

# Harnessing CSR towards Education for All

## *A Cambodia Case Study*

May 2014





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## Partner Organisations

**This Life Cambodia (TLC)** is a not-for-profit, non-government, community development organisation based in Siem Reap. The organisation was established in 2007, and focuses on providing opportunities for communities to develop the essential infrastructure, skills and knowledge to make positive change in their lives and break free from poverty. TLC currently operates four programs, including the Student Assistance Program (SAP), the Lower Secondary School Development Program (LSSDP), the This Life Beyond Bars (TLBB) Program, and the Community Research and Consultancy Program (CRCP).

**NGO Education Partnership (NEP Cambodia)** was formally constituted as a membership organisation in 2002. NEP currently has 122 members (47 international and 75 national) based in Phnom Penh and in semi-urban and rural centres throughout Cambodia. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), and development partners recognize NEP as the voice of education NGOs in Cambodia. As such, NEP has the opportunity to actively participate in Ministry planning and policy discussion.

**The Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE)** is a regional association of more than 200 organisations and individuals. It works towards promoting quality education for all and transformative and liberating, life-long adult education and learning. It strives to strengthen an Asia-Pacific movement to support community and people's organisations, national education coalitions, teachers unions, campaign networks, and other civil society groups and institutions in holding governments and the international donor community accountable in meeting education targets and commitments.

## About the Research Team

This research was conducted by the **Community Research and Consultancy Program (CRCP)** of **This Life Cambodia (TLC)**. In line with TLC's mission to listen to, engage with and advocate alongside communities, CRCP translates voices into new knowledge, which can then be used as a tool to advocate for positive change in education policy and human rights.

Key researchers on this project included:

- Mr. Sen Se – Deputy Director
- Mr. Tuot Mono – CRCP Coordinator
- Ms. Robin McNaughton – Program Development Officer  
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NGO sector	Corporate sector	MoEYS officials from:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Aide et Action</i></li> <li>• <i>Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation</i></li> <li>• <i>Friends International</i></li> <li>• <i>Indochina Starfish Foundation</i></li> <li>• <i>Komar Pikar</i></li> <li>• <i>Kampuchea Action for Primary Education</i></li> <li>• <i>M'Lop Tapang</i></li> <li>• <i>PEPY</i></li> <li>• <i>Sipar</i></li> <li>• <i>Women's Development Association</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>ANZ Royal</i></li> <li>• <i>Coca Cola</i></li> <li>• <i>Ezecom</i></li> <li>• <i>Manulife Financial</i></li> <li>• <i>Sabay</i></li> <li>• <i>Shinta Mani Foundation</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Department of Planning</i></li> <li>• <i>Department of Primary Education</i></li> <li>• <i>Department of Secondary Education</i></li> <li>• <i>Department of Non-Formal Education</i></li> </ul>

The researchers would also like to thank NEP and ASPBAE for their partnership and support throughout. Their knowledge and experience was invaluable in framing this study. Both ASPBAE and NEP Cambodia play key roles in supporting local organisations like TLC to conduct education research and advocacy activities from the grassroots up to the national level. This study provided a valuable space for NEP member NGOs in particular to discuss and articulate the challenges they face, as well as their suggestions towards *Education for All*.

## Key Terms

**Corporate Sector** Refers to for-profit corporate businesses. 'Corporates' is also used in the text to refer to representatives of corporate organisations, as participants themselves used this term throughout interviews.

**Corporate Social Responsibility** The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) defines CSR as "the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the community and society at large".

**NGO Sector** This report uses the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia definition: Non-government and non-profit organizations are established for a specific set of purposes – often a social goal such as relieving suffering, defending the rights or promoting the interests of the poor, protecting the environment, or undertaking community development. They do not belong to any state or government apparatus, although they may collaborate with them...if there are shared goals and objectives (CCC, 2012). The NGOs in this study are all members of NGO Education Partnership (NEP).

**Public-Private Partnership** This report uses ASPBAE's definition of PPP as "a mutually negotiated and agreed arrangement between the public and private sectors, [which] as a partnership, implies shared control, responsibility, costs and benefits...The main objective of PPP is to promote improvements in the financing and provision of essential services with an emphasis on achieving efficiency, effectiveness, quality, equity, and accountability" (ASPBAE, 2013).

# Acronyms & Abbreviations

ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CCC	Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EFA	Education for All
ePPP	Public-private partnership for education
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NEP	NGO Education Partnership, Cambodia
NGO	Non-government organisation
PPP	Public-private partnerships
TLC	This Life Cambodia
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund

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# Executive Summary

As the 2015 deadline for *Education for All* fast approaches and it becomes clearer that we are far from reaching the goals we set as a global community in 2000, education policy stakeholders around the world are well into the task of exploring innovative models of financing and delivering education. One key area of exploration is engagement with the private sector through strategies like formal public-private partnerships, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), or corporate philanthropy.

In Cambodia, forward thinking NGOs and corporate organisations are beginning to harness the interest in the concept of CSR as smart and ethical business practice, for education. This report presents a country-level case study of how these CSR partnerships are evolving. The exploratory study used qualitative methods to consult those in the NGO and corporate sectors who manage these relationships, as well as public sector officials, in order to understand their motivations, experiences and lessons learned.

Clear common ground was identified from which to move towards a more coordinated approach to investing in education for Cambodia's collective future. On the other hand, participants identified challenges in engaging at the technical level. This study sought to understand corporate support to education NGOs, but also found generally low engagement with public sector stakeholders on these projects.

Despite the positive interest in corporate philanthropy and CSR for education development in Cambodia, it is important to consider these practices in the context of ePPP debates, and the specific concerns attached to them. International research suggests that we should proceed with caution, to ensure that government responsibility and capacity for providing free, quality education for all its citizens is not eroded. Three broad recommendations can serve as entry points for beginning a conversation on harnessing CSR and philanthropic support to education in Cambodia in a critical and strategic way.

## **Broad Recommendations**

- 1) *A guide for CSR and corporate philanthropy partnerships for education in Cambodia*
- 2) *More efficient coordination and technical knowledge sharing.*
- 3) *Better and more creative partnerships.*

### *Forward thinking NGOs can aim to:*

- Demonstrate good practice and help to educate corporate supporters on what this means (in line with accepted minimum standards such as those set by CCC or UN).
- Explain to corporate supporters how programs fit within the broader strategic context of education development in Cambodia.
- Develop activities that engage the corporate sector in supporting the public school system, and consider creative ways to engage the public sector in these (including at the provincial or district level).
- Engage in knowledge sharing within and across sectors.

### *Forward thinking corporates can aim to:*

- Incorporate CSR support for education into their core business practice.
- Consider ways for their CSR and philanthropic activities to support the public school system, especially at lower and upper secondary level.
- Consider ways to engage with public sector stakeholders as well as with NGOs in collaborative partnerships.
- Engage further with the technical dimensions of education development, in order to identify and collaborate better with NGO partners.
- Engage in knowledge sharing within the sector and across sectors.



Given the unique power of education for sustainable development, the study finds that there is an opportunity in Cambodia for NGOs, the corporate sector, and governments to build on common ground for investing in education. The corporate organisations in Cambodia who aspire to good business practice through CSR or philanthropy activities are potentially powerful allies and advocates for the *Education for All* agenda and education NGOs are already in a unique position to channel corporate support for education towards the public school system through their programming and to encourage carefully considered partnerships between the corporate, NGO and government sectors.

## Summary of Key Findings

### **CURRENT PRACTICES**

#### *Making connections and building relationships:*

- Networks and existing connections are key
- The reputation and profile of NGOs carry weight in decision-making
- Accountability is established via trust in the relationship
- Dedicating a staff member exclusively to cross-sector engagement has had positive results in both sectors
- Good engagement leads to more opportunities in for both sectors
- Visibility is important, but it's not always all about marketing

#### *Understanding impact:*

- Impact is often articulated in terms of the strength of the relationship
- Responsibility for monitoring, evaluating and reporting impact rests with the NGO
- Site visits and time spent face-to-face are key for understanding impact

### **NEXT & BETTER PRACTICES**

#### *Common ground for investing in education:*

- A better education system is essential for meeting Cambodia's human resource needs – without better human resources, Cambodia will not be able to compete
- Education is a pathway out of poverty, but there is a need for strategic improvements to the public system, in terms of both equal access and quality
- The corporate sector must appreciate that education is a long-term investment
- The game is changing: NGO-Corporate engagement is an opportunity to try something different and potentially more sustainable

#### *Challenges & barriers:*

- NGOs perceive that International corporations tend to have a more strategic understanding of the potential of CSR than local companies
- A perceived lack of trust prevents engagement between the corporate sector and government
- All three sectors are concerned with waste and inefficiency
- Neither the NGO nor the corporate sector articulated a strong connection to the Education for All agenda

#### *Good practice concerns*

- It is time to progress past shallow CSR
- NGOs perceive a lack of understanding by the corporate sector of good development practice
- NGOs must be brave enough to advocate well for their beneficiaries – even if it means saying no to a partnership
- NGOs should be competing on good practice
- NGOs have an opportunity to educate the corporate sector about good practice

# Background

## Introduction

This report begins with an overview of the context of the research, framing the study within global *Education for All* efforts, and describing the Cambodian context with respect to education and its stakeholders, as well as the context of CSR practices in the country. Next, the methods are described, including three sector samples, research tools, data collection process and limitations of the study. Findings are presented together in two main sections: Current Practice, and Next and Better Practice. Finally, a discussion situates the findings within the wider context of the *Education for All* agenda and makes broad recommendations for future action.

## Purpose of the Study

As UNESCO and coalitions work to garner support for the current and future *Education for All* agendas on a global scale, it is important to also understand how engagement can happen on the local level, particularly with regard to financing. While other studies have explored the potential of sourcing financial contributions to *Education for All* through corporate engagement on a global scale, this study attempts to explore the concept at a national level, through a case study on Cambodia.

Corporate philanthropy in Cambodia is in part developing under the umbrella of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In considering CSR in Cambodia as a potential part of education development strategy, many questions remain unanswered: As the concept of CSR develops in Cambodia, what potential exists for directing this activity towards the priority of basic education for all Cambodians? What can be done to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of CSR for this purpose? Can partnerships be built between the corporate sector and education stakeholders (including NGOs and government) that make a real and sustainable impact on the education system in Cambodia without threatening equality of access to education?

NGOs working in the education sector in Cambodia have voiced a desire for research that can assist in further harnessing this potential. Such research would scope corporate giving to education in Cambodia, as well as begin to investigate the impact of this kind of public private partnership.

This study provides education development stakeholders, including the corporate, NGO, and government sectors, with a snapshot of current CSR practice directed towards education initiatives in Cambodia. The research can serve as a tool for NGO and public education stakeholders in building relationships with the private sector for future funding support, and as context for private companies who wish to begin or strengthen their CSR activities with respect to education in Cambodia.

## Research Objectives

- *To provide a snapshot of the provision of support from the corporate sector to education NGOs (What kinds of support are being provided and to a kinds of initiatives?)*
- *To understand the view of private sector companies in providing this support (What are the motivations, experiences and lessons learned?)*
- *To understand the view of beneficiary NGOs on receiving this support (What are the motivations, experiences and lessons learned for NGOs?)*
- *To begin to understand the implications of this support in the overall framework of the right to education in Cambodia (What impact is this support having, how is it understood by both corporate and NGO representatives?)*
- *To begin to suggest good practices of corporate sector support of education in Cambodia (What is the impact more widely, and how can these relationships be fostered to contribute to Education for All in Cambodia? What is the potential?)*

## Context of the Study

### *The Education for All Agenda*

In 2000 the world came together to prioritise education as part of the UN Millennium Development Goals. This action further committed UN countries to uphold the right to education enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by striving towards basic education *for all*. A policy umbrella of *Education for All* (EFA) was created to cover six ambitious goals. Led by UNESCO, the global community began the mammoth task of setting clear targets, developing strategies, and holding stakeholders accountable to their commitments. The *Dakar Framework for Education for All* was adopted by the World Education Forum in April 2000 and contained six regional frameworks for action, including the Asia South Pacific framework.

