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NGO EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP



**ENHANCING COLLABORATION
 BETWEEN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AND
 DISTRICT AND PROVINCIAL OFFICES OF
 EDUCATION**

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ACRONYMS

CCWC	Commune council for women and children
CFS	Child friendly school
D&D	Decentralization and de-concentration
DOE	District Office of Education
DTMT	District Training and Monitoring Team
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NGO	Non-governmental organization
POE	Provincial Office of Education
P-ESWG	Provincial education sector working group
SBM	School-based management
SEST	Siem Reap Education Support Team
SSC	School support committee
TPAP	Teacher Policy Action Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent decades education authority and decision-making in Cambodia has increasingly transitioned to the local level. In the 1990s school cluster policies grouped schools together based on geographic regions to pool resources, share knowledge, and provide support to one another. In 2002, the creation of the school support committee (SSC), a group of 6 to 12 community members, aimed to increase community participation in education and support principals and teachers to monitor student learning and school development.

The school-based management (SBM) reforms currently being implemented by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) aim to further decentralize education decision-making and transition additional roles and responsibilities to the district and school level. As more authority transitions to the local level, it is important to examine how local and national decision-makers can best coordinate with one another.

This research topic was proposed by members of the Siem Reap Education Support Team (SEST), a provincial working group bringing together non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field of education in Siem Reap province to coordinate information sharing, advocacy, and support of member programs. SEST members raised concerns about some principals and SSC members receiving little or no support upon assuming their roles, such as explanation of their roles or trainings on how to fulfill their responsibilities. After consultation with SEST members, three major research goals emerged: (a) to uncover what support is available for new principals or SSC members; (b) to find out what support principals and SSC members are able to access in practice; and (c) to highlight good collaboration practices between principals, SSCs, community members, and district office of education (DOE) and provincial office of education (POE) officials.

Past research found that lack of or inefficient collaboration between communities, school management (principals and SSC members), and DOE and POE officials is a significant barrier to school development (Fata and Kreng, 2015; Thida and Joy, 2012). This new research builds on those findings by uncovering effective collaboration practices and providing clear recommendations for how to strengthen engagement between the school, district, and provincial levels.

The study examines good collaboration practices in Siem Reap province through interviews with five school principals and two POE officials, as well as focus groups with five SSCs and three DOEs. The research also incorporates field observation notes and two case studies of good collaboration practices. The data collected was largely qualitative, which allowed for interview subjects to explain the specific conditions or decisions that influenced their good collaboration practices.

Numerous good collaboration practices of principals, SSCs, and DOE and POE officials are highlighted in this research. At the district and provincial level, monitoring visits to schools

help DOE and POE officials stay updated on school progress and challenges, and evaluate what supports are needed at individual schools. Regular DOE meetings of all principals in the district, and POE meetings of all DOE officials in the province, facilitate a consistent chain of communication from the local to the provincial level. Additionally, most principals report receiving numerous trainings when they were new to their roles, including trainings on management, leadership, gender, and finance and reporting. While trainings received are helpful, principals request additional trainings in financial management, computers, communication, and English language.

At the school level, regular SSC meetings facilitate communication between the principal and SSC members. Collectively drafting the annual school development plan in consultation with the community also strengthens engagement between SSC, principal, and community members. Holding additional community consultations during the year and/or reporting on school progress at commune council meetings keeps the community informed, promotes transparency, and encourages community involvement in school development. Financial transparency is a key priority to build trust between principals, SSCs, and community members. Many principals and SSCs document every income and expense and make those records easily accessible to community members.

The research also uncovered key challenges to good collaboration. SSCs rarely receive government training and therefore feel they have limited skills to support schools. The trainings SSC members report receiving are given by NGOs or NGOs in partnership with government, making training sporadic and unequal across schools. Lack of staff time and funding as well as far travel distances in rural communities are key barriers to DOE and POE officials conducting monitoring visits and trainings. Time constraints and lack of funding are also challenges for principals and SSC members to attend meetings and community consultations, or coordinate learning visits with neighboring schools. Knowledge of the upcoming transfer of roles and responsibilities under SBM is limited among principals and SSC members. In order for transfers to proceed successfully, further trainings on how to manage new responsibilities will be required.

Based on the challenges and good practice findings, this research concludes with recommendations to enhance support to the local level and improve collaboration between the provincial, district, and local levels. At the district and provincial level, recommendations focus on improving comprehensiveness of trainings to principals and SSCs, facilitating learning and knowledge sharing visits between schools, and ensuring the SBM rollout includes trainings on how to manage the roles being transferred and involves community members who play key roles in supporting schools. At the local level, recommendations include regular communication from principal to DOE, SSC members training and advising students on life and career skills, and school management partnering with community institutions such as commune councils to keep the community informed on school needs and activities.

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Cambodian government have been promoting the ‘decentralization’ of education in Cambodia, meaning the transfer of more decision-making and authority to the local level. As in many other Southeast Asian countries, the method chosen for decentralizing education in Cambodia has been school-based management (SBM) (Thida and Joy, 2012). SBM is a broad concept, but one widely-cited definition is: “the systematic and consistent decentralization to the school level of authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matters related to school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies, curriculum, standards, and accountabilities” (Caldwell, 2009).

