Success of the Textbook Monitoring Project in Cambodia Using a Social Accountability Framework

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Table of Contents

Introduction

The Khmer Institute for National Development (KIND), founded in 2003, aims to promote good governance in state institutions and defend violations against the poor, marginalized, excluded, and/or vulnerable people. To achieve this, KIND works to advocate and integrate these groups into social participation.

The Affiliate Network for Social Accountability-East Asia and the Pacific (ANSA-EAP), founded in 2008, aims to promote citizen monitoring of government performance and protection of rights and welfare of communities. This involves monitoring of the quality of public service delivery and transparency of public transaction. ANSA-EAP achieves this through the use of programs of networking, research and knowledge management, capacity building, information awareness, and resource mobilization.

To promote the improvement of the quality of education, KIND collaborated with ANSA-EAP, to form the project Feedback for Improving the Quality of Education (FIQE). During this two and a half year project, KIND and ANSA-EAP used three social accountability tools to learn more on the use of the national budget expense for textbook publication and distribution. ANSA-EAP provided resources through their network fellow and network associate that joined as lead project coordinators in facilitating and supporting KIND staff in conducting PETS, CRC, and Social Audit tools.

The objectives of FIQE were to:

- Review the existing law, policy, and development plan of MoEYS related to the Education Sector Support Program
- Conduct research on how the national budget transact for textbook publication at the national level through PETS
- Study the result of textbook distribution by the MoEYS in the city and three provinces through CRC and Social Audit
- Advocate for improving education through public problem solving session, stakeholders building, and media use

With no experience of conducting qualitative research, and little experience of the usage of social accountability tools and survey conducting, KIND implemented the project under a "learning by doing" methodology; ultimately building internal capability within the KIND staff. Technical expertise was provided by the donor and the regional team provided by ANSA-EAP. Financial support was provided by USAID, under the Building Bridges for Better Spending in SouthEast Asia Program.

The purpose of this tool-kit is to present the methodology, findings and recommendations obtained by KIND and ANSA-EAP through using social accountability tools in relation to textbook monitoring; specifically the delivery, distribution and quality of textbooks to upper secondary schools in Cambodia.

This tool-kit also explores the benefits, risks and importance of social accountability and the use of social accountability tools in Cambodia and within the Cambodian context. The report ends with an outline of the tangible results of the project as well as future recommendations for social accountability research in Cambodia. It is intended that this is read in conjunction with the PETs, CRC and Social Audit Reports on the textbook monitoring project.

List of Abbreviations

- ANSA-EAP Affiliated Network for Social Accountability — East Asia Pacific
- CRC Citizen Report Card
- CISA Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability
- CICA Cambodia's Independent Civil Servants Association
- DCD Department of Curriculum Development
- DOE District Office of Education
- DFGG Demand For Good Governance
- ESP Education Strategic Plan
- FGD Focus Group Discussion
- GRLC Governance Resource Learning Center (GRLC)
- KIND Khmer Institute for National Development
- KYA Khmer Youth Association
- MoEYS Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport
- NEP NGO Education Partnership
- PDE Provincial Departments of Education
- PDP Center People Center for Development and Peace
- PDH Publishing and Distribution House
- TSWG Core Textbook Supply Sub-Technical Working Group

Acknowledgement

About USAID: The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent federal agency that provides economic, development, and humanitarian assistance around the world in support of the foreign policy goals of the United States. Since 1961 USAID has been the principal U.S. agency to extend assistance to countries recovering from disaster, trying to escape poverty, and engaging in democratic reforms.

Social Accountability

ANSA-EAP defines social accountability as actions and mechanisms initiated by citizen groups to hold public officials, politicians, and service providers to account for their conduct and performance in terms of delivering services, improving people's welfare and protecting people's rights.[1]

There is a growing belief that civic engagement is key to keeping governments accountable for their services, behaviors and actions; overall reducing corruption and driving democratic practices. One of the ways in which to achieve this is through actively encouraging, empowering and engaging the people in holding governments responsible and accountable for the services they are meant to provide. This can be done through using specific research methods, tools and creating platforms for civic engagement

Social Accountability in the Cambodian Context

Social accountability is a relatively new concept in Cambodia; a country where there has been minimal transparency and accountability in relation to the actions, services and behaviors of the government towards civilians.