14 years later, and one year away from the target, it is overwhelmingly clear that we will not achieve a single EFA goal globally by 2015 (UNESCO, 2014). Each year the *Global EFA Monitoring Report* presents new global data, tracking progress and further evidencing the interconnectedness of education and sustainable development. The *2013/14 Global EFA Monitoring Report* “clearly shows that education provides sustainability to progress against all development goals”. But despite progress, and although the evidence in support of

#### **Education for All Goals**

**Goal 1** *Early childhood education and care*

**Goal 2** *Access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality (including for marginalised children)*

**Goal 3** *Equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs (for children and adults)*

**Goal 4** *Adult literacy especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults*

**Goal 5** *Gender equality in education*

**Goal 6** *Improving quality of education and ensuring excellence*

*(abridged, UNESCO, 2000)*

education as an essential factor for achieving the MDGs continues to grow, the world is still far from the aspirations of *Education for All*.

### Education in Cambodia

Cambodia's public education system was completely and systematically destroyed during the civil war, which ended in 1979 (CDC, 2001). With 50% of Cambodians living on less than \$2 a day, access to education remains a great challenge (World Bank, 2009). Although public education is technically free to all, households living in poverty struggle to cover the financial costs of basic materials associated with attendance in public schools such as uniforms, transport, and basic study materials (Bray & Seng, 2005). Teachers also struggle in the public school system: low salaries and delays in payment drive many Cambodian public school teachers to seek additional employment to supplement their income (Brehm, Silvoa, & Tuot, 2012).

Cambodia can be a challenging context for stakeholders working to improve education: Cambodia's score of 20/100 and ranking of 160<sup>th</sup> of 177 countries on Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index means that perceptions of corruption in the country are very high.

But despite these systemic challenges, Cambodia has made great strides towards universal primary education. On the other hand, like many countries, progress towards targets in lower secondary education, which has a net enrollment rate of only 35%, has lagged behind (MoEYS, 2011).

#### **Cambodia's Education Strategic Plan 2014-18 – Policy Focus**

*Policy 1: Ensuring equitable access for all to education services*

*Policy 2: Enhancing the quality and relevance of learning*

*Policy 3: Ensuring effective leadership and management of education staff at all levels*

Globally we are furthest from achieving, in particular, Goal 1: pre-primary education, Goal 3: appropriate learning a life skills programs (including lower secondary education, vocational training, and other opportunities), and goal 4: Adult literacy (UNESCO, 2014). The Royal Cambodian Government's Education Strategic Plan 2014-2019 includes a greater focus on all three of these neglected EFA goals, focused around three policy areas including equitable access, enhanced quality and effective leadership and management.

As a result of the structural challenges associated with an under-resourced public school system, and despite gains in enrollment at the primary level, education quality of education is generally low in Cambodia. Cambodia has a medium ranking Education for All Development Index of 0.81, along with countries like Laos and Indonesia (ASPBAE, 2013). Cambodia, like many other countries, is beginning to see increasing privatization of education in various different forms, as citizens search for better quality options. One significant example is the 'hybrid' of public schooling and complementary private tutoring, which has been shown to be essential for students to complete a full, quality education. Rather than supplementary learning, private tutoring in Cambodia has been shown to be a "central continuation of government schooling", where "delivering mandated curricular learning involves both formal schooling and private tutoring", with resulting inequities in access (Brehm, Silvoa & Tuot, 2012). Another trend towards privatization is the increasing number of private, non-state schools, and the increasing enrollment in these, especially among the elite and urban middle class.

Despite this blending of public and private, few if any *formal* public-private partnerships in education have been implemented to date, and Cambodia has not yet embraced ePPP models (see below).

## Financing gaps in reaching *Education for All*

One of the most significant challenges in reaching the EFA goals has been, and will continue to be, lack of financing on a global scale. This is true on the national level, for Cambodia as well as for many other countries. According to the 2013/14 *Global Monitoring Report*:

*The finance gap to achieve good quality basic education for all by 2015 has reached US\$26 billion, putting the goal of getting every child into school far out of reach. Unfortunately, donors seem more likely to reduce their aid than increase it in coming years (UNESCO, 2014).*

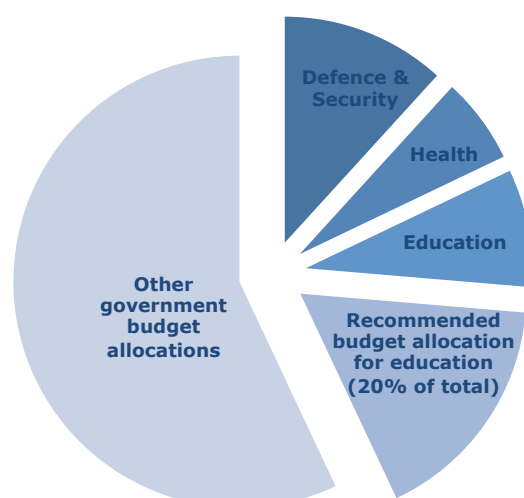
Beyond putting the 2015 EFA goals out of reach, this financing gap threatens to stall the post-2015 education development goals even before they are made, especially as UNESCO estimates that the gap will widen to \$38 billion when the post-2015 agenda is set (UNESCO, 2014). Meeting this financing gap will require a range of strategies working at global, national, and grassroots levels:

*The Dakar Framework for Action states that the ‘heart of EFA lies at country level’. It also affirms that ‘no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources’ (UNESCO, 2000).*

Responsibilities rest with the international community as well as with individual governments. UNESCO suggests that individual governments can close this funding gap by: devoting an adequate share of existing and projected government resources to education; raising more domestic revenue; and sharpening the focus of external assistance (2014).

In Cambodia, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has been allocated \$331 million in the 2014 National Budget. While this constitutes a roughly 20% percent increase compared to the 2013 budget, total government resources budgeted for education still amount to less than 2% of Cambodia’s projected 2014 GDP (Zsombor & Hul, 2013). Although targets were not formally established in the *Dakar Framework for Action*, UNESCO recommends that governments allocate at least 20% of the total national budget to education. Allocating just 10% of the national budget to education leaves Cambodia behind this standard, and behind the global average of 15% (UNESCO, 2014).

*Figure 1: Comparative government budgeting for education in Cambodia*



Source: Data interpreted from the 2014 National Budget, Royal Government of Cambodia.

UNESCO has positioned taxation as a key strategy for increasing domestic revenue. Cambodia has a low tax base, which, even combined with official development assistance (ODA) and government resources, does not meet the demand for infrastructure development or service provision (ADB, 2012). However this may be a strategy worth considering, as UNESCO argues that only “modest increases in tax effort and prioritizing education spending could significantly increase resources” (UNESCO, 2014).

With regard to ‘sharpening the focus of external assistance’ one suggested strategy is to build stronger partnerships with the private sector, locally and globally.

Whether funds come from governments themselves, from Official Development Assistance (ODA) or from other external sources, increased financing alone will not fix the problem. Measures of effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability are essential (ASPBAE, 2013).

### *Public Private Partnerships for Education (ePPP)*

With donor interest in education waning, the search for alternative models for financing and provision and development of public education is well underway. National governments and international stakeholders are increasingly exploring ways for the private sector to assist where governments are struggling or failing in their role as providers of public education.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) are one strategy for assisting governments to uphold their responsibilities when government resources and ODA are insufficient. Risk is allocated between the public sector (government) and private sector partners so that significant national projects are financially feasible. In Cambodia, PPPs have been mostly used to “procure” large-scale infrastructure projects, such as power, airports or roads, with little investment in social sectors like health or education (ADB, 2012).

Cambodia has passed a law on Concessions (LOC) to encourage PPP in infrastructure (including health, education, and sports *facilities*), however there is not yet an agreed legal framework that guides implementation. As such, PPP is generally considered to be under-utilised and under-developed in Cambodia (ADB, 2012), although this is a growing priority for international finance organisations.

PPPs can also be used as a strategy for financing social and public services that are traditionally provided by governments. The concept of public private partnerships in education (ePPP) is an umbrella concept that encompasses a wide range of complex partnership models, which has been advanced since the 1990s in different ways by a range of actors, including the UN, multilateral banks, international finance institutions, aid organisations and large international NGOs.

Proponents argue that, like in infrastructure, PPPs in education can bring better management of public projects and faster results. But there are fundamental differences to consider between PPPs that provide public infrastructure and those that provide public services. In the education sector in particular, there is well-documented concern that ePPP models could erode a government’s responsibility for upholding the right to education of its citizens (ASPBAE, 2012). In addition, the “uncritical” approach to ePPPs that has been seen around the world to date has made ePPP difficult to embrace for some (Robertson et. al, 2012).

The table below shows some of the proposed benefits as well as some of the major concerns with these types of models.

Figure 2 Benefits and concerns of Public-Private Partnerships for Education

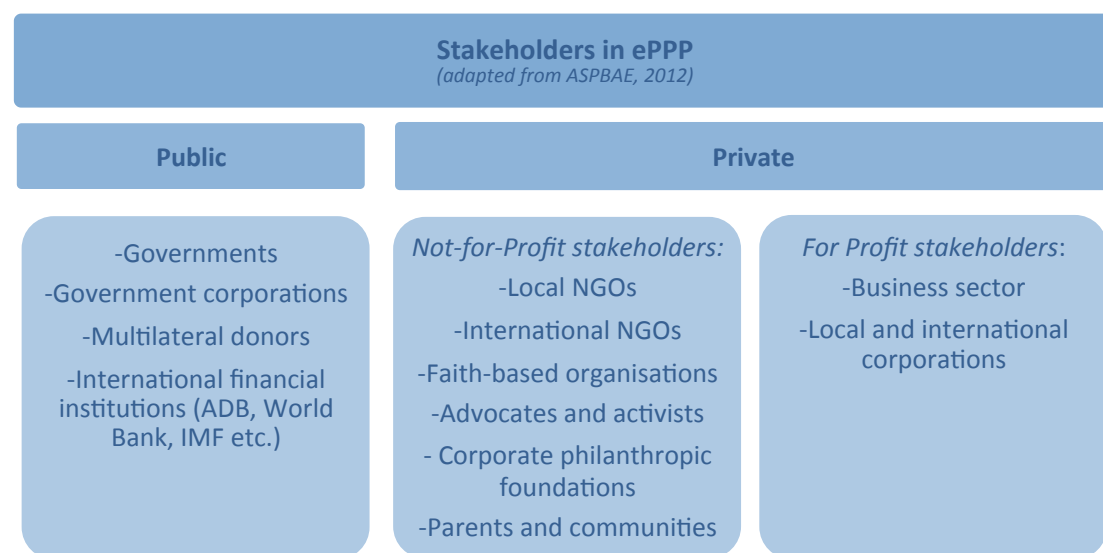
Potential benefits of ePPP models	Concerns about ePPP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>pro-poor</i></li> <li>• <i>harness new forms of innovation</i></li> <li>• <i>tap into community preferences and needs</i></li> <li>• <i>offer new sources of financial support for education</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>negative impacts on equity</i></li> <li>• <i>erosion of citizen’s voice as a contributor to change</i></li> <li>• <i>detracts from education as a public good and human right</i></li> </ul>

(Robertson et. al, 2012)

In Cambodia, lines of accountability are further complicated by a high concentration of NGOs and civil society organisations in the country who are themselves acting as education providers or facilitating access to the public education system through programs that target the most marginalised. There are 3,492 registered NGOs in the wider NGO sector in Cambodia, 1,350 of which are considered active (CCC, 2012). It is estimated that collective NGO spending in the social sector is nearly equal to government spending on social services (HACC, 2012).

It is important to note that within the concept of ePPP, the term “private sector”, who partners with the public or government sector, includes ‘non-state’ actors. ‘Non-state actors’ include corporate, private, and civil society or NGOs.