A key argument in favor of decentralization is that local people have firsthand understanding of local contexts. Therefore, when resources and authority are channeled through the local level, decisions and resource allocation can be more responsive to local needs (Thida and Joy, 2012). In order to function in practice, decentralization requires local actors who understand the larger decision-making structures, as well as national and sub-national actors who help coordinate local decisions with broader government policy and actions (Pellini, 2005).

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) makes policies and decisions at the national level. Within MOEYS, provincial offices of education (POEs) and district offices of education (DOEs) are responsible for supporting and monitoring schools. The POE generally assumes a monitoring and oversight role, while the DOE supports more day-to-day school functions and management of program funds (UNESCO, 2011). Because they serve as the links between the national government and local schools, DOE and POE play important roles in ensuring accountability in both directions. They disseminate national policies down to the local level and ensure local priorities are communicated up to the national level. POE and DOE are also responsible for providing training and ongoing support to principals and school support committees (MOEYS, 2015).

The School Support Committee (SSC), established by MOEYS in 2002 to increase support for school development at the local level, is a committee of diverse community actors such as teachers, parents, monks, local authorities, and community residents. A well-functioning SSC can facilitate communication between community members and teachers and principals. Similarly, school principals serve as a major link between the community and DOE and POE, conveying priorities and developments between actors. A well-functioning and adequately supported school management team¹ (principal and SSC) can support SBM functions at the local level to promote quality education and a positive learning environment for students and staff.

¹ For the purpose of this research, ‘school management’ will refer to the principal and SSC.

While SBM policies and the establishment of SSCs have increased community participation in education in some cases, past research and evaluations show that community support and ineffective school management are major challenges to promoting quality education. School principals and SSCs often receive little training and lack clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This often results in inaction and limits their capacity to improve education in the community (Thida and Joy, 2012). Due to low levels of collaboration and communication among key actors, school principals and SSCs are often unaware of or unable to access support available to them (Fata and Kreng, 2015; NEP, 2011). One recent survey of a diverse group of school and community actors cited five major challenges to community participation in education. Four of the five challenges related to principal's and SSC's lack of understanding of roles, or lack of collaboration between local and non-local stakeholders (Fata and Kreng, 2015).

While much recent research identifies low collaboration as a major challenge and makes broad recommendations for parties to 'improve collaboration,' there is little research for school management and DOEs/POEs on *how* to better engage one another. This new research will build on past findings and recommendations by uncovering effective practices and providing clear recommendations for how to strengthen engagement between the school, district, and provincial levels. It will provide an opportunity for schools with strong collaboration practices to share their lessons and practices with other schools facing similar challenges. A compilation of diverse lessons learned will allow individual communities and schools to select the recommendations most applicable to their unique situation.

This study will focus on the following types of collaboration:

- (1) Regular, effective communication between parties (SSC, school principal, DOE and POE).
- (2) Mutual exchange of relevant information between parties. DOE/POE ensuring new policies and direction are clearly communicated from the national level down to the local level, and school management ensuring local developments, challenges, and requests for assistance are communicated up to the DOE/POE level.
- (3) POE and DOE offering and communicating trainings and support to build capacity of school management. School management accessing available training and support opportunities and conveying areas where support is most needed to DOE/POE.
- (4) School management communicating school challenges clearly to DOE/POE (and wider community), and DOE/POE helping school management identify available support or good practices to address these challenges.
- (5) School principal ensuring understanding of SSC roles and responsibilities, establishing an open and transparent relationship with SSC, and involving SSC in

relevant aspects of school development and management.

- (6) SSC regularly seeking community input and communicating community priorities to school principal. SSC assisting with planning, fundraising, school enrollment, and other tasks to help school principal advance community and school priorities.

The purpose of this study is not to prove that lack of collaboration is a challenge for school management or DOE and POE, as that would be duplicative of previous research. The purpose is also not to perform a quantitative analysis of what constitutes 'strong' collaboration or what results good collaboration produce, as this would not provide clear, specific next steps for school management. The aim of this research is to collect lessons learned from schools with strong collaboration practices so these lessons can be used by other schools in Cambodia.

Research Objectives

The specific objectives of this research are:

- (1) To uncover what support currently is available for principals and SSC members.
- (2) To examine what support school principals and SSC members are aware of and able to access in practice.
- (3) To examine schools with strong collaboration between school management and DOE/POE.
- (4) To compile lessons learned for enhancing collaboration between school management and DOE/POE to inform clear, accessible advocacy materials for use by P-ESWG, schools, communities, and other stakeholders.

Research Questions

This research study aims to answer the following questions:

- (1) What support exists for principals and SSC members?
- (2) What actions do DOE and POE officials take to inform school principals and SSCs of the available support and how to access it?
- (3) What support are principals and SSC members aware of and able to access from the DOE, POE, or other sources?
- (4) Regarding schools with strong collaboration practices:
 - a) How well does the school principal represent community and SSC priorities to DOE and POE?
 - b) How do school principals and SSCs access the support available to them?
 - c) What strategies do school principals use that have been successful for collaborating with DOE and accessing the support they need?