In developing countries in particular, where records are hard to find, corruption is high, transparency poor and where the people feel disempowered; social accountability is a powerful approach in reducing poverty and in creating sustainable development.

Like many developing countries Cambodia has not historically had a strong tradition of civic engagement; the concept of civic engagement with the government is both new and possibly anxiety producing in much of the civilian population.

Roles and Responsibilities in Social Accountability

Who	What	Responsibilities
Civil Society	NGO's, Development Partners	• Obtain and analyze information • Give a voice to the people • Elicit a response from the government
The Public	All people, citizens of Cambodia	• Awareness of their rights • Willingness to act on those rights • Willingness to actively seek out accountability from the public service /government
Government / Public Service	Public Service providers Government departments Ministers and Officials	• Willingness to be held accountable for services • Willingness to respond to the needs of the public • Willingness to be transparent • Willingness to work with

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[1] A Manual for Trainers on Social Accountability, ANSA-EAP, 2010

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has made significant strides to encourage good governance and improve public service delivery; primarily through actively initiating national decentralization in order to develop democratic, participatory, accountable and effective institutions of government. However, neutral third-parties, such as NGO's and development partners will continue play a significant role in providing the social groundwork in empowering the public in driving accountability of public service providers and reducing corruption

Risks and Benefits of Social Accountability

With any social accountability initiative; the risks and benefits need to be considered within the context of the government, environment and culture where the initiative is being driven. These are particularly important when considering an approach, analyzing results and developing recommendations.

Risks to consider are the stability of the government and the possibility of conflict, a lack of true buy-in by the government (political will), focusing on the wrong target population (excluding minorities and focusing on the elite) which will capture inaccurate results and raising impossible or unrealistic expectations amongst the citizens.

While the benefits to social accountability are considerable; the risks must be analyzed and measures put in place to ensure the right target audience is captured, that the parties involved are themselves free of corruption and bias, and that the approach used is constructive and solution driven.

Social Accountability in Practice

While there are a number of social research tools available which promote social accountability, three tools were chosen to specifically address the Textbook monitoring project by KIND and ANSA-EAP. These three tools were the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) and CRC (Citizen Report Card); both of which were used to create civic engagement and foster discussion using a Social Audit.

Diagram of Social Accountability Framework used in the Textbook Monitoring Project, KIND and ANSA-EAP
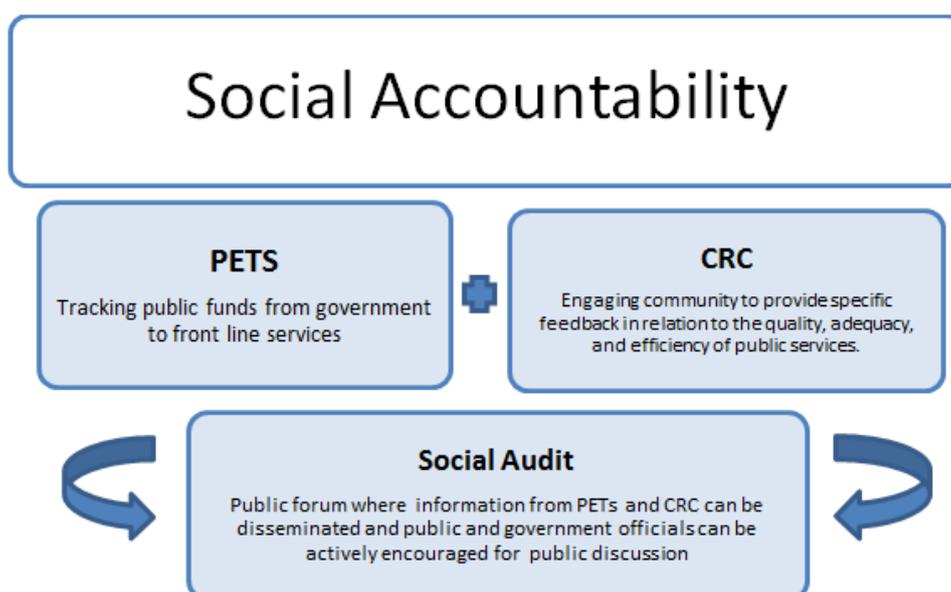
Social Accountability and Textbook Monitoring