Figure 3 Public and private stakeholders in ePPP



### CSR and Corporate Philanthropy

On a global scale, one strategy that comes under the umbrella of PPP is the harnessing of corporate philanthropy for social outcomes. Referred to using various terms including corporate philanthropy, social giving, social investment, or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), this strategy refers to activities by corporate organisations that demonstrate a social conscience by directing profits to a cause such as education development. On an international scale, corporate philanthropy is often channeled towards aid agencies or large

international NGOs, which then distribute funding to individual projects at the country level, often partnering directly with governments (van Fleet, 2012).

'CSR', 'corporate philanthropy' and 'social giving' have all been identified as variations on one form of engagement of the private sector in education development (Van Fleet, 2012). Van Fleet's background paper prepared for the 2012 *Education for All Review* identified definite potential to "harness the energy of private philanthropy and social investments to strategically advance the wider Education for All agenda leading up to 2015". But in harnessing this potential, the global community has our work cut out for us: to date, these activities have achieved relatively low impact (van Fleet, 2011b), and philanthropic funding is very low compared to ODA (UNESCO, 2013). Van Fleet found "little evidence of large scale coordination and only a loose alignment with broader Education for All agenda" in current corporate philanthropy and social giving practices, and urged "finding a balance between the unique assets and interests of the private philanthropic sector and the social goals of *Education for All* is crucial" (2011b).

### **CSR and corporate philanthropy in Cambodia**

In Cambodia, regulation is developing in some sectors where there is a clear motivation for built-in CSR or social business practices, for example in the garment or extractive industries. In these industries, CSR usually seeks to mitigate negative economic externalities, in the form of environmental impact or social justice issues, and the key motivation tends to be legislation rather than philanthropic interest alone. Fierce contention over social justice issues such as land grabbing, living wages, and factory working conditions has brought discussions of responsible business practice to the top of the political agenda in 2014.

CSR has been hailed as having the potential in Cambodia for outcomes ranging from increased international trade competitiveness, to climate change risk mitigation, to pro-poor socio-economic strategy (Chhabara, 2008), and there has been over a decade of efforts to build CSR practices into Cambodia's economy as a development strategy and competitive advantage, notably by UN organisations and international finance institutions. Still, the concept of CSR as both voluntary business strategy and legislated practice is as yet under-developed. An independent analysis of Cambodia's readiness for active CSR concluded that "capacity-related barriers have the most serious impact" and that a "three pronged strategy is required to overcome these barriers: capacity building, advocacy and regulatory reforms" (Chhabara, 2008).

Still, voluntary corporate philanthropy is growing in Cambodia, including among local companies, and within the framework of 'CSR'. Corporate organisations are beginning to scale up their efforts to take the opportunities presented by CSR for public recognition of contributions to community and society (Rezenbrink, 2012). The high concentration of NGOs and prevalence of children's issues in Cambodia makes children's education a logical priority for CSR support.

Little research has been done on the extent, drivers and impacts of corporate philanthropy in Cambodia. A study in neighbouring Vietnam found that 75% of the 500 companies surveyed had made a charitable donation in the past year, to a range of different types of recipient. The surveys also revealed that the majority of giving was relatively unplanned and not strategic, and "often driven by government instruction without a focus on impact". Researchers suggested that NGOs might play a larger role in guiding Vietnamese corporate organisations to improve the impact of their giving (Taylor, 2013). Although there are significant political and economic differences between the two countries, the quantitative study can provide a starting point for examining the Cambodian context as it develops further.



# Methods

This study used qualitative methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the views and experiences of corporate support to education in the NGO sector in Cambodia.

## Sample

Data for this study was collected via three sample groups representing the NGO, corporate and government sectors. Individual interviews were conducted with representatives of ten NGOs and six corporate organisations, and one focus group of four participants was held with representatives from four departments of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

The NGO sample included a range of representatives from small to larger NGOs, all of whom are members of NGO Education Partnership Cambodia (NEP). The corporate sector sample represents a range of industries, including banking/finance, tourism/hospitality, telecommunications, and food/beverage, including Cambodian-owned and international companies.

Although some relationships do exist between the NGO sector and corporate sector samples, it was not the intention of this study that samples would be matched.

*Figure 4 Interviewee selection criteria*

NGO Sector	Corporate Sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The NGO is an active NEP member (therefore is considered an 'education NGO' by NEP's membership criteria)</li><li>• The NGO has received some kind of support from a private company within the past three financial years</li><li>• There is at least one clear example of a project supported by a private company to be discussed in the interview</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The company has provided support (funding or in-kind) to education projects in Cambodia within the past three financial years</li><li>• The company promotes its CSR or philanthropic activities publicly (information is found on the company's website)</li><li>• A company representative is contactable and willing to share their perspective</li></ul>

## Recruitment Process

The NEP membership base provided an initial pool of potential participants. All NEP members were first contacted via an e-mail survey, the objective of which was to gauge interest in participating in interviews and to collect information about current private

business sponsors. A telephone survey to a randomised list of NEP members was subsequently used to reach further potential participants. A purposive sample of 10 NGOs was then recruited for interviews based on the criteria above, convenience and responses to the email and telephone surveys.

Companies were purposively selected based on the criteria listed above, convenience and on the visibility of their CSR or community sponsorship activities in Cambodia. Some representatives were contacted through professional networks of the research team, while others were reached through the general contact information publicly available on their websites.

Each organisation nominated an appropriate representative to participate in the interview. In most cases, participants were directors of NGOs and senior corporate staff who were directly responsible for community sponsorship and/or CSR.

## Research Tools

Qualitative tools were used to conduct this research, as the aim was to collect in-depth information about corporate sector support specifically for education, a topic that has been relatively unexplored, particularly in Cambodia.

Interview guides were developed for interviews that ran for between 60 and 90 minutes. Questions were grouped in four thematic sections including; current support relationships, managing relationships, understanding impact, and wider impact on education. The interview guides were tailored to the corporate or NGO sector, and were designed to mirror each other in order to identify common and diverging opinions and experiences between the two sectors (see Appendix).

The focus group with four representatives of MoEYS was conducted using a set of guiding questions that loosely followed the four thematic areas used in the interview guides. The focus group ran for 2.5 hours and was co-facilitated by This Life Cambodia and NEP, following the Focus Group Guide (see Appendix).

## Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted between December 2013 and March 2014, mostly in Phnom Penh, the location of many of the NGO and corporate head offices. Interviews were conducted in person wherever possible, in locations selected by participants, including cafes and office spaces. As the research team was based in Siem Reap, one interview was conducted via email and two were conducted via Skype, for convenience.

Interviews were conducted either by an individual researcher or by a team of two. Participants were offered a choice of completing the interview in either English or Khmer. Of the 16 interviews, 13 were conducted in English and three in Khmer. All interviews excluding one completed via email were audio recorded and transcribed in English. The focus group was conducted in Khmer, with notes taken in Khmer and translated to English.

All transcripts were analysed by the research team to determine themes arising within each of the four sections: current relationships, managing relationships, understanding impact, and wider impact on education in Cambodia. As themes emerged, findings were further analysed, compared and contrasted with international and national literature.

# Ethical Considerations

All information presented in this report has been carefully de-identified to protect the privacy of participants, out of respect for the NGO-supporter relationships being discussed and to ensure that participants felt safe to share their honest perspective. On the other hand, the list of participating organisations has been published as a way of valuing the contributions of participating organisations not only to this study, but also to increasing engagement between the NGO and corporate sectors in Cambodia.

All participants were sent a copy of the interview guide prior to the interview. Conditions of consent were discussed before interviews began. Participants were informed that they could decline to answer questions and choose to withdraw from the research at any time, including after the completion of the interview. All participants were assured that the information shared would be de-identified, were offered the opportunity to review the transcript of their interview, and were encouraged to contact the researchers for follow up should any concerns arise. All participants signed consent forms held on record by the research team.

## Limitations

This study was conducted in part to inform ASPBAE and other stakeholders in their participation in UNESCO discussions on the *Education for All* Review in 2014. This intended application of the research defined the timeline and scope of the study.

The research was somewhat constrained by time and resources, mostly with regard to accessing information and identifying potential participants, as there is little coordination of publicly available information about CSR and corporate philanthropy in Cambodia.

The study did not make an attempt to locate and analyse CSR program documentation beyond the fairly superficial information made available on corporate websites. The study instead analysed the explanations of CSR programs as given by corporate representatives verbally in interviews. A larger study may have benefitted from follow up with interview participants to access and analyse each company's CSR documentation more deeply.

Sample sizes were kept small and the corporate sector sample focused on high-profile corporations for convenience. Social enterprises and SMEs were not intentionally excluded, however no participants from these sectors were successfully engaged to participate (although some of the included NGOs do engage in social enterprise or social business activities). In addition, the study relied on networks and publicly available information in English or Khmer: foreign-owned companies from countries such as Japan or Korea may be engaging in CSR or corporate philanthropy in Cambodia in different ways<sup>1</sup>.

The researchers encountered real challenges in identifying and reaching corporate interviewees. Recruiting from within NEP membership proved to be an effective strategy for establishing the NGO sample, and this study was potentially limited in that no similar corporate membership group was engaged. Such a group may have been able to facilitate connections with a larger corporate sample within the timeframe.

Researchers also anticipated that a snowballing sample technique could be applied, where participant NGOs would facilitate direct contact with representatives of the companies that support them. This method proved impossible because although all participants were

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<sup>1</sup> For examples, see: <http://www.cambodiainvestment.gov.kh/csr-award-for-korean-companies-in-cambodia-16-january-2013.html>

supportive of the research, most NGOs were understandably unwilling to place potential strain on relationships by putting the research team in direct contact with their corporate supporters.

Finally, the researchers initially intended a small quantitative mapping exercise, where 30-40 corporates would be surveyed in order to provide a snapshot of the flows of resources from the corporate sector to the education sector. This data would certainly be useful to inform future policy, but was ruled out as a method for gathering data in the early stages of the research, given the complexities of identifying and motivating survey respondents within the timeframe.

# Findings

## Current Practices

### *Characteristics of CSR approaches*

Corporate organisations were identified for the study in part based on the existence of public information promoting their support of community or NGO activities relating to education. The resulting sample represents a range of sectors including banking and finance, tourism and hospitality, insurance, digital technology and internet. None of these are sectors where government regulations enforce commitments to CSR beyond the standard regulatory requirements such as those enforced by the labour law. As such, CSR or community activities were voluntary and the design of frameworks was at the discretion of each organisation.

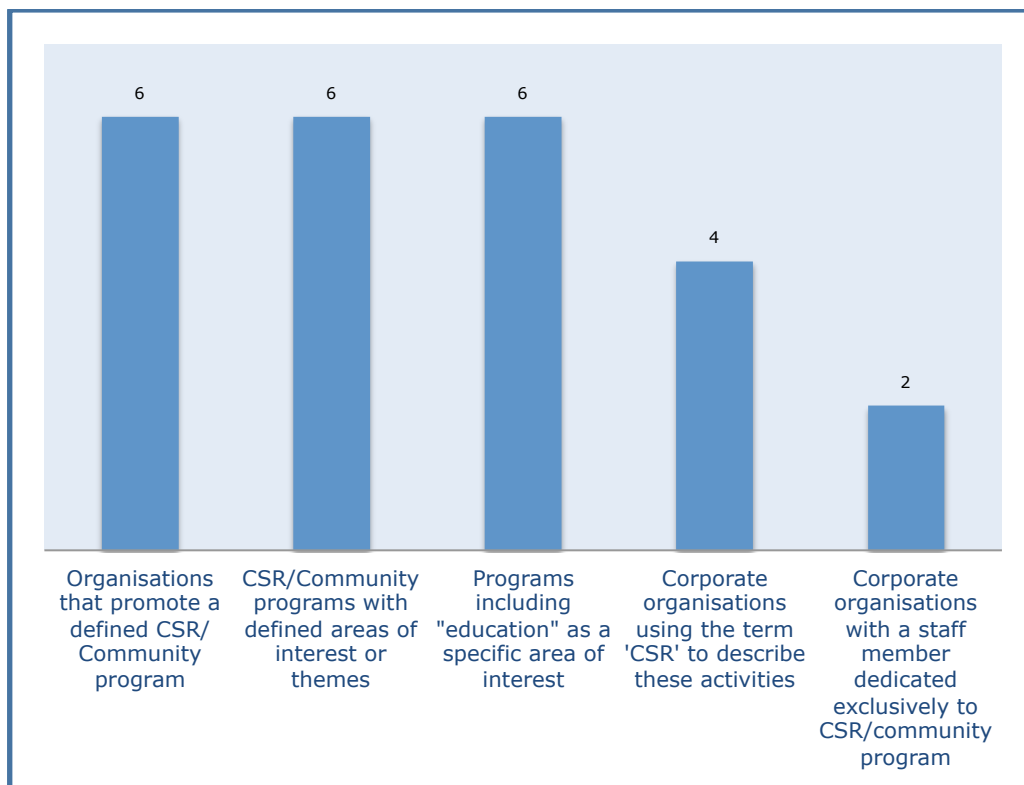
The figure below shows that philanthropic or charitable support to external education initiatives, whether NGO or government run, were often referred to as 'CSR programs'<sup>2</sup>. 'CSR partnerships' as they were also often referred to, were not generally subject to rigid guidelines by the corporate organisations in the sample, as contributions were generally considered as donations or sponsorship, rather than grants. None of the corporate representatives outlined clear criteria that CSR partners or projects must satisfy, although most had guidelines of what they would not fund, for example political or religious organisations. All corporate organisations had umbrella themes to describe their CSR interests, however interview participants stressed that potential partnerships were treated case-by-case and did not necessarily have to fall within these.