- d) What strategies do SSCs use to ensure community priorities are heard by school principal and DOE/POE?
- (5) What are DOE and POE perspectives on collaboration with schools? What practical suggestions do they have for school management?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Collaboration in policy

In recent decades, education policy in Cambodia has increasingly transitioned decision-making to the local level. By establishing committees of community members and encouraging more training of local actors (including school principals, teachers, and SSCs), these policies have encouraged greater government collaboration with local communities. During the 1990s, this transition focused on “school clusters,” collections of schools grouped together based on geographic proximity. These clusters served as support networks where schools could share knowledge, pool resources, and work together to improve education quality at the larger community level (Pellini and Brendenberg, 2015).

In 2002, the creation of the School Support Committee (SSC) gave the community a direct pipeline to school decision-making. “Theoretically, the SSC established the last link in the vertical integration of educational decentralization: national ministry of education, provincial office of education, district office of education, school administration, school support committee, and local community” (TLC, 2012). SSC members are elected and comprise a diverse group of individuals including village and commune chiefs, teachers, principals, parents, and other community members. According to the MOEYS 2012 SSC Guidelines, the SSC’s main duties are:

1. Formulating, implementing, and monitoring the school development plan
2. Enrolling children in school
3. Monitoring student learning
4. Generating revenue and mobilizing funds
5. Overseeing school infrastructure construction and repairs
6. Sharing experience and life skills
7. Preventing irregularities inside and outside the school
8. Expanding education awareness and building capacity

Since the establishment of SSCs, education policies generally assume community participation happens in two ways: through direct support of school activities and through the SSC (Save the Children, 2015).

The 2007 MOEYS Child Friendly School (CFS) Policy laid out a framework for ensuring schools recognize and nurture children’s basic rights and strengthen the quality and effectiveness of basic education. The policy gives schools tangible goals to strive for to

improve their learning environments for students and teachers. It includes six dimensions of a child friendly school, two of which focus on community participation and collaboration:

Dimension 5: The participation of children, families and communities in the running of their local school

Dimension 6: The National Education System supports and encourages schools to become more child friendly

The CFS policy notes the need for school principal leadership training and one of the implementation principles is to, “strengthen cooperation and collaboration with commitment-holders such as community, national and international organizations and NGOs in the development of Child Friendly School programs with a high level of accountability” (MOEYS, 2007).

MOEYS’ Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018 (ESP) is framed within the national priority to transfer more roles and responsibility to the sub-national level (see *Literature Review: Decentralization and de-concentration*). Preparing for these transfers, the ESP includes numerous strategies to strengthen collaboration at the community level and build the skills of school management through more effective guidance and training. The ESP states that DOE has a key role in deepening the role of communities and parents to address social and economic issues affecting education, and strengthening leadership and management skills at the school level to ensure responsible operation of schools (MOEYS, 2014).

Building on the ESP, the MOEYS Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) outlines policy goals and strategies to improve recruitment and retention of high quality teachers. It includes a significant focus on capacity building for teachers, school principals, and MOEYS, POE, and DOE officials (MOEYS, 2015). One of TPAP’s nine core strategies is “strengthening effectiveness of school leaders.” The tasks outlined in this strategy include conducting a baseline survey of school principals to assess capacity and needs, creating a School Management Handbook, and training school principals. Other TPAP sub-strategies include enhancing SSC participation in school operation, strengthening SSC roles and responsibilities, and training MOEYS officials (including at the POE and DOE level). Implementation of TPAP activities is staggered between 2015-2020. (MOEYS, 2015).

MOEYS compiles a performance report after the conclusion of each school year. According to their analysis of the 2014-15 school year, MOEYS provided capacity building training to 1,616 SSC members. The report also notes that MOEYS developed a guidebook for teachers and trained school principals on management, leadership, and governance. School principals and POE and DOE officials were also trained on monitoring and evaluation (MOEYS, 2016b).

Collaboration in research

Research has consistently demonstrated that community engagement and collaboration are crucial to ensuring quality education in Cambodia. “Cambodian communities have shown a

deep understanding of the importance of education and, though government spending on education is increasing, they provide substantial material contributions for the improvement of schools” (Pellini, 2005). Historically, it has been common for over half of school financing to come from community households rather than government funding (Bray, 2005). Local pagodas are also integral to education as they often serve as schools, especially for children from poor or vulnerable families (Pellini, 2007).

A 2011 study found that out of ten factors influencing education, household respondents chose community support as the most important factor that contributed to improving education quality. This study emphasized that community engagement and parental involvement have the potential to revitalize education even at a time when peoples’ confidence in public schools is dwindling (NEP, 2011).

Numerous evaluations of NGO education programs highlight collaboration between actors as an essential component of school development (Save the Children, 2015; TLC, 2014). A key aspect of collaboration is that it requires each actor to make space in their school development role to listen to and work with other actors. Not only do community members need to become involved in school activities, but the school principal, DOE, and POE need to respect the role of community members and not interfere in local school development responsibilities.

Collectively drafting a school development plan is one way the community, school, and government can collaborate in practice. This often involves school management holding a consultation to receive input from community members on their priorities for education. The SSC, with the school principal, then draft a school development plan to submit to government officials. DOE officials can participate in the community consultation or provide feedback on the first draft of the development plan. Once the plan is drafted, school management can work with DOE, POE, and the community to identify government or external funding for school development plan activities (Fata and Kreng, 2015; TLC, 2014).