By 2030 the Royal Government of Cambodia (RCG) aims to transition the country from a lower-middle income economy to an upper-middle income economy; and to a developed country by 2050. The success of this partially relies on the Cambodian people being able to have access to quality education.

In Cambodia, education is funded through two main sources; government funds and development partners. The Enhancing Education quality Project (EEQP) is a project with funding provided through a grand provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The project has three main target areas:

1. Education system management and development;
2. Teacher professional development; and
3. Strengthening secondary education

An important tool for improving secondary education is through the appropriate use and distribution of textbooks. The Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) is the agency in charge of the EEQP, and carries out these responsibilities under the auspices of its Department of Curriculum Development Department (DCD). The DCD is responsible for the quality and distribution of textbooks.

The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2009-2013, developed by the MoEYS developed an Education Books Policy and Guild lines for the development of Textbook Prescriptions. One of the mandates identified include 2 new textbook ratios: 1 textbook to 2 students in grades 10-12 in urban areas and 1 textbook to 1 student in grades 10-12 in remote areas. Subsequently the RCG has been allocating a significant amount of the national budget towards textbooks in public schools. In 2012, the DCD planned to distribute 157,595 students' textbooks for upper secondary schools to the areas of Phnom Penh, Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu and Kampot.

To measure the effectiveness in textbook management, MoEYS and the DCD developed a textbook mechanism in 2012 to ensure the transparency in procurement and distribution of textbooks to students. The Publishing and Distribution House (PDH) is the single semi-autonomous state institution that provides the publishing and delivery service of textbooks.

The textbook monitoring project looked to establish the success of textbook distribution across secondary schools in Cambodia. The methodology used investigated the distribution and trail of public funds (PETS), citizen satisfaction with the service (CRC) and presenting the findings to a social forum to engage civic and government communication and transparency (Social Audit).
Each of these processes are further explained below with the methodology, results and recommendations.

Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS)

The PETs is a social accountability tool used for the tracking the flow of public resources from the highest levels of government through to the front line service provider. While the implementation of using a tool like PETs can be challenging in the Cambodian environment; the results are tangible and supports the accountability of officials towards the community while promoting transparency and the overall reduction of corruption.

KIND and ANSA-EAP used the PETs to track the funds allocated towards the textbook program by evaluating the performance of the Department of Curriculum Development (DCD). DCD is responsible for monitoring the distribution from the Publishing and Distribution House (PDH) directly to the schools

In order to track the flow of funds a number of research methods were employed by KIND and ANSA-EAP using the PETs methodology. A series of qualitative and quantitate interviews were conducted targeting various stakeholders. These included representatives from the DCD, PDH and the government in relation to the funds allocation and planning of the textbook program, as well as school principals, councillors and teachers in relation to the flow of textbooks from PDH to the schools themselves.

Results	Recommendations
- Delivery made through DOE required payment by the school representative - No clarification on the timing or quantity of books being delivered - Lack of accountability and verification of deliveries - Sale of textbooks in markets of surveyed districts - Lack of engagement and involvement of community	- Quicker approval and improvement of Ministry of Education budget by Ministry of Economy and Finance - Ministry of Education should investigate and predict any future problems in relation to textbook distribution and publication - Ministry of Education should establish greater policies and stricter controls around contractual obligations with venders - Minimum of two upper secondary school representative should document the arrival of textbook deliveries - A Hotline should be set up and published on the textbooks so any irregularities can be reported and tracked - The student to textbook ratio should be revised to be 1/1 in all subjects and all locations - The DCD should take a more active role in auditing the arrival of textbooks across Cambodia - There should be stricter enforcement of the copyright law

Source: Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) report, KIND and ANSA-EAP 2013

A Citizen Report Card (CRC)

The Citizen Report Card (CRC) is designed to provide public agencies with information from users of public services so they are able to identify strengths and weaknesses in their services. The purpose of the CRC used by KIND and ANSA-EAP was to specifically investigate the effectiveness of the distribution of textbooks from the school to the student.