Only two organisations had a staff member whose sole role was to manage these types of relationships, and responsibility for this work more often falls under marketing and/or communications. Roles responsible for this work included; Public Affairs and Communications Manager, Communications and Community Relations Manager, CSR Manager, Brand Manager, Communications Manager, and Foundation Director.

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<sup>2</sup> This study sought information specifically about corporate support for education programs and education NGOs. Data was not collected about responsible business practices or other activities that might also be classified as 'CSR'. Several corporate organisations did mention internal initiatives such as employee education and professional development schemes or other commitments to ethical business practice, however these were not the focus of interviews.

Figure 5 Characteristics of CSR/Community Programs



Sources: Corporate websites and interviews with corporate organisation representatives. N=6

Types of support included cash donations, in-kind donation of materials and staff volunteer time. The majority of corporate participants described how contracts were designed on a case by case basis, depending on the amount of funds and timeframe of the NGO project that was to be supported, and most corporates mentioned a range of support from small, one off cash donations of \$200-\$300, to larger, longer-term and more collaborative 'partnerships'.

### Characteristics of CSR-supported projects

This section gives an overview of the types of projects and programs supported by corporate-NGO relationships, with some clear themes emerging.

Anecdotally, support from corporate organisations amounted to a very small percentage of NGO organisational funding (less than 5% for several NGO participants)<sup>3</sup>. Some NGOs were very confident in their relationships with their corporate partners, however were conscious that the support may or may not continue, due to the nature of the business sector.

The table below gives an overview of the larger and longer-term projects that the participating NGOs and corporate sector organisations were engaged in.

<sup>3</sup> This is anecdotal. Reliable and comparative data on funding amounts was not able to be collected due to the sensitivity of the issue. See Limitations.

Figure 6 Examples of education projects supported by CSR

Type of project	EFA Goal	Sector contributions	Frequency
Vocational training	3	Run by a corporate foundation (registered as an NGO) with corporate support	1
Vocational training	3	Run by an NGO with corporate support	
Programs for university students: scholarships, competitions, skills building		Run by an NGO with corporate support OR run by a university with corporate support	3
Education provision with the end goal of reintegrating marginalised children into the public school system	2, 3	Run by an NGO with corporate support	3
Public awareness raising about inclusive education	2	Run by an NGO with corporate support	2
Public awareness campaign in individual schools (including some materials)	2,3	Run by an NGO with corporate support	1
School development programs (individual public schools)	2,3	Run by an NGO in public schools, with corporate financial support to the NGO	3
Scholarships, bicycles, or other student material, for students attending public schools	2,3	Run by an NGO with corporate support for students to attend public school	2
Partnership delivering services to public schools	3	Run by the government, in public schools, with corporate support	
One-off donations directly to individual schools	2,3	Corporate donations collected by communities for public schools	3

*NB: Some limitations should be noted. First, data presented in this table was collected exclusively from individual interviews conducted with corporate and NGO sector participants. As such, the analysis is based only on the information participants shared. This section is not intended to provide an exhaustive list of projects funded by corporate sector participants, nor does it capture all of the programming activities conducted by NGOs. Many of the programs listed likely receive funding or support from multiple sources, and these are not captured here.*

Only one participant described an education project that was being implemented in direct partnership with the government, through MoEYS. On the other hand, the majority of the listed projects do inter-relate in some way with public basic education.

A number of projects utilise corporate support to facilitate access to the public system, including the provision of scholarships, materials or bicycles to support marginalised children to attend public school.

Some projects are provided and financed purely by private sector actors, with NGOs or corporate foundations acting as implementing organisations and delivering education outside of the public system. Importantly, all of these alternatives to public education are being provided at the higher education or vocational level, rather than at the basic education level. An exception is the group of programs providing private alternative education opportunities for marginalised children (for example, street-living children). These can be considered as privately-delivered supplementary education services, designed to prepare marginalised children for reintegration into the public basic education system.

Some corporate organisations are also making one-off ad hoc donations of materials or funds directly to public schools, or financially supporting NGOs to run school development programs in public schools.

Overall, the list above shows a degree of integration with the public school system, with projects either facilitating access or providing alternatives that inter-relate in some way with public schooling, by aiming to individually support some of the most marginalised children.

## *Making connections & building relationships*

*[NGOs] need to be good at networking. They should not expect that just by sending a proposal companies will provide them funding. They need to know people in person and join a lot of events.*  
- Corporate participant

Interview participants shared their experiences of how first connections are made and how these develop into one off donations, funding relationships, or more engaged CSR partnerships. There was a general sense among NGOs in particular that strong inter-sector partnerships are hard to find and require high effort. However most participants did see a great deal of value and potential in these relationships once they are established.

### **Networks and existing connections are key**

Most interviewees referred to the importance of personal connections and networks both for NGOs “to get a foot in the door” and for corporates to eventually make the decision to support them. The Board of Directors of the NGO sometimes plays a role in making these connections, and personal introductions are important:

*We're quite fortunate in that our board is well connected, so they will make introductions for us.*

Corporate sector participants also described the importance of personal connections at the beginning of a relationship:

*At first it starts 70-80% from a personal relationship...We need to understand each other first, then proposals are submitted to us. In general, if we don't know an organisation and they send a proposal through, it is not enough. I believe it is the same in other companies – that it starts from a personal relationship.*

### **The reputation and profile of NGOs carry weight in decision-making**

Those responsible for CSR activities exercised a high degree of autonomy in terms of identifying whether an NGO was worthy of partnership, with oversight and eventual decision-making often being led by a small committee of senior staff.

*I am responsible. But come to funding decisions, our director is involved in the process.*

*We have a committee. I'm the one who is mostly responsible for the whole process, so every initiative will come to me, and after I decide...I will bring this into the committee discussion.*

In the absence of strict criteria for selecting an NGO partner, many of the corporate organisations interviewed placed a high degree of importance and trust on an NGO's profile and networking ability. NGOs generally had experienced this approach by corporates:

*In the community of funders, they contact each other...and when one decides to work with us they tell others about us...This is how we get to know funders...When one company gives funds, the [companies] trust each other [about] funding.*



An organisation's reputation within the NGO sector was also important to corporate organisations in choosing whether to support them or not. Several mentioned that in addition to field visits and meetings with the NGO, discussion among personal and professional networks of "friends in the NGO world" is a key part of their due diligence process:

*[I will] go to the field and look into the NGO project and their background...And I also have some networks. So before I decide to go to any NGOs I will try to reach out as much as I can, to see what kind of information I get from different people [about] what they see from that NGO.*

*I'll ask my friends who work in the NGO world if they know of this organisation - have they heard anything about it. They're very helpful: they tell me what they know and what they don't know, and that makes things sort of easier.*

CSR activities are often, but not always, partially about public relations (PR), and so wider public perceptions of NGOs also factor into the decision, along with genuine concerns about ethics of NGO practice (see Good Practice Concerns):

*To be honest, I don't really look at much, as long as you don't really have a bad rumor around you.*

*We also have to make sure that we are working with a reputable organisation because we don't want it to reflect badly on us and we don't want to support anyone who is abusing children in any sort of way... [Also], because it's a corporation, I have to think about the PR value that we get out of things.*

One corporate organisation, whose motivations for CSR include building staff engagement and morale, actively prioritises NGOs that are recommended or endorsed by staff members, "moving them to the top of the list", as a way of coping with the high volume of proposals they receive.

### **Accountability is established via trust in the relationship**

Corporates did not describe methodical due diligence processes. Instead they expressed a clear need to be able to 'trust' an NGO, based on interpersonal relationships.

*Before we gave a donation we sat down with the Program Director to establish an understanding and a relationship.*

*Sometimes [NGOs] don't really convince me that I can really trust them, that they really have the expertise to do the job.*

*[It is done] through relationships – we know each other, and if it's a project we trust, we can process it fast. [A lot of] paperwork and admin is useless as we base [our decision] largely on the personal relationship.*

### **Dedicating a staff member exclusively to cross-sector engagement has had positive results in both sectors**

For most of the corporate organisations interviewed, CSR falls within the remit of communications, community relations, public affairs, or marketing (see Characteristics of CSR Approaches). NGOs reported that it could sometimes be difficult to progress with a partnership when CSR is not a dedicated role for their point of contact, who often had many other responsibilities.

Two corporate representatives expressed pride that their organisation had created their role to focus directly on community engagement, both saying that this was relatively rare

among the corporate sector and that NGOs responded well. One participant reported a positive response among both corporate and NGO networks to the newly created role and saw it as being a key step for the company to really understand the impact of their CSR activities, through strong communication with the NGOs they support:

*[The company was] doing a lot of good things, some great things, but there was no one who could actually follow up on it and oversee everything that was going on, and [outcomes] got lost in translation.*

NGOs appreciated having this focal point for collaboration:

*If they do have a dedicated person...that makes it a little easier, someone a bit more responsible for working **with** you on a strategy and so on.*

A small number of NGOs have also developed designated roles that deal exclusively with corporate partnerships, with titles like Corporate Liaison or Sponsorships Officer. Two corporate representatives showed appreciation for NGOs that had a dedicated staff member:

*These organisations [we support] have clear structures and have a person responsible for communication with us. So we know everyone.*

*Some even have [a staff member] whose purpose in their organisation is to deal with people like me. So that makes it easy and good.*

For these NGOs, the expected benefit of having a staff member committed exclusively to corporate sector engagement was clearly linked to longer-term engagement and the sustainability of the organisation, even if it had not yet been achieved:

*We don't expect much, but at least we have some work for our sponsorship officer to do, to follow up on what are the problems, why they do not support us, why does this company continue to support us. We learn...We just started [this role] last year because we considered the sustainability of the organisation without relying on donor funding. In Cambodia, very few NGOs are doing this activity. So why not initiate the idea step by step, even if its not successful 100%?*

The NGO representatives who seemed to have experienced the most success in engaging corporates were foreign staff employed by the NGO to focus exclusively on fundraising and corporate engagement. Although they did highlight examples of successful partnerships with local companies, these participants focused on building international networks and expressed a view that international companies tended to have a more developed understanding of corporate-NGO engagement and CSR, and of the mutual benefits.