The fact that engagement and collaboration is recognized as essential by virtually all actors in education is not a point to be glossed over. While collaboration may fall short in practice (see *Collaboration in practice*), any recommendations for improving collaboration can start from the common ground that all actors acknowledge strong collaboration is a key component of quality education.

Collaboration in practice

Community participation in education in Cambodia has historically been strong, but compartmentalized. While past policies have achieved positive reforms, these benefits tend to be concentrated in one level of the education hierarchy, rather than increasing collaboration across institutions.

For example, evaluation of school clusters showed mixed results. Some research found clusters were “generally under resourced and their full potential unrealized.” While clusters helped schools share resources and learn from one another, there was little collaboration between the local and government levels, especially in terms of training and capacity building. While Cluster School Committees were established at the local, district, and provincial level, they rarely met and were unclear about their functions (Pellini and Brendenberg, 2015).

A 2002 UNICEF review of Cambodia school clusters found that a two-tiered system emerged where clusters receiving NGO support performed dramatically better than clusters not receiving NGO support. Non-supported cluster schools were found to have very low community engagement (Pellini and Brendenberg, 2015). This suggests that lack of human resources support, such as training, on-going technical support, or funding for additional staff, are key barriers to local participation in school development. School clusters did demonstrate some success in their goals to facilitate resource and knowledge sharing, and strengthen communication at the local level. However, they made little impact on improving collaboration between local, district, provincial, and national level actors.

Similar to school clusters, SSCs have shown some positive results while also highlighting gaps in current practice. Since SSC members often include principals, teachers, and community members, SSCs generally increased collaboration at the local level. SSCs increased community engagement by giving parents and community members a direct mechanism to join school development work. However, this engagement was often limited to fundraising and infrastructure, with the community less involved in monitoring student learning or teaching methods (Fata and Kreng, 2015; Thida and Joy, 2012; NEP, 2011).

Additionally, some SSCs struggle to recruit and retain members, and others technically exist as names on paper but are inactive in supporting school development. Although SSC guidelines state members should be elected annually, in practice members are sometimes just appointed by the school principal and in many communities elections only happen when an existing SSC member leaves, rather than occurring annually (TLC, 2012).

SSCs face similar challenges as school clusters, namely lack of resources and capacity-building support. SSC members, especially in vulnerable communities, often have low education and literacy levels and receive little training on their roles and responsibilities (Fata and Kreng, 2015). They therefore feel unqualified to be involved in school decision-making and often leave complicated decisions to the school principal. Similarly, school principals hold many key responsibilities for the school but there is inconsistency in the training and support they receive. Many are overwhelmed by their numerous new responsibilities and without sufficient support, feel they learn mostly by trial and error (Thida and Joy, 2012).

High levels of poverty in many communities only exacerbate lack of community engagement and collaboration. Since parents and SSC members engage on an unpaid, volunteer basis, they often have to prioritize other work and home responsibilities that place significant demands on their time. Lack of transportation to visit the school or attend community meetings is also a factor for many (TLC, 2014). Just as with school clusters, SSCs receiving NGO support (even temporarily) engage more in school development and show greater results than SSCs without NGO support (Fata and Kreng, 2015; TLC, 2014).

MOEYS officials and local village and commune leaders have expressed that their heavy workload prevents them from prioritising collaboration with school management. One recent study highlighted that, “SSC members seemed to have little support from the local authorities. The interviews supported that the local authorities did not care much about SSC work; they only cared about their core work at their workplace” (Fata and Kreng, 2015).

Capacity building takes significant time and effort, and does not happen overnight. POE and DOE officials with demanding schedules may find it easier to prioritize the short-term efficiency of making decisions themselves, rather than building capacity for this decision-making at the school and local level. When government is involved in nearly all school decision-making, community members, SSC members, and parents often do not see space to participate in school development (NEP, 2011).

Research shows that community support for schools happens in two ways: through material means, such as contributing funds or materials for school development, or through non-material means such as contributing ideas and priorities to the school development plan, budget, or curriculum. Unfortunately, community participation in practice mostly happens through material contributions. This is partly due to lack of consultation on the part of school principals or government officials, and partly due to low capacity and confidence of SSC and community members. While education policies often include training and capacity building actions, in practice this happens sporadically rather than as part of larger, coordinated efforts.

Decentralization and de-concentration

Currently, the Cambodian government is in the midst of implementing a decentralization and de-concentration (D&D) initiative across all sectors to shift power and accountability to the local level. In the education sector, this takes the form of school-based management (SBM). The goal of SBM is to improve the quality of education by eliminating barriers of hierarchy and bureaucracy and allowing for more individualized solutions based on a specific community’s strengths and needs.