The CRC was conducted using both qualitative and quantitative surveys in the field. The surveys investigated four specific areas of textbook distribution: Timing of arrival, Availability and Accessibility, Quality, Cost. In the study, 489 randomly selected students were interviewed from 33 Upper secondary schools in 15 districts across the City of Phnom Penh and the provinces of Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, and Kampot.

Results	Recommendations
- Poorly regulated distribution an no clear definitions around the distribution from school to student 61% of students did not receive textbook in time - There are not enough textbooks available to students in each school (Some students reported they share books with 1,2,3 or more other students) - Textbooks distributed through the state can be found in markets across Cambodia, often at highly inflated prices - Textbooks are of poor quality, with many mistakes 22.66% of students were required to pay a fee to borrow a book from the school	- Implement a monitoring mechanism for textbook distribution - Investigate underground textbook rental fees - Implement a program disseminating information about the Education Strategic Plan to students; informing students of their rights - Consider an open bidding process for textbook contracts to create competition; leading to improved quality of textbooks - Improve management of textbooks belonging to the state to ensure they are not leaked to the black market

Source: Citizen Report Card (CRC) report, KIND and ANSA-EAP, 2014

Social Audit (SA)

The Social Audit was designed to increase the dialogue between the service providers in the education sector, upper secondary school students, and stakeholders in the city and provinces on the students' need and textbooks. The dialogue relied on the information gathered through the use of the PETs and the CRC and covered four issues regarding textbooks; the time to receive textbooks from the school, accessibility and availability of textbooks to students, textbook quality and cost to borrow textbooks from school and buy from the market.

During May-June, 2014, four Social Audits were conducted in the capital city of Phnom Penh and provinces of Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu and Kampot in relation to textbook monitoring. There were a total of 213 participants, including officers from the MoEYS, City/Provincial Department of Education and District Office of Education, upper secondary school teachers and students, parents and stakeholders.

The social audit process included the development of an agenda and the identification of the appropriate stakeholders. During the actual audits themselves, participants were divided into four groups tasked with one of the four identified issues. After a period of group discussion, each group presented back their key findings; followed by time for questions and answers, as well as tangible recommendations for improvement.

Results	Recommendations
• Similar findings as per the CRC and the PETs results in relation to timing and distribution of textbooks • Libraries were generally inaccessible much beyond one or two days per week with a lack of resources available to students • The textbooks were inaccurate, poorly written and often had mistakes across multiple subjects • The outline of the curriculum did not follow the structure of the textbooks • Students were often required to pay for textbooks, or pay a lending fee to the library	• MoEYS should strengthen the textbook quality monitoring system to ensure relevant stakeholders are consulted to improve the quality of textbooks prior to printing • MoEYS should strengthen the implementation of TSWG's work to ensure that it works efficiently • Textbook policy should be amended to a ratio between student and textbook of 1:1 for all areas in all subjects for high school students • MoEYS should increase textbooks provisions for libraries and ensure that it opened and easy for students to conduct research • MoEYS should urge the education officers at all level to implement the textbook guideline efficiency.

Source: Social Audit Report, KIND and ANSA-EAP 2014

Results and Impact of the Textbook Monitoring Project

One of the challenges in Cambodia is in establishing, implementing and driving tangible improvement programs when issues are identified across various sectors. Following the distribution and dissemination of the published findings and recommendations of the PETs and CRC, KIND and ANSA-EAP have received significant and positive responses from the Cambodian government to improve the distribution, quality and monitoring of textbooks for secondary education.