### **Good engagement leads to more opportunities for both sectors**

Several NGOs had experienced additional corporate sector interest in their organisation as a result of a relationship with a corporate organisation:

*Our Board are making connections and opening doors, and then one corporate comes on board and someone else hears about it and you have people coming on board [as corporate supporters].*

*If an organisation gets funds from a corporate supporter, it is an opportunity for a good reputation, so they can then approach other companies.*

When asked why they thought NGOs were interested in engaging with their company in particular, representatives of several corporate organisations perceived that it was because of the reputation of their CSR program:

*I think [our company] is one of the leaders globally in terms of sustainability projects...and I think, even before we actually put effort into projects [locally], our global CSR [work] was known here in Cambodia.*

*To begin with I think we are a reputable company. Secondly, I think if they need funds they can go to any organisation, but we are pretty clear on what we want to do and what we want to give funds to.*

Good engagement with a corporate supporter can also lead to new connections between NGOs. There were two clear examples, one from an NGO and one from a corporate representative, of NGO collaboration that came about at least in part, through a mutual corporate connection. The corporate representative in one of these examples was particularly impressed and enthusiastic about being a part of this relationship between the company's CSR partners:

*For me it's fascinating. For me, they [the NGOs] went beyond their mandated role [by supporting each other's programs]...Also the connection for sharing best practices is very important.*

### **Visibility is important, but it is not always all about marketing**

Many participants mentioned that corporate-NGO support relationships often involved events sponsored and attended by the corporate organisation, including campaigns, volunteer days and media events. But corporates did not necessarily prioritise PR value in a direct way, and even spoke of experiencing a misconception among NGOs that all they wanted to do was "put their logo" on a project.

Corporate representatives and NGOs both spoke highly of opportunities to promote the CSR activity when creative and collaborative, and several NGOs recognised that the benefit of visibility goes both ways, commenting on the mutual value of publicly visible partnerships:

*We had this showcase [of the program supported by a CSR program], and all the media came...It was just fantastic. It not only made our students feel proud to see that their community is really amazed at what they can come up with, it gave us some really nice exposure to the business community.*

*Regularly, formally or informally, [visibility] needs to be taken into account – when we can promote them and the visibility of all the key actors in the process.*

*We have a whole network, so that's why they support us - [with] small things, not much, but at least some [publicly visible] support for our work.*

One corporate representative was especially pleased to have been able to participate in an advocacy action led by their CSR partner, by co-signing a petition to government. This same participant felt that there was still more to be gained from this partnership, due in part to the organisational strength of the NGO:

*There's so much that [our NGO partner] can offer us, from a media perspective, from an advocacy perspective, from a corporate governance perspective, and from the perspective of impact and needs analysis.*

Several NGOs also perceived that even if brand profile is not a priority of their CSR partner in a direct way, it is important to help the corporate organisation find a way to demonstrate their involvement publicly:

*Businesses are different one to one, but of course the visibility is important in different ways. If they are not interested in publishing their name in publications, they might be interested in*

*presenting at some events. Some might not be able to present at events, but it's good [to offer other opportunities]. So visibility is a benefit we provide to a company in terms [demonstrating their] social accountability.*

Despite concerns identified in the next section (see also Good Practice Concerns), many participants across both sectors understood visibility as an opportunity for the NGO to support the corporate in demonstrating their investment in the community, rather than in marketing their brand.

## *Understanding Impact*

Most of the NGO participants said they communicate differently with corporate supporters and most made a distinction between corporates and other donors in other ways as well. 'CSR partnerships' or 'sponsorships', as they were referred to by corporates, rely heavily on relationships and less on reporting systems and requirements.

### **Impact is often articulated in terms of the strength of the relationship**

In discussing the impact of their support, corporate representatives often used the word 'trust' and referenced the strength of their relationship with the NGO:

*Sometimes we know [the results of the project] already better than if a report is given to us. We believe in our relationship and the people working on it.*

NGOs sometimes measured the success of their relationships in terms of how well their corporate sponsors understood their work:

*It's often interesting when I meet up with our sponsors and they start to tell other people about our organisation, and they've got a good grasp on it.*

*The first [priority] for encouraging [corporates to support education via NGOs] is that our work in education is clear. We must make our work clear...they need trusted people who are clear that they have done well in the project.*

### **Responsibility for monitoring, evaluating and reporting impact rests with the NGO**

None of the corporates interviewed had a template for reports or a formal acquittal process. When asked what they required by way of reporting, most corporates referred to photos and basic financial reporting for accountability purposes of the corporate organisation itself. Some corporates also expressed the need to be able to verify that money had been spent towards the "real needs" of the project. This focus on input and output reporting left monitoring and evaluation almost exclusively to the NGO, with the exception of site visits to keep the relationship strong (see below).

This is not to say that corporate representatives were not concerned with impact, only that once a relationship was established they placed a high degree of trust in the NGO partner to achieve that impact on the ground. For example, one corporate representative was impressed by a particular NGO's monitoring and evaluation system, which included a strong needs assessment process and pre and post testing. None of this was required by the corporate, however the representative found the information interesting, and the demonstration of good practice and accountability cemented the relationship.

Several corporate representatives explained that they did not want to tie up either the NGO's time or their own with "useless" reporting and process. One corporate representative expressed frustration for example, with the long delay experienced in donating to an urgent flood appeal of a large international NGO, which had "too much

process". Another corporate representative preferred to use direct communication or social media to source information on the projects the company had supported:

*Since I am responsible [for these activities] I know them. I would rather go get information by myself on their Facebook page [like photos] they have uploaded. There is no need for people to work on reports for us.*

There was an expectation among some corporate representatives that it was the NGO's role and responsibility to inspire them:

*We have many NGO partners who inspire us a lot and make us understand their projects. And we love to learn from them since we have our CR framework but we are not in their NGO, we don't understand the depth of their project. They are the people who need to inspire us and share information. It's not for us to tell them 'okay you need to tell me this'.*

One NGO participant described the difference between reporting impact to other donors and reporting to corporate sponsors or CSR partners. The comment highlights that the dependence on relationships for understanding impact is not necessarily perceived as a transparency issue;

*When you have a big donor that's giving you \$50,000-\$100,000, they have strict ways of how you [should be] spending it – it's part of the industry. [However], for corporates it's not the industry they're in and generally the spend is a lot lower. And they don't 'speak NGO' and they don't need to, so it's quite simple, which is good. There's no point going on and giving them a whole lot of [information] that's of no use to them.*

On the other hand, when asked whether they felt that their corporate supporters truly understood the impact of their programs for beneficiaries, several NGO participants felt that they did not. Several NGOs confirmed a perception that a corporate organisation's understanding of impact hinged on the NGO's ability to communicate well to a corporate audience:

*They [corporate partners] don't have much time to ask us about the impact of their funds, so we need to remind them when new results are achieved.*

*Sometimes they are far away from us and they do not know or see what our work looks like [at the community level]. Our relations team works a lot to maintain our connections. Many of the NGO representatives interviewed felt they have found this balance over time, but the idea that NGOs were the keepers of impact information featured often throughout interviews.*

*I think [the biggest challenge] is making sure you get the right balance between informing [corporate supporters] and engaging them, and not being constantly in their face...The key to it is, even if they don't ask for updates, I will give them stories, because people forget the facts and figures but they remember the stories.*

- NGO participant

### **Site visits and time spent face-to-face are key for understanding impact**

Although some NGOs felt it could sometimes be hard to secure time with corporate representatives for in person discussions, corporate representatives generally placed high importance on site visits and face-to-face communication as tools for keeping the relationship strong in order to understand impact:

*Relationship wise I don't think it's a problem...There is a clear understanding of what they need from us and what's expected from the partners...We sit down with them at least one or two times a year to be able to understand [the expectations].*

*When you have trust, reports don't really matter. Because I personally visit the program, so I know what the impact is and what they did for the community. So whether or not they give a report doesn't really matter. I see it.*

Most NGOs appreciate this strategy, seeing it as an opportunity to engage further with the corporate organisation by helping them gain a deeper understanding of the project's impact. For some NGOs, face-to-face meetings and site visits are seen as an important opportunity to education donors about what to look for in supporting strategic and good practice programs (see also Good Practice Concerns).

One NGO representative attributed the difference between managing corporate support relationships and other donor relationships to a difference in perspective between NGOs, donors, and business-oriented corporate organisations:

*Emails and reports don't work well with businesses...Their processes and expectations are different from us - different from NGOs and donors...Some processes they believe, from the business perspective, are the best way to do it, while the NGO might see it differently. So then for communication, meetings and discussion are really the best way...Some donors in two years they just visit us once or twice, but for businesses ...[we need to engage them] so they feel that they are part of the process. Even if they're not present in the implementation, they feel that we've really engaged them for both technical and financial support.*

## Next and Better Practices

### *Common ground for investing in education*

Participants from the NGO, corporate and government sectors articulated clear and common ground in their views on the uniquely powerful role of education in Cambodia's future, emphasising that each sector has a role to play.

#### **A better education system is essential for meeting Cambodia's human resource needs – without better human resources, Cambodia will not be able to compete**

In describing why they felt the corporate sector should take an interest in education, the strong majority of participants identified a clear link between a quality education system and a competitive workforce: the region is moving quickly and Cambodia risks being left behind if access to quality education does not improve. Some NGO representatives were specifically concerned with Cambodia's ability to compete in the near future, given the upcoming changes to migration and trade in the ASEAN integration plans for 2015:

*I feel that donors and the government are trying to focus on quality, but they keep on talking about minimal standards. And there's a real danger in that. If you have a whole [public education] system geared to minimal standards, where is that going? If the whole country is geared to the minimum how will it compete with other countries in ASEAN?*

*Companies need quality human resources, currently and in the future. So to get future motivated and capable human resources, they need to invest in education. They have to compete within ASEAN, within the world, as part of globalization.*

This concern was echoed by a MoEYS focus group official who felt personally that Cambodia was at real risk of losing out in the ASEAN integration due to the lack of a strong technical workforce.

The priority of building a competitive workforce is also a feature of Cambodia's Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018, which focuses on "human resource development to ensure competitiveness in an increasingly open regional labor market", acknowledging "the fact of ASEAN integration in 2015 and the desire of Cambodia to be a middle income country by 2030 require considerable investment in education" (pg. 12).

Corporate participants made a link between human resources and competition at an organisational level and at a national level: strong human resources are a competitive advantage for countries as well as individual companies. For some corporate organisations this link is articulated within a CSR framework, which is sometimes imposed from the international corporate head office:

*[Our interest in education] is linked to our vision ...'to become an employer of choice'. So any graduate that finishes their degree would think 'this is the company that I want to work for'.*

Another corporate representative explained a connection between CSR and the company's philosophy on internal human resource development in their Cambodian operations:

*[The company is] putting a lot of investment in so that our people become future leaders of this industry...I think the [whole] private sector needs to also focus on its own people. It needs to start from within. If we [want to] live up to our own principles and guidelines but also reach out to the community and people in need as well, participating in education development is the best thing to do.*

One corporate representative described how when the company first began operating in Cambodia the human resources simply did not exist to meet their staffing requirements. A training program was begun, initially implemented by the company itself, to build a workforce for the company and its specific industry.

NGO representatives also generally felt that the corporate sector should be convinced of their responsibility to engage in education development in Cambodia because of their clear stake in the outcomes:

*The private sector is a part of the education life cycle in Cambodia.*

*There is potential for the future workforce to come out of NGO [education programs] and for the corporates to be able to influence what [skills and human resources] actually come out of them.*

### **Education is a pathway out of poverty, but there is a need for strategic improvements to the public system, in terms of both equal access and quality**

*Being Cambodian I can offer my own perspective about development in the education sector, but I can also offer the corporate perspective on the reasons why we believe that the private sector should be an important stakeholder in participating proactively in development of the education sector in Cambodia.*

*- Corporate participant*

NGO participants, whose core programming mostly includes initiatives for the most marginalised, clearly appreciate the importance of education for poverty-reduction. Corporate representatives also demonstrated this perspective in a clear, direct and sometimes personal way.