The recent MOEYS policy on D&D reform in education details four main objectives (MOEYS, 2016):

1. Develop a legal framework for education management in line with the government-wide D&D reform
2. Transfer functions and resources to the local level
3. Build the capacity of local institutions and actors to take on additional responsibility
4. Ensure social inclusiveness and equity

Cambodia's current D&D reforms are occurring within the larger movement towards SBM taking place across the Asia Pacific region (Thida and Joy, 2012). Since various forms of SBM have been piloted in recent decades, the new D&D policy can benefit from an existing collection of lessons learned. While a wealth of research exists on the effectiveness of SBM, a comprehensive review of SBM is beyond the scope of this research. What this research will examine is the intersection of SBM and efforts to enhance collaboration among various levels of education actors.

A key lesson that emerges from that intersection is that SBM has the potential to exacerbate existing inequalities in education delivery (TLC, 2012; Shoarku, 2008). Transferring authority and accountability to the local level has obvious benefits, such as eliminating bureaucratic barriers and allowing for solutions tailored to local contexts. However, as was shown above with school clusters and SSCs, community ownership requires local understanding of roles and responsibilities and local individuals capable of fulfilling those responsibilities.

For example, past research on SBM found that, "introducing teacher autonomy too quickly without adequate training often leads to ineffective reforms" and "decentralizing management to the school level increases variations within the country, thereby widening the gap between rich and poor areas" (TLC, 2012).

MOEYS SBM reforms are in the early stages of rollout. It is clear that effective collaboration across actors and levels of decision-making is critical to SBM success. Therefore, the researchers hope the practical lessons learned from this study will be valuable in informing the scale up of SBM reforms across the country.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research examines five schools in Siem Reap province. The research topic was proposed by members of the Siem Reap Education Support Team (SEST), a provincial education sector working group (P-ESWG) bringing together NGOs working in the field of education in Siem Reap province to coordinate information sharing, advocacy, and support of member programs. SEST members raised concerns about some principals and SSC members receiving minimal support upon assuming their roles, such as explanation of their

roles or trainings on how to fulfill their responsibilities. After consultation with SEST members, three major goals emerged for this research: (a) to uncover what support is available for new principals or SSC members; (b) to find out what support school management is able to access in practice; and (c) to highlight good practices of collaboration between school management, DOE, POE, and communities to access support in their roles and support for school development.

Since the research topic was proposed by the provincial education sector working group, it was decided focusing the study on Siem Reap province would most directly examine the research goals SEST proposed. Siem Reap province contains the urban area of Siem Reap town as well as many very rural communities in the rest of the province. This allows for good practices to be drawn from urban and rural schools, and schools that are varying distances from a DOE or POE office. These lessons can provide insight into on-the-ground challenges and successes for those working in education in other provinces and at the national level, including school management teams, advocates, and policymakers.

SEST members, drawing on their extensive experience working with schools across Siem Reap province, recommended seven total schools for inclusion in the study. Schools were assessed based on the following criteria:

1. The school has undergone strong development by improving infrastructure, building community relationships, and/or creating a positive learning environment for students and teachers.
2. School management performs well in their roles and are actively involved in school development, including drafting school development plans, seeking funding from government and external sources, and applying creative solutions to school challenges.
3. School management builds strong relationships between principal, SSC, community, DOE/POE, and NGOs.

Though the above listed criteria is somewhat anecdotal, it is based on the experiences of SEST member organizations and individuals working with schools and DOE and POE officials across Siem Reap for many years. The aim of this research is to take this initial anecdotal evidence and explore in greater depth what collaboration successes and challenges each of these schools demonstrate. The final schools were selected to ensure diversity in terms of geography, school level (primary or secondary), and proximity to DOE/POE offices.

School Name	Commune	District	Primary or secondary	Proximity to DOE	Proximity to Siem Reap
1. Khnat	Khnat	Pouk	secondary	7 km	7 km
2. Cham Bak He	Cham Bak He	Pouk	primary	5 km	18 km
3. Krabei Riel	Krabei Riel	Siem Reap	secondary	6 km	13 km
4. Vessvan	Bakong	Prasat Bakong	primary	4 km	14 km
5. Samky	Along Sam Nor	Chi Kraeng	secondary	12 km	76 km

At each of the five schools, one interview was conducted with the school principal and a separate focus group was conducted with the SSC. All SSC members were invited to participate in the focus group. DOEs were selected for interview in three of the districts with participating schools. As the research focused on Siem Reap province and only at the primary and lower secondary school levels, the primary POE and lower secondary POE were also interviewed. All interviews and focus groups were conducted at the relevant school (for principal and SSC), relevant office (for DOE or POE) or other nearby location requested by the participant(s).

Data collection

Due to the subject of the research and the focus on sharing lessons learned, data collected was primarily qualitative. This allowed for interview and focus group subjects to explain examples of strong collaboration practices, and how the unique environment or skill sets of different actors influenced the actions taken to enhance collaboration. Data collection methods included focus groups, interviews, field observation, and a literature review. Focus groups contained between three and seven participants and interviews were individual. Field observation notes were recorded by the research team and analyzed alongside focus group and interview notes. From the data collected, two schools were chosen as foci of case studies to highlight their specific collaboration strategies and results.