These initiatives include two official statements made on January 13 2014 where MoEYS publically announced that stealing and selling state owned textbooks would be considered a criminal offence. At the same time, they are investigating how the textbooks had been leaked into the market in the first place. MoEYS also requested the cooperation of both the MOI and local and provincial authorities to support the crackdown on textbook theft and illegal sales. MoEYS is also looking to MOI to partner with them on driving policy change at both national and local level (See Appendix 5 for copies of the statements).

On April 21, 2014, MoEYS appointed a Core Textbooks Supply Sub-Technical Working Group (TSWG) to manage the supply and monitor textbook distribution for public schools. This group consists of 20 members who represent MoEYS, NGO's, development partners and Education Development.

Finally, on May 12, 2014, a Textbook Guideline was developed by MoEYS. This guideline is intended to manage and develop textbook planning, publishing, and distribution by identifying specific tasks, responsibilities and roles that are to be played by education officers and school Principals. Following the publication of this guideline, training was provided to various impacted stakeholders in both Phnom Penh and Provincial departments.

At the time of the publication of this document, the Social Audit report has not yet been published and disseminated to the stakeholders. However it is expected that through the already promising results described above, that this will only further support the existing recommendations.

Official Government Response to the public to stop illegal selling of textbooks

Key Lessons Learned

The textbook monitoring project served two purposes; to investigate the distribution and delivery of textbooks to upper secondary schools and to build knowledge and capability in social accountability within Cambodia. The methodology used was underpinned through "learning by doing" and involved a partnership approach between KIND, ANSA-EAP and the donor and the government.

Contextualizing the Methodology

The approach between the CSO, the government and the public is important to consider; and a diplomatic, non-biased approach is important in ensuring that the information gathered is accurate, recommendations are realistic and relationships are constructive and well maintained. For social accountability tools to be successful; they must be adapted to the environment that they are being used in.

In this project, training the KIND researchers in how to use social accountability tools also involved learning how to extract information, create a safe environment for honest responses and encouraging diplomatic and constructive discussion.

Role of the Media

The role of the media played a significant part in driving the success of the project; using radio outlets, print media and online media as well as social media campaigns ensured forums for distributing the findings of the research as well as encouraging the public to participate and raise concerns. Other media involvement included press releases, and direct marketing campaigns (See Appendices 1, 2, 3)

In order to further social accountability in relation to education in Cambodia, KIND and ANSA-EAP conduct a weekly radio program called "Social Mirror - We Demand" which allows for the public, government officials and experts within the field to discuss current issues and develop recommendations for improvement. This has provided an important platform for the discussion around the textbook project results.

KIND and ANSA-EAP also held a national conference in February 2014 where multiple NGO's, government officials and ministers participated in discussion around how to increase integrity and quality of education in Cambodia. This served an important venue for further recommendations in this sector, as well as discussing the results of the social accountability tools findings (See Appendix 4).

Future Recommendations

While KIND and ANSA-EAP have already seen tangible initiatives and improvements driven by MoEYS; further monitoring and development of textbook distribution and quality must continue to be undertaken. While the capacity to do this will always be influenced by available funding; additional initiatives to monitor improvement will continue to be discussed on a year on year basis by KIND an ANSA-EAP.

What the textbook monitoring project has shown is that by using social accountability methods of investigation and adapting them to the Cambodian culture and environment in tangible results for political reform and greater transparency andND and ANSA-EAP.

References
- http://web.worldbank.org/
- http://www.citizenreportcard.com/
- Textbook policy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) March, 2012
- Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) report, KIND and ANSA-EAP 2013
- Social Audit Report, KIND and ANSA-EAP 2014
- Citizen Report Card (CRC) report, KIND and ANSA-EAP, 2014
- Rectangular Strategy" for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase III of Royal Government of Cambodia, September, 2013
- A Manual for Trainers on Social Accountability, ANSA-EAP, 2010

Appendix 1

Snapshot of Media Campaign for PETS

Print Newspaper:

Radio and Press Releases:

Appendix 2

Snapshot of Media Campaign for CRC
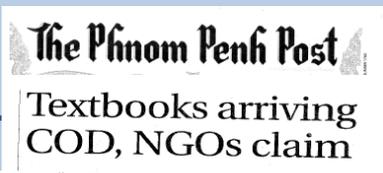
Print Newspaper:

Radio and Press Releases:
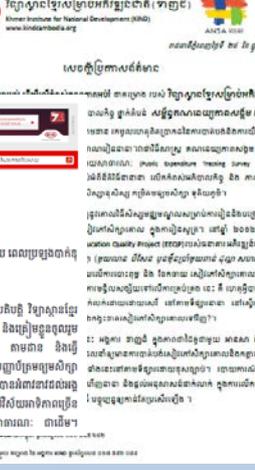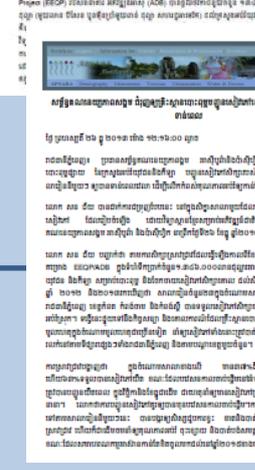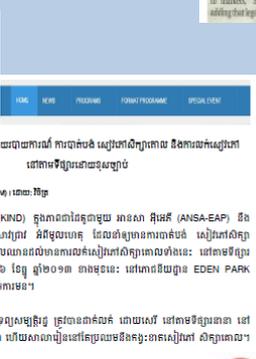
Appendix 3

Snapshot of Media Campaign for SA

Print Newspaper: SA

Radio and Press Releases:
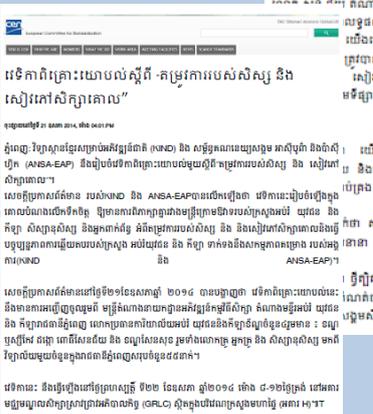
Appendix 4

National Conference – "Promoting Integrity to Strength the quality of Education in Cambodia",
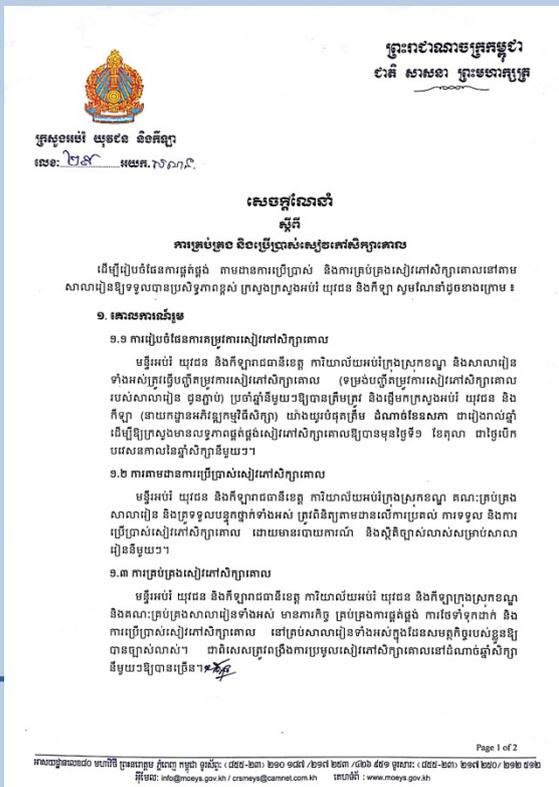**February 2014**