Several corporate representatives who attributed their success at least in part to education also articulated the value of education on a personal level, and as Cambodians. They were concerned by the very real and complex issues faced by fellow citizens, as well as their own families. These included issues of access for the poor and marginalised, but also issues of quality in the public

school system:

*Cambodian people...the future is always uncertain for them, because of the history we went through. [Some families] don't see education as a means to an end, but rather a cost being imposed on their family, because food is very important for them: Why would they send their kids to school when the family is struggling to find food for their stomachs on a daily basis?*

*We are not really fortunate, I don't need to say why, but we need more education system [improvement] and [young people need] skills...It even hurts me because I am a mother and I want my son to go to public school, but I cannot do that...I'm sorry to say.*

On the other hand, when asked whether their CSR activity targeted real need in Cambodia in an equitable way, at least one corporate representative was wary that too much focus on university students, although these projects had positive outcomes, could result in missed opportunity in the longer-term for basic education:

*I think we need to be a little more direct [with support] to poor kids. And I think that is a gap [in our CSR focus on education], because we mostly target university students...So it's probably a wake up call that we should do something more [to support access to education at lower levels].*

This same participant was concerned about the risk of leaving a generation of children behind, explaining a view later in the interview that:

*For university students who find their way there, I think people are clever enough, somehow [to get there]. But for the young kids from the poor families...it's not even that they are [just] struggling, it's like mission impossible for them to go to school at some point [in their lives].*

Although they expressed a clear interest in the human resource and humanitarian outcomes of improvements in the education system, most corporate organisations interviewed placed this responsibility squarely with the government and NGOs. Rather than a way to make strategic, national impact, CSR was seen more as a way to 'do what we can' to 'give back'.

### **The corporate sector must appreciate that education is a long-term investment**

A few participants recognised that corporates often focus CSR on university-level projects because these students will soon be joining the workforce and so positive impact can be seen in the near future. For example, one corporate representative mentioned that at least one university student who had benefitted from a university level skills-building program supported by the company was now a member of staff.

On the other hand, several corporates also voiced an opinion that others in their sector need to develop an understanding of the longer-term outcomes of investing in education now.

*Like I said, the only way to get out of poverty is through education. But it's a very long-term investment, and we need to be patient. And the companies need to be patient as well in terms of development. It's not a one-year shot. It's probably 5, 6 years down the line. Or it could be 10 or 20 years, until the kids are going out there [into the workforce] and saying wow, thanks to these companies that were providing such funds, we have a much better future.*

In addition to charitable or 'noble' motivations, and in addition to a recognition that supporting education will help improve the workforce, some corporate participants also expressed an understanding that as communities are lifted out of poverty they will become better customers for the business:



*Giving away to the community is something that a private company has got to do. It's the noble thing to do...It shows how strong your organisation is. Because you work within the community and you're selling your product to the community. Giving back to them is so important.*

### **The game is changing – NGO-Corporate engagement is an opportunity to try something different and potentially more sustainable**

Despite the bilateral and multilateral funding directed to Cambodia in the past decades, it is glaringly obvious to participants of this study that we are still well behind on the goal of reaching quality and accessible basic education in Cambodia. However, as participants were acutely aware, donors are moving their attention elsewhere and leaving a financing void behind them. One corporate participant told the full story well:

*In the last 10 years Cambodia survived by donations, by donors...but now it has changed, Cambodia is more developed, businesses have started, new investors have come in. Donors saw the development, so some of them left, or the funds have been reduced...So local NGOs, even international ones, if they want to survive, they need to be very innovative, think out of the box. Where can they find financial support for them to survive without international donors? That is why they approach [the] private sector.*

Several of the NGOs in this study are already embracing this shift, with creative approaches for financing their activities ranging from engaging with corporates to incorporating social business into their core operations as an NGO. They are actively changing the game. For some NGOs these strategies have been in place for years, while others are just beginning to test these strategies to prepare for the future.

Collaboration between the NGO sector and the corporate sector could also result in new approaches to organisational sustainability by learning from the business sector:

*The nature of NGOs and nature of the private sector are different. But somehow if they are sharing their knowledge about how to be sustainable, how to be a strong organisation, through private company role models, why not? Because if we look more deeply, with private companies and NGOs, are not so different. Because one they work for people, and one they work for benefit, but finally the benefit goes to the people.*

*I think step-by-step. That's why we need NGOs or we need the government to promote that concept, that idea [of corporate sector engagement in social development]. Now we are growing the seeds to grow the tree. We cannot expect one year or two years later the tree will give us fruit. But at least in 10 years time, 15 years time, step-by-step. We need to make the tree grow through a very good process first.*

*- NGO participant*

Furthermore, several NGOs shared the perspective that engaging the corporate sector in their work would plant seeds for important social development outcomes more widely in the future.

## **Challenges & Barriers**

### **NGOs perceive that International corporations tend to have a more strategic understanding of CSR than local companies**

Not all NGOs found it easy to encourage their corporate supporters to engage, particularly, if they were Cambodian businesses:

*For local companies, I think they need to take more time to understand our impact and visit directly.*

Most of the NGOs interviewed held the view that local companies have less of an understanding about the potential of CSR, usually attributing this to a lack of time or interest in considering creative collaboration.

*I guess corporates in Cambodia, they're time poor, because a lot of the time [CSR is] just a little extra that someone probably in marketing is doing.*

But participants did point out that there are some notable exceptions:

*We do find the market in Cambodia, in understanding CSR, is not very developed. Excluding a couple of local businesses that we do work with, a lot of the companies that are getting involved in CSR are foreign owned...From [my experience of] going to [local companies] personally and not getting anywhere, we might have one or two shining stars.*

The 'shining star' examples of local companies are going beyond small cash donations for profile raising activities toward more engaged and creative partnerships (see Good Practice Concerns).

### **A perceived lack of trust prevents engagement between the corporate sector and government**

Government officials expressed a perceived mistrust of MoEYS among the corporate sector. This mistrust was perceived to limit corporate involvement with MoEYS directly and the need to deal with this trust issue was raised as a priority several times during the focus group.

As some government officials in the focus group also felt that MoEYS may be perceived as generally less accountable than NGOs, they supported the idea of increased partnership between the corporate sector and education NGOs. The two sectors can work together, with companies bringing funds and NGOs bringing implementation skills, on projects that can be delivered or connected to MoEYS. One example given was that the corporate sector could provide funding to an education NGO to produce high quality textbooks, which could then be distributed in partnership with MoEYS.

One official suggested that if companies were not comfortable providing financial support directly, they could provide support through donations of materials or construction.

Another potential strategy that was identified by MoEYS officials was to utilise the Provincial Annual Operational Plan (AOP) and District AOPs as a mechanism for directing support from the private sector towards education priorities that align well with district and provincial planning. These plans outline the prioritised activities for the year but often lack funding. It was suggested that the corporate sector or NGOs may be able to meet some of these shortfalls. It was also suggested that AOPs provide a mechanism for transparency, because they clearly outline government commitments compared to contributions from other sources.

### **All three sectors are concerned with waste and inefficiency**

Many of the NGO representatives were concerned that efficiency is compromised and funding wasted if corporates do not choose their CSR partners well. Several of the corporate representatives perceived waste and unsustainability among the wider NGO sector, though not among their chosen partners. One participant even expressed caution about how the findings from this study would be used:

*If you do a campaign to educate businesses and you don't understand business, just spend a lot of money to do something [it will be seen as wasteful] because they care a lot about the money. If*

*you do a campaign or a big workshop at a big hotel to educate them, they will say these things that NGOs are doing are a waste of a lot of money to do something that's not important.*

### **Neither the NGO nor the corporate sector articulated a strong connection to the Education for All agenda**

Interviewers kept comments to a minimum, however participants were informed that this study was being conducted from the perspective of the *Education for All* agenda. Several participants confirmed that they believed strongly in the concept of 'education for all', however a clear link to the broader *Education for All* agenda was not articulated in any interview. Neither was a connection made to Cambodia's Education Strategic Plan, except in one case where a corporate organisation had partnered directly with the ministry.

While not a criticism of the participants or of their programming, this is an important finding given the urgency of a strategic and coordinated push for *Education for All* in the final year, and the upcoming priority of setting a post-2015 agenda.

Given the relatively small amounts of funding that CSR partnerships provide and the lack of a strategic program linking these efforts to broader education development policy, EFA goals appear to be beyond the immediate concern of these partnerships.

### *Good practice concerns*

Many of the NGO representatives interviewed raised real concerns about the kind of CSR, corporate donations, and corporate volunteering they commonly see in Cambodia. Among the corporate representatives, there were concerns about inefficiencies and lack of sustainability in the NGO sector. Overall, there was a clear desire among interview participants to see both sectors do better in terms of efficiency and participants had a wealth of valuable experiential advice to share.

### **It is time to progress past shallow CSR**

One corporate representative expressed real frustration in seeing other organisations engage in activities that were seen as simply PR stunts with little substance, which in turn reinforced a shallow conception of CSR in a wider context. An assumption that corporates only want to sponsor profile-raising activities with small amounts of cash and the corresponding assumption by corporate organisations that "because we are an NGO, all we're asking for is money" was perceived to have an effect on the potential of NGO-corporate engagement more widely (see also Connections and Relationships). Some corporate organisations have experienced this misunderstanding at the beginning of relationships:

*There's a lot of misunderstanding. Many NGOs bring proposals to me and the benefit that they present to us is that the brand will be exposed through the media, etc. But we discuss with them and let them know that we have a different team for marketing who have their own budget to sponsor events.*

This is not to say that awareness-raising events are not a valuable form of corporate-NGO engagement. Several organisations did genuinely value corporate interest in their events, because it helped to raise the profile of their particular social issue or cause, while others recognised the PR value for both organisations.

### **NGOs perceive a lack of understanding by the corporate sector of good development practice**

Some NGOs described real challenges in reaching an engaged and flexible partnership with a corporate supporter. Several NGOs mentioned that in the early stages of a relationship,

one of the challenges can be aligning the corporate agenda to the NGO's development practice.

A common example was the feeling that corporates only conduct CSR for PR or publicity. Many NGOs moved beyond this assumption however, perceiving that differences in agendas or approaches more often than not were the result of a shallow understanding among the corporate sector of strategic education development in practice.

*I don't always think that they're really understanding, even if you see that they are supporting someone particular, I don't honestly believe that they really get it. It's more that you see lots of other businesses starting to do it, and so they're getting involved. But hopefully it will evolve a bit more and they will allocate more time to someone in their business to research [an understand good practice].*

The NGOs that are working hard to engage the corporate sector contribute a lot of time and effort to negotiating projects that suit the values of both organisations:

*They have their own ideas. But we have to make sure we start with our own ideas and that we're strong enough to educate them...sometimes we cannot accept their ideas...so we break for a while and take some time to research and consult with other actors...and later we come back to say okay, from these results, we cannot do it. Just to really communicate...it's just the way we manage the relationship...it's worth it to try.*

### **NGOs must be brave enough to advocate well for their beneficiaries – even if it means saying no to a partnership**

Around half of the NGO representatives described having experienced pressure from corporate supporters to stray from their usual programming activities or approaches, sometimes in ways that would compromise their values as an organisation.

These participants urged fellow NGOs to have the integrity and strength to negotiate in the best interests of the children or communities they work with, even if it means turning down a partnership. Not having the strength to do this reinforces more static donor-recipient relationship models, damages potential for new kinds of partnerships, and exposes beneficiaries to potential risk.

*The challenge for a lot of NGOs is that they're so desperate for money that they will jump through hoops and set up new programs that they don't actually do. We just refuse to do it.*

*Just make sure at the start that there is impact for the community we work with. We're the key actors who do it together. We don't want to just win in the process [of negotiating with corporate supporters], we choose something we believe we can do in line with our mission and vision and capacity to do it.*

Volunteering was seen as a point of difficulty and sometimes disagreement between corporates and NGOs. This was particularly true when there was a perceived potential risk to children. This had been a 'deal breaker' for more than one organisation in the past:

*I know there are some organisations that quite happily have opened doors to orphanages [and supporting these means] supporting a system that is not beneficial for children...So I know that's definitely what we're up against and I know that sometimes we will lose a potential relationship by saying, no I'm sorry this is not what we're going to allow.*

### **NGOs should be competing on good practice**

With the NGO sector in Cambodia being "so dominant" as one NGO participant described it, NGOs compete for funding based on many different criteria depending on the potential

supporter. Many of the NGO participants in this study expressed concern with how often they see activities labeled as 'CSR' supporting what they perceive to be poor practice NGOs or shallow partnerships. Of particular concern to participants, and mentioned several times in both NGO and corporate interviews, was the issue of orphanages that did not have appropriate child protections in place and were not demonstrating good practice in the best interests of children<sup>4</sup>:

*One thing that we do see quite often with corporates is that they don't know about sustainable projects and what is and what isn't, and they're supporting things that in the UN's eyes and Unicef and various others, are not effective for the development of children and young people.*

Corporate representatives for the most part in this study were confident in what they would not support, however had little to add about what they would specifically look for in terms of strategic programming and practice, aside from the umbrella themes of their CSR interests.