Data collection method	Subjects	Number Conducted	Total Participants
Interview			
	Principal	5	5
	POE Official	2	2
Focus Group			
	SSC	5	25
	DOE Official	3	12

Data collection activities were completed in November 2016. All interviews and focus groups were conducted in Khmer language. The research team read a verbal consent form (see *Appendices*) out loud and obtained verbal consent from each participant. Interview and focus group content was captured through note taking and use of an audio recorder and then typed up in English language for analysis and use in the final report.

Limitations

Due to budget and timeline constraints, data collection focused on five schools. This small scope limits the comprehensiveness of the study, and the research team cautions against drawing any sweeping conclusions to apply to the national or international level without further research. However, this study uncovers common challenges and best practices regarding strong collaboration, which can be explored further in future research. As the research was proposed by SEST, it is intended to benefit school management teams and schools at the local level by providing a diverse set of good practices and recommendations for enhancing collaboration with communities and DOE/POE. It also provides recommendations for DOE and POE that can be used by school management and NGOs to advocate to DOE, POE or MOEYS.

Some factors that contribute to strong collaboration may be beyond the control of school management. For example, some schools may benefit from strong financial support that enables them to more easily travel to meetings or utilize a wider pool of resources. Some school communities may be geographically closer to DOE or POE offices, which makes communication easier. While efforts were made to select a diverse group of schools, Siem Reap province contains numerous NGOs and the proximity of Siem Reap town means potential access to many international donors. There is little hard data on the topic, but it is the experience of SEST and research team members that a large number of schools in Siem Reap province receive some form of external assistance, whether large or small. These factors were controlled for as much as possible in defining strong collaboration practices and selecting school participants. However, it is impossible to completely disaggregate strong collaboration from all potential influencing factors. Therefore the study could be skewed towards schools with financial, resource, or other advantages.

SEST input was essential in selecting participating schools and understanding local context. However, SEST members have relationships with many schools in Siem Reap. Selection of participating schools in consultation with SEST was done strategically to ensure schools were selected for strong working relationships that produce positive results for the school. Schools were not chosen based on any personal relationships of SEST, school management, or DOE/POE.

Lastly, the qualitative focus of this research means data drawn from focus groups and

interviews are based on individual perceptions. Data collection was designed to include a variety of opinions from different SSC members, principals, and DOE and POE officials and interviews with each of these groups were scheduled separately so they were not influenced by one another's answers. However, firsthand accounts contain subjective elements and opinions. It was not within the scope of the study to verify all accounts through records or documentation. This would take incredible time and effort, and it is extremely unlikely that all communications, trainings, or other events referenced in these interviews and focus groups are officially documented.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Collaboration between POE, DOE, and school management

Siem Reap Provincial Office of Education (POE) and District Office of Education (DOE) officials host regular meetings with key school actors to facilitate communication and support. DOE convenes a monthly meeting of all school principals in the district to share updates from MOEYS and provide space for principals to ask for advice on school challenges and share lessons and solutions with one another. At DOE meetings, principals:

- Share effective teaching methods and how to mentor teachers to improve skills
- Exchange strategies for achieving school development such as infrastructure projects or improving student performance
- Seek clarification from DOE on MOEYS policies and guidelines
- Share lessons learned on how to effectively engage with SSCs or communities

POE holds a similar monthly meeting of representatives from each DOE to receive updates on school development in each district and to communicate policies and news from MOEYS down to the local level. These regular meetings facilitate a chain of communication from the national down to the local level and similarly from the local level up.

Principals and DOE representatives cite the monthly DOE meetings as helpful to stay knowledgeable about local and national activities and work through challenges collectively with other principals and DOE staff. DOE representatives feel the monthly meetings are particularly helpful in clarifying policies for principals and staying informed on individual school activities. If a school challenge cannot be addressed fully by DOE staff, they bring the challenge to the POE monthly meeting to request further support or advisement.

In addition to the monthly meetings, both DOE and POE conduct monitoring visits to evaluate school performance. One DOE representative summarized the purpose of monitoring visits into three aims: (1) see how the principal and administration work; (2)

examine how funds are spent by school management; and (3) observe how technical responsibilities, such as teaching and administration, are performed. Some principals find these visits helpful because they can ask for DOE support in drafting school development plans or advice on how to strengthen their performance as principal. However, others feel these visits do not support school development outside of ensuring adherence to rules and budgets.

In addition to evaluating performance, principals and SSC members would like DOE and POE officials to use monitoring visits to advise on school monitoring challenges. Since DOE and POE officials assess school strengths and weaknesses during these visits, they could also recommend trainings or capacity building activities that DOE or POE officials could provide to school management during subsequent monitoring visits.

DOE and POE officials cite funding and staff capacity as challenges to conducting monitoring visits. They do not have enough funds or enough staff members to travel to schools as often as the MOEYS monitoring plan dictates. POE representatives report their monitoring plan requires visiting each school two to three times per year, but for the past three years they did not have enough staff to evaluate every school in the province.

Even with limited capacity, DOE and POE officials find monitoring visits helpful to assess needs and gaps that they can then support the school to address. One DOE representative gave an example of a school where teacher attendance was sporadic and students were increasingly failing exams. DOE staff visited the school and provided teacher training on child friendly school policies, teaching approaches, and community engagement. DOE staff encouraged SSC members to visit the school more often and organize trainings for students on topics such as business skills and ethics. This increased capacity building and community engagement helped change teacher behavior and improve attendance.

