vihear	6	3
Stung Treng	6	2
Kratie	5	3
Mondulkiri	5	2

⁴⁰ NPB refers to non-programme budget. It refers to ethnic minority students who received scholarship assistance under the UNICEF-supported scholarship programme via MoEYS, of US\$ 150 per school year.

⁴¹ PB refers to poor students who received scholarship assistance from the government scholarship programme US\$ 90 per school year. UNICEF tops up US\$ 60/ per year to the students in this category.

Annex 4: Total number of students receiving UNICEF scholarships, and total number of female students receiving scholarships in Grades 11 and 12 combined in school year 2017/18

Province	Number of students receiving scholarships (including Grades 11 and 12)	Number of female students (including Grades 11 and 12)
Ratanakiri	451	202
Mondulkiri	263	142
Preah Vihear	152	93
Stung Treng	124	58
Kratie	105	51

Annex 5: Number of UNICEF full and top-up scholarship recipients in schools selected for site visits

	Province	Urban or rural	Number of full UNICEF scholarship recipients	Number of top-up UNICEF scholarship recipients
1.	Ratanakiri	Urban	182	50
2.	Ratanakiri	Rural	9	0
3.	Mondulkiri	Urban	89	34
4.	Mondulkiri	Rural	9	19
5.	Preah Vihear	Urban	47	9
6.	Preah Vihear	Rural	30	6