With a high concentration of NGOs and relatively low regulation or coordination of their activities, it is often NGOs in Cambodia that hold each other to account. The NGO representatives in this study felt that the NGO sector collectively has an opportunity and a responsibility to educate corporate organisations and to commit to modeling good practice themselves. The table below lists some suggested characteristics of good practice NGOs, which NGOs believe corporates should prioritise in their selection of CSR partners.

*Figure 7 Participant views – what should corporates look for in a 'good practice' NGO?*

<b>Characteristics of a 'good practice' NGO as a CSR partner</b>
<i>Has a child protection policy in place</i>
<i>Networks well with other NGOs</i>
<i>Prioritises supporting rather than replacing the public education system</i>
<i>Values local knowledge</i>
<i>Is properly registered as an NGO in Cambodia</i>
<i>Has an international Board to oversee finances</i>
<i>Does not have a religious or political agenda</i>
<i>Is non-residential (if caring for children)</i>
<i>NB: This table shows advice given by corporate and NGO interview participants in the study. It is not intended as a definitive checklist. Developing guidelines may be a beneficial project in future.</i>

### **NGOs have an opportunity to educate the corporate sector about good practice**

NGOs perceived that they had a leading role to play in educating Cambodia's corporate sector about good education development practice.

*So first we also need to educate them and we also need to learn from them [about] what they see. So we educate them that this is a solution, a possibility. We engage them in a process, so with that process, from time to time, they will learn something from us.*

Encouragingly, several NGOs shared the experience that corporates respect the opportunity to learn – it doesn't always have to be a sales pitch:

<sup>4</sup> There has recently been a strong social marketing campaign in Cambodia educating both tourists and local businesses that children in orphanages "are not tourist attractions" and arguing that institutional care is not in the best interests of children. See [www.orphanages.no](http://www.orphanages.no)

*What I like to do is go and meet with their team and present [our organisation]...to explain in depth who we are and what we do. A lot of them are surprised...I guess a lot of them are under the perception that I'm coming in to ask directly for money. But no, it's all sorts of other ways you can support.*

Although participants articulated various different roles for the three sectors in their vision of ideal engagement, there was a strong sense that the NGO sector had a strong role to play, not only as a driver of education development, but as a driver of engagement in social development.

## What can we work towards?

Participants perceived that there are real opportunities for forward thinking people to connect through CSR to make an impact on education in Cambodia, even if on a relatively small scale. This was evidenced by efforts made by both corporate organisations and NGOs to reach out and engage, sometimes even dedicating a staff member to these relationships.

In discussing the successes and challenges they faced in cross-sector engagement, participants were asked to share their advice to other organisations. Although participants mostly spoke in terms of direct one-to-one partnerships, their strategic advice is also applicable on a sector-wide level. The figure below shows advice from participants directed within their sector as well as across sectors.

*Figure 8 Participant views - advice from within and across sectors*

<p><b>Corporates to NGOs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be honest and direct about impact</li> <li>• Have evidence to back up your project</li> <li>• Show that you can inspire your own people and others</li> <li>• Come prepared: why do you want this company to support you? Do you have assessments in place? Do you have a communications process in place?</li> <li>• Keep your supporters informed and engaged</li> </ul>	<p><b>NGOs to Corporates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage in social development</li> <li>• Support good practice NGOs – learn how to select them and what to look for</li> <li>• Appreciate that improving Cambodia's education system is a long term investment but that it is essential for the future of your business – we must start now</li> </ul>
<p><b>Corporates to corporates</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appreciate that improving Cambodia's education system is a long term investment with unique importance for the country's development</li> <li>• Appreciate that strengthening the community means strengthening your current and future customers</li> <li>• "Even small or big, [CSR] shows how strong your organisation is"</li> <li>• Start small by responding to current humanitarian needs (e.g. flood appeals or blood donations)</li> <li>• Choose an area that is a passion for management, but that can also engage staff - getting your staff engaged will build momentum</li> </ul>	<p><b>NGOs to NGOs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think past the simple donor-recipient relationships – strive beyond them.</li> <li>• Educate corporates about good practice</li> <li>• Educate corporates about effective education development and the wider policies in place</li> <li>• Research what corporates are interested in</li> <li>• Invite international corporate supporters to visit</li> <li>• Conquer the fear of competition with other NGOs: share and leverage resources and knowledge within the sector</li> <li>• Still, be able to identify your unique selling points</li> </ul>

Participant views reinforced a sense that CSR, as a form of public private engagement for education in Cambodia is based very heavily on direct relationships between organisations. Carefully managed relationships ideally allow for partners to leverage their resources and expertise for a successful partnership. The figure below reflects, in an ideal world, what participants would like to see each sector bring to the table, and what potential they perceive exists with the right kind of engagement.

*Figure 9 Participant views – What can each sector bring to partnerships?*

<p><b>Corporate Sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financing (on an organisational level and by contributing to the economy)</li> <li>• Longer term financial sustainability than NGOs in general</li> <li>• Higher profiles and platforms for awareness raising of social change issues (e.g. child protection, inclusion of persons with disabilities)</li> <li>• Can motivate the government, put pressure on or encourage specific ministries</li> <li>• Business-minded expertise and a different perspective to NGOs</li> <li>• Role model good CSR practices to other corporate organisations</li> <li>• Can facilitate connections between partner NGOs</li> <li>• Advise all sectors about human resource needs</li> <li>• Role model personal successes to younger generations</li> </ul>	<p><b>NGO Sector</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication and connections between the corporate sector and government (with regard to education development specifically)</li> <li>• Technical expertise in community development</li> <li>• Role model good education development practice</li> <li>• On the ground community connections</li> <li>• “Moral” oversight and pro-poor approaches</li> <li>• Accountability and impact reporting – trustworthiness</li> <li>• Public awareness raising of issues</li> <li>• Advocacy on legislation and policy</li> <li>• Can innovate in ways that the public sector may not be able to (but this will be most effective with government support)</li> <li>• Can leverage smaller scale impacts and roll out larger impact projects (help move past small donations)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Government</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The responsibility rests with the government for upholding the right to a basic education for all Cambodians – this includes quality of education services and equality of access.</li> <li>• The government can collaborate with non-state actor groups to increase coordination and transparency, and bring efforts in line with government policies and priorities.</li> </ul>	

# Discussion

The findings presented here show an appreciation among participants that we are still in the early days of how CSR practices with a focus on education will develop in Cambodia. The corporate representatives interviewed generally feel that contributing to education is part of 'doing the best they can' to 'support the needy' or 'give back to the community' in Cambodia while still returning profits and contributing to the developing economy. For their part, NGOs are beginning to see benefits in partnerships with the corporate sector that extend beyond donations, and they are encouraging each other to reach out to engage in creative, forward looking ways, while maintaining the integrity of good NGO practice.

The reasons why the corporate organisations in this study engage in CSR activities directed to education are similar to those found internationally. These include: strengthening community relationships, empowering and engaging employees; developing the workforce in communities of operation, and fostering economic opportunity for consumers, among others (van Fleet, 2012).

The term 'CSR' encompasses a range of practices in Cambodia that may elsewhere be defined as 'corporate philanthropy' or simply 'charitable donations'. Participants acknowledged that CSR in Cambodia is in the early stages, and the findings suggest that in the Cambodian context the use of the term suggests an aspiration, and a potential for CSR practice to contribute to education, although this connection is not yet fully developed in practice.

There is evidence that built-in CSR practices (i.e. those that have a direct connection to a company's core business practices) have a larger effect on poverty reduction than bolt-on practices in Cambodia (Schölmerich, 2013). This suggests that the more the corporate sector integrates the concept of CSR into their business models, the higher the impact of their CSR activities in support of education will be. It may, at first appear difficult to integrate support for education into business practices, however most of the corporates in this study did see a direct, if longer-term, impact for their company of a stronger and more equitable education system in Cambodia. It may be possible for NGOs and corporate organisations to capitalise on this common ground by innovating new ways to incorporate philanthropic interest in education development into core business practice in mutually beneficial ways. Some organisations in this study are already taking these steps, for example through social business initiatives run by NGOs themselves, which offer services to corporate partners.

At least for now, for this particular group of corporate organisations, CSR support to education is relatively small, ad hoc, and directed primarily to education NGOs. The goal is a better education system in Cambodia and this makes good sense from both a human rights and a business perspective. Given the current scale of these partnerships, the biggest negative implications seem to be relatively low scale, and focused mostly on inefficiency or waste when corporate organisations support 'bad practice' NGOs.



The international literature suggests that inefficiency and waste can also be a result of a lack of coordination of philanthropic activities (van Fleet, 2011). NGOs may be the most appropriate stakeholder to engage with the government, as well as to engage with the corporate sector. In their advice to fellow NGOs, NGO participants seemed to share the perception that the NGO sector needs to own this role as intermediaries, to take charge of educating corporates and the government about how their programming fits into the broader strategic context.

Despite this positive interest in corporate philanthropy and CSR for education development in Cambodia, it is important to consider these practices in the context of ePPP debates, and the specific concerns attached to them. International research suggests that we should proceed with caution. The risk is that philanthropy and partnership is assumed to be effective and benevolent, without a critical understanding of its impact and without careful management of how government responsibilities for providing free, quality education may be impacted in the longer term (Srivastava & Oh, 2012).

We can learn from the international debates on philanthropy to education on a global scale, paying special, critical attention to the limitations and concerns documented about CSR and corporate philanthropy as one kind of ePPP. The literature warns that as a form of ePPP, corporate philanthropy could: a) undermine government capacity to build an education system; b) be morally problematic; c) instigate a lower degree of government accountability; and d) interfere with the democratic nature of public education (van Fleet, 2012).

The findings suggest that we do need to be aware of these limitations in the Cambodian context, especially given the reliance and expectations placed on NGOs for a) understanding the policy context and articulating their impact within it b) themselves demonstrating good moral and organisational practice and accountability; c) contributing a layer of accountability for collaborations with the government and d) playing the lead role in engaging with government on education. Participants felt that responsibility for provision of public education rests with MoEYS, however relationships between NGOs and corporates were somewhat removed from this context. If this is the perceived role of NGOs, and CSR or corporate philanthropy programs on a local level in Cambodia are choosing to direct the majority of their support to NGOs, then how will this impact the role and capacity of MoEYS in the future?

In effect, most of the CSR and corporate philanthropy activities identified in this study were cases of partnerships *within the private sector* (i.e. partnerships between private NGOs and private corporate sector organisations), rather than public-private partnerships. This context makes it all the more important to understand how these relationships may affect government perceptions and future policy developments. This is a recommended research priority for education stakeholders in Cambodia.

It is encouraging that the set of CSR-supported programs found in this study show an alignment, at least on a surface level, with priorities set in Cambodia's Education Strategic Plan (2014-2018) including a stronger focus on lower secondary level as the second part of a basic education, vocational training and skills for young adults. Reflecting the priorities set by the government also brings these projects into line with expectations for the Education for All agenda post-2015, most notably through a stronger focus on lower secondary education.

However participants in this study did not expressly articulate their work in this context, other than the few participants who strongly believed that working in line with government systems and policies was a mark of a good practice NGO. Given the lack of any strategic framework and the generally weak engagement between these three sectors, the broader strategic *Education for All* agenda may be beyond the immediate concerns of participants.