The most common way DOE shares policies with school management is by disseminating printed copies of policies to school principals, with some DOE representatives asking principals to read policies out loud to teachers. Other forms of communication used by DOE and POE include phone calls, social media, and attending school events when possible. To harness the benefits of technology, Siem Reap POE created a Facebook group open to all school principals and relevant DOE staff. Principals use this Facebook group to ask for support from DOE or other principals as well as to stay informed about district and provincial developments.

Facebook is a useful tool for some schools to communicate with DOE or POE, but some rural schools do not have reliable internet access and therefore rely mainly on phone calls or in-person visits. Lack of access to electricity and internet, in addition to the DOE and POE's limited funds and staff time mentioned above, can make it especially difficult for rural

schools to consistently communicate with DOE or POE.

Training and support for principals and SSCs is currently provided by a combination of government and NGO actors. Most principals report receiving training from DOE, POE, or MOEYS as new principals, although one principal interviewed said he received no training. Principals received training on management, leadership, gender, and finance and reporting. DOE representatives also cited trainings given on community engagement, fundraising, administration, the child friendly school policy, and school development plan creation. (The school development plan is a document drafted annually by principal or school management and submitted to DOE, which details goals for school improvement and how school management aims to achieve those goals).

While training provided can be unequal across districts, principals report the training they receive is helpful. For example, one principal remarked that the management training received from MOEYS helped lay foundations for how to problem solve, communicate, and work with others to address challenges. It helped him understand the behavior of inactive or absent teachers and decide what actions to take to work with teachers towards a solution. Most principals feel confident in their teaching skills but would like additional training in management and leadership to improve understanding of management approaches and how to motivate teachers and staff. Principals also request training on finance, computers, communication, and English language to help them better track and report finances and communicate school developments to DOE and community.

The District Training and Monitoring Team (DTMT), comprised of DOE employees, provides technical assistance on monitoring, evaluation, and reporting during monitoring visits to schools. They are also responsible for building the capacity and skills of principals and teachers through trainings. Some SSCs report DTMT advised them on how to create the school development plan and determine what action steps can help achieve the school development goals. Principals report that DTMT provides technical support to them on drafting financial and progress reports for DOE, as well as provides trainings on teaching methods to teachers. However, according to some DOE officials, DTMT has limited capacity to assist teachers teaching higher grades (grades 9-12). Many DTMT officials do not have enough knowledge or understanding of the material being taught to high grades, and therefore cannot advise teachers on effective methods to teach this material.

Though policies such as the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) call for strengthening the roles of SSCs, no policy states any required trainings for SSC members. SSC members interviewed report receiving little or no government training. Most DOE and POE representatives interviewed said the school principal is responsible for passing the trainings he or she receives from government down to SSC members. However this rarely happens in practice. The only trainings SSCs accessed were given by NGOs or through a partnership between an NGO and DOE or POE. For example, one SSC received

training on management and monitoring and evaluation from an NGO partnering with the government. The NGO-provided trainings SSC members report receiving are proposal writing, fundraising, management, communication, and overseeing school construction projects.

Many principals would like SSC members to receive more training on leadership, management, and community engagement so SSCs can be more involved in overseeing teacher performance and school development. One principal discussed how he would like to provide trainings to the school and SSC members, but he does not receive training funds in accordance with MOEYS guidelines. For the past few years, he has either received funding for training much later than MOEYS guidelines state or never received the funds at all.

DOE and POE representatives are open to providing more training to school management but also report not having the necessary budget. As mentioned above, DTMT provides some technical assistance during their monitoring visits to schools but feels limited by staff capacity and budget. Therefore DOE and POE rely heavily on NGOs for training and capacity building. A common arrangement cited was for DOE or POE to conduct the training and an NGO to cover training costs. In other instances, NGOs provided training without government involvement.

Services provided by NGOs are sporadic and unequal across schools. It is difficult for school management to try new skills in practice and refine them over time if they only receive one-time trainings on any given topic. Even if training or support is provided holistically or over a period of time, it still creates inequalities between schools that receive NGO support and schools that do not.

In addition to trainings, DOE and school management collaborate on fundraising, hiring, human resources, and school development plans. DOE staff do not actively help schools fundraise, but they advise school management on potential people or organizations to seek funding from and provide technical assistance on the fundraising process such as proposal writing. DOE officials also advise schools on how to strengthen community engagement. For example, one school came to DOE needing to raise funds for an additional school building. DOE advised school management to meet with leaders at the local pagoda, explain the importance of a new school building to the community's children, and try and find ways to jointly fundraise with the pagoda.

Some principals also report DOE helps mediate conflicts among teachers or other school staff. If the conflict is small, principals try to solve it on their own, but if the conflict is persistent or beyond the capacity of the principal to resolve him or herself, he or she asks for DOE assistance. Regarding school development plans, some principals submit the plan to DOE, who reviews it and provides comments and suggestions to improve the plan. DOE

officials then work with the school principal to update the plan before finalizing and sending to POE.