Appendix 5

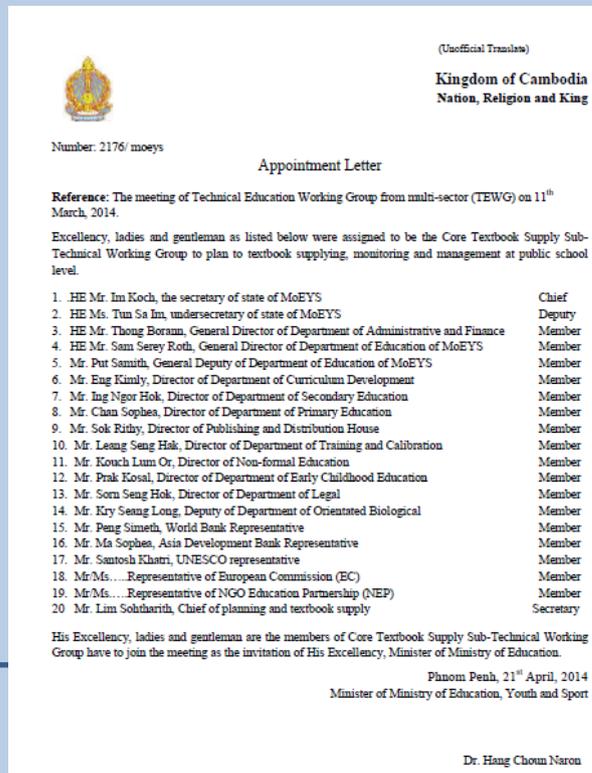# Official Government Response
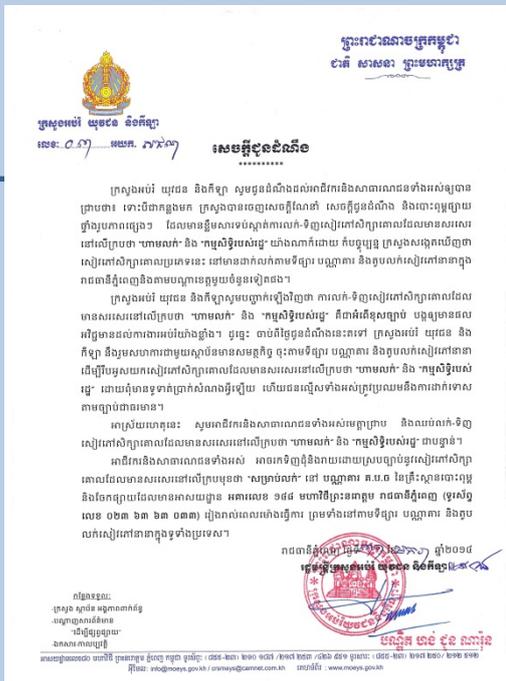
Official letter from MoEYS stopping the illegal sale of state property textbooks
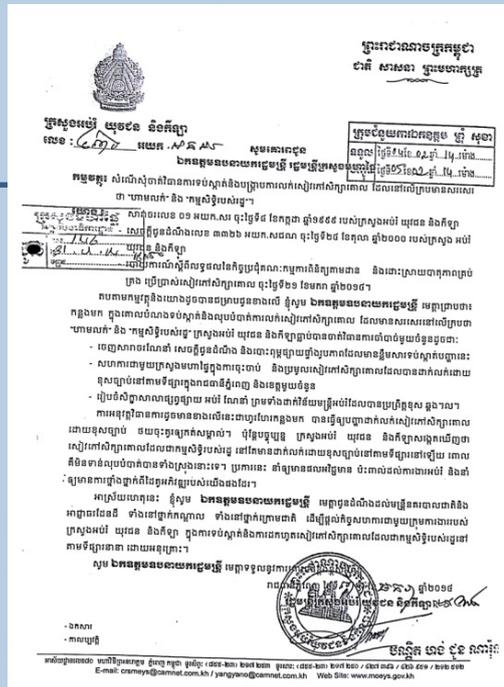
Official letter from MoEYS to MOI asking for collaboration to reduce illegal sales of textbooks

Official Letter from MoEYS regarding the changes to textbook guidelines in regards to distribution and delivery

Letter of appointment for the Core Textbook Supply Sub-Technical Working Group