But in an international study of 50 corporate philanthropy programs operating in 50 countries, less than 25% actually coordinated their activities with the recipient government's priorities (van Fleet, 2011a). This was highlighted as part of the reason for relative lack of impact of global corporate philanthropy on EFA goals (van Fleet, 2012). In Cambodia, forward thinking NGOs and corporate organisations who are embarking on creative partnerships may achieve stronger impact if strategically tied to wider policy frameworks.

The power of PPPs for delivering technical know-how on the ground is spoken about often (Santos, 2014). The findings of this study suggest that the NGO sector also has essential technical knowledge to bring to the table, and NGOs are encouraging each other to assert this. The NGO sector is considered to represent a unique combination of accountability (which is not perceived of the public sector) and knowledge of wider education policy and practice (which is not perceived of the corporate sector). Still, in order for effective harnessing of the enthusiasm for CSR and corporate philanthropy to education, van Fleet finds that:

*private donors must actively engage in the technical dimensions of education and the education sector at large must aim to better coordinate and strategically align the various actors, motivations and education needs of the most marginalized children (2011b).*

This study identified activities supported by CSR that target some of the most vulnerable children in Cambodia. On the other hand, participants were also critical of the lack of access and quality in the public education system as a whole, for all children. If Cambodia, like many countries in the world, continues to see a growth of private education services and private schools, the risk is that efforts to improve the public system will be undermined.

Interestingly, the 'philanthropic' or charitable characteristics of CSR activity found in this study are balanced by a focus on programs that provide opportunities to university students, not always via NGOs. The corporate interest in these programs, which bring direct impact on the workforce in the shorter-term, suggests that there may be strong potential to harness CSR interest for public lower secondary and high school education if corporates begin to understand the impact of less-immediate returns on their investments in education.

Clear common ground was identified from which to move towards a more coordinated approach to investing in education for Cambodia's collective future, however participants identified challenges in engaging at the technical level, and perceived a general lack of awareness of education development policy and practice among the corporate sector.

The findings clearly show that trust and interpersonal relationships are key to the CSR partnerships described by participants. This suggests that CSR support to education in Cambodia will continue to develop on an organisation-to-organisation basis.

If CSR efforts in Cambodia are to be efficiently directed to increasing equitable education for all Cambodians, these partnerships need to be carefully considered and better documented. The UN Global Compact, for example outlines principles for engagement between governments, civil society and corporate organisations, and can provide a framework for assessing the quality of partnerships. NGO and corporate participants alike expressed real concerns that the poor NGO practice as well as poor CSR practice they often witness in Cambodia is resulting in inefficiencies and placing children at risk. There are strong efforts underway to encourage good practice knowledge sharing within the NGO sector, perhaps most notably by Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, which has developed a certification system for NGOs in Cambodia as "a collective response" that works "in partnership with NGO community, donors/funding agencies, and other

stakeholders to professionalize and strengthen the NGO sector in Cambodia by encouraging and promoting NGO accountability and good organisational practice'. These types of initiatives have a role to play in providing a structure for accountability that could be applied in corporate-NGO partnerships.

If the evolution of CSR within a developing country context is reinforced by cultural factors (Jamali and Mirshak, 2006) then CSR in Cambodia is likely to develop in unique ways. Evidence presented by this study shows that there is an opportunity, as the Cambodian economy grows and as the concept of CSR and corporate philanthropy in the Cambodian context grows with it, to trial more innovative, transparent, and mutually beneficial partnership models that work towards *Education for All*.

# Conclusion & Recommendations

Given the unique power of education for sustainable development, there is an opportunity in Cambodia for NGOs, the corporate sector, and governments to build on the common ground for investing in education that was identified in this study. The corporate organisations in Cambodia who aspire to good business practice through CSR or philanthropy activities are potentially powerful allies and advocates for the *Education for All* agenda. Education NGOs are already in a unique position to channel corporate support for education towards the public school system through their programming *if* they clearly demonstrate good practice. They may also be in a position to encourage carefully considered partnerships between the corporate, NGO and government sectors.

Three broad recommendations can serve as entry points for beginning a conversation on how to harness CSR and philanthropic support to education in Cambodia in a critical and strategic way.

**1) Develop a guide for CSR and corporate philanthropy partnerships for education in Cambodia.** Such a guide should: demonstrate an appreciation for good practice by both NGO and corporate partners, serve as a tool for linking CSR-supported activities with broader national education development goals, and encourage creative engagement with the public sector when possible and appropriate.

**2) Efficient coordination and technical knowledge sharing.** This can begin on a small scale, and will be most effective if low cost, and inclusive of corporate, NGO and government stakeholders who are already engaging in creative CSR partnerships. An NGO sector group such as NEP may be best placed to lead this coordination, by collecting information from its members and coordinating knowledge sharing opportunities.

**3) Better and more creative partnerships.** Interpersonal and face-to-face relationships are key to CSR and corporate philanthropy in Cambodia. Partners can continue to strive for better efficiency, innovation and coordination by doing their part at the organisational level and in their partnerships.

*Forward thinking NGOs can aim to:*

- Demonstrate good practice and help to educate corporate supporters on what this means (in line with accepted minimum standards such as those set by CCC or the UN).
- Explain to corporate supporters how programs fit within the broader strategic context of education development in Cambodia.
- Develop activities that engage the corporate sector in supporting public systems, and consider creative ways to engage the public sector in these (including at the provincial or district level).

- Engage in knowledge sharing within the sector and across sectors.

*Forward thinking corporates can aim to:*

- Incorporate CSR support for education into their core business practice.
- Consider ways for their CSR and philanthropic activities to support the public school system, especially at lower and upper secondary level.
- Consider ways to engage with public sector stakeholders as well as with NGOs in collaborative partnerships.
- Engage further with the technical dimensions of education development, in order to identify and collaborate better with NGO partners.
- Engage in knowledge sharing within the sector and across sectors.

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# Appendix

## Interview & Focus Group Guides

### *NGO Sector Interview Guide*

#### **Current support relationships:**

1. Let's start with a brief overview of your organisation's projects or programs that receive support from private businesses.
2. Is this support consistent from year to year? How confident are you that it will continue in the future?
3. How did these relationships come about? Did you approach the business, or did they approach your organisation?
4. Does your organisation have a strategy for finding support from private companies?
5. How are agreements made? For example, an MOU, a one off donation, etc.?

#### **Managing Relationships:**

*Now we'd like to hear from you about how your organisation manages relationships with private sector supporters. We'd like to hear about your priorities, experience and lessons learned.*

6. Who in your organisation is responsible for managing the relationship and why?
7. How easy is it to manage the relationship?
8. What is the greatest challenge?
9. What is the greatest benefit?
10. Do you publish information about the support you receive from the private sector?
11. From your perspective, why do these companies support your NGO? How do companies choose which NGOs to support? (*prompt: does the company have a policy/strategy/guidelines for supporting NGOs?*)

#### **Impact:**

*Let's discuss the impact of this support from the private sector for the beneficiaries of your organisation.*

12. How do you report to the business? What do they require, and what does your organisation provide? (*prompts: if the company does not require reports, do you still produce a report? Do you have an M&E framework, how do you produce reports, how much detail is in your reports? etc.*).
13. Do you feel that the company has a strong understanding of the impact of their support? How do they know?
14. Do you feel that they support the highest priorities of your NGO? (*Prompt: have you approached them about supporting other projects? Do you feel that your supporters will listen to your suggestions? Why or why not?*)
15. Do you feel that the support actively targets the most needy of Cambodia's population?
16. Is there ever any interaction between the supporting business and your beneficiaries (for example volunteering, special events, site visits). How do you feel about this involvement? (*Prompt: how about the direct impact on beneficiaries?*)



**Wider impact on education:**

Now we'd like to ask about your perspective on this issue more generally, in the education sector in Cambodia.

17. Do you think that it's important for the private sector to support and engage with education NGOs in Cambodia? *(prompt: Why or why not? How can we encourage more companies to support education?)*
18. Do you think that private companies can be key players in education development by supporting NGOs? Are they partners who understand what you do, or are they only financial supporters?
19. Do you feel that this support contributes to reducing inequality in access to education in Cambodia?
20. What messages or advice do you have for private sector companies who want to support education-sector NGOs?
21. What is your best advice for other NGOs wishing to engage with private sector support? Do you have any other lessons learned that you would like to share?

**Wrap up questions:**

22. We've come to the end of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to add or clarify? Is there any part of this interview that you would like to review?
23. Would you be comfortable putting us in touch with a representative of one or more of your private business supporters so that we can interview them as part of this research? We will be asking them similar questions about their perceptions of private sector support to education NGOs in Cambodia.
24. Do you have any other concerns that you would like to discuss?

## Corporate Sector Interview Guide

**Current relationships:**

Let's start with a brief overview of your company, and your charitable or philanthropic activities. Why is your company interested in philanthropy to education?

1. Is this support consistent from year to year? What are your future plans?
2. How do these relationships come about? Do you approach the organisation, or do they approach your company? Why do you support the particular NGOs you support?
3. Does your company have a framework for supporting NGOs, i.e. a CSR policy or philanthropic guidelines (if so please provide information).
4. Do you publish the grants and support directed to NGOs?
5. How are agreements made? For example, an MoU, a one off donation, etc.?

**Managing Relationships:**

Now we'd like to hear from you about how your company manages relationships with the NGOs you support. We'd like to hear about your priorities, experience and lessons learned.

6. Who in your company is responsible for managing the relationship and why?
7. How easy is it to manage the relationship?
8. What is the greatest challenge?
9. What is the greatest benefit?
10. From your perspective, why are NGOs interested in engaging with your company in particular?

**Impact:**

Let's discuss the impact of your support for the beneficiaries of the NGOs you support.

11. How do NGOs report to you? What do you require? (i.e. reports, operational, activity, financial or M&E framework, etc.)
12. How detailed is your understanding of the impact of your support? *(prompt: impact on inequality?)*
13. Does your company's support actively target the most needy of Cambodia's population?
14. Is there ever any interaction between your company and the beneficiaries of the NGO you support (for example volunteering, special events, site visits). How do

you feel about this involvement? (Prompt: how about the direct impact on beneficiaries?)

**Wider impact on education:**

Now we'd like to ask about your perspective on this issue more generally, in the education sector in Cambodia.

15. Do you think that it's important for the private sector to support and engage with education NGOs in Cambodia? (prompt: Why or why not? How can we encourage more companies to support education? Impact on inequality?)
16. Do you think that private companies can be key players in education development by supporting NGOs? Do you consider your company to be a development stakeholder?
17. Do you feel that your support contributes to reducing inequality in education access in Cambodia?
18. What messages or advice do you have for:
  1. private companies
  2. NGOs
19. Do you have any other lessons learned that you would like to share?

**Wrap up questions:**

20. We've come to the end of our questions. Is there anything else you would like to add or clarify? Is there any part of this interview that you would like to review?
21. Do you have any other concerns that you would like to discuss?

## MoEYS Officials Focus Group Guide

### Government Representative Focus Group Session

#### Research on Corporate Sector support for education in Cambodia

**Objectives:**

- Understand the perspectives of government representatives on corporate sector support for education in Cambodia.
- Collect advice from government stakeholders about how the corporate sector and NGO sector could better collaborate on education issues in the future.
- Introduce the research to government stakeholders and identify ways that the research findings can be effectively distributed while engaging stakeholders.

**Agenda:**

Time	Agenda Item	Person
	Welcome and open the session and Introductions	TLC/NEP
	Background & context to the research	TLC
	Open for questions & concerns	TLC
	Focus Group Session	TLC/NEP
	Open for questions, concerns and suggestions	TLC
	Close meeting	NEP

**Key questions:**

1. Do you think that it's important for the corporate sector to support and engage with education in Cambodia? If so, in what way?
2. Do you think that private companies can be key players in education development by supporting NGOs?
3. Do you feel that company support contributes to reducing inequality in education access in Cambodia? Why/why not?
4. How can MoEYS, Corporates and NGOs work together? What are the roles of the government (MoEYS), Corporates and NGOs?
6. What messages or advice do you have for:
  - a) Private companies
  - b) NGOs