DOE and POE officials like staying up to date on what is happening in each school, but often feel limited by time, distance, budget, and staff capacity. While the monthly meetings, occasional monitoring visits, and POE Facebook group provide platforms for knowledge sharing and support, DOE officials recommended that principals regularly update DOE on school development and challenges. Regular communication, even just through phone calls, keeps DOE informed about the school and better enables them to help when challenges arise. POE and DOE also advise schools to work closely with local authorities and the community, including the commune council and pagodas.

Collaboration between principal and SSC

A common thread among SSCs and principals with good collaboration is consistent communication, whether through meetings, informal visits, or phone calls. In order for SSCs to contribute to school development, they need to stay informed on the school's activities and needs. Many principals and SSCs highlight the fact that the principal and teachers are at the school almost daily, whereas the SSCs spend more time in the community. If some principals or teachers are also SSC members, they can keep the rest of the SSC informed about day-to-day school circumstances, but in order to ensure this occurs SSC members and the principal need to agree on a plan for regular communication.

All SSCs report meeting annually with the principal to discuss priorities and draft a school development plan, often inviting the community to join. Some meet more frequently throughout the year and also visit the school periodically. Regularly visiting the school gives the SSC more context to participate in planning, fundraising, and promoting education in the community. It also gives them a stronger foundation from which to contribute ideas and priorities to the annual school development plan.

The school development plan can be a key tool for promoting collaboration between principals and SSCs. In communities where collaboration is weaker, the principal tends to create the school development plan on their own or with input only from teachers. SSC participation in school development plan creation encourages members to actively work towards achieving school development goals. While knowledge of education and teaching is valuable, even SSC members who feel they have limited skills can share their experiences and opinions on what they want the school to achieve.

Many principals also identify annual SSC elections as contributing to a stronger, more active SSC. Elections provide a vehicle to replace inactive SSC members and educate the community about the SSC and its functions. Principals, DOE, and POE acknowledge difficulties in recruiting strong SSC members because SSC members are not paid and many

community members have other priorities such as jobs and family care. One principal pointed out having a principal or SSC member with public speaking or communication expertise helps because that person can speak at local events and visit community members to encourage participation in the SSC.

Multiple principals and SSCs shared that they work together on all school-related issues and make all decisions together. If a principal or SSC member identifies a challenge, they can bring that challenge to the group, discuss together, and decide on the best course of action to address that challenge. For example, if the school needs infrastructure improvements, they discuss which improvement is highest priority and brainstorm how to find funding. If there is a conflict between a teacher and parents, the SSC can visit parents to help mitigate the tension and identify potential resolutions. These examples of collective decision-making also reaffirm the importance of consistent communication through reliable methods, as mentioned above.

Principals and SSCs also frequently partner on school finance and budgeting. This is often tied to collaborating on the school development plan, as the principal and SSC set goals and actions for the year and then identify what budget they have to achieve those goals. Because of their role as the bridge between school and community, SSCs often work with the school principal on fundraising for school development activities. Principals that work well with SSCs recognize that: (1) SSC members will be more motivated and better equipped to fundraise if they have input into the school development goals they are fundraising for and (2) SSC members will be more likely to continue fundraising if they see the positive results of their work.

Financial transparency is also key to building trust between principals and SSCs. With schools often stretched for funding, finances can easily become a contentious issue. One SSC shared that the principal reports every income to the SSC and they track finances together, which they feel avoids many potential obstacles to working together. Transparency also creates an environment of equality, where all collaborators feel they have access to similar information and contribute to progress. Additionally, as finance is a topic that many SSC members and principals request additional training on, transparency allows principals and SSCs to pool their financial skills and work through budget and financial difficulties together.

A common challenge for SSC members is feeling they have limited knowledge or skills to be active in school development. Many SSC members see themselves as just farmers or parents with little formal training on leadership, finance, or education. Although additional training for SSC members is needed to improve skills and understanding (see *Collaboration between POE, DOE, and school management*), lack of formal training should not keep the SSC from using their existing skills to contribute to school development.

Many SSC members tend to see “skills” as things they receive through formal education or training, and therefore may not appreciate the skills they already possess. For example, many schools have student councils but they are rarely included in decision-making or school development planning. SSC member who are parents can bring the perspectives of students to school development. SSC members who have many contacts in the community can help convince community members to attend school events and community consultations. Additionally, DOE often suggests SSC members come to the school to give trainings or share knowledge with the students about business or life skills.

Another way principals can build skills without formal trainings is by encouraging mentorship and knowledge sharing between SSC members. One principal described struggling with relatively unskilled SSC members. To address this, the principal assigned more complex tasks to experienced SSC members or teachers, and paired them with a less experienced SSC member or teacher. This way the experienced member has support in his or her task and the less experienced member can learn from working closely with the more experienced member.

Though many SSCs and principals report working closely on creating budgets and school development plans, in one school the principal and teachers collaborate on the drafting process and the SSC is only involved to review final plans and budgets. However, the principal still values SSC input and tries to involve SSC members by inviting them to planning sessions, but says they do not contribute much. This scenario is not uncommon in communities where SSC members feel they lack the skills, education, or understanding of their roles to contribute to school development.

Though this SSC is not heavily involved with school development planning or major decisions, they conduct an informal census of poor or vulnerable students in the community to identify which children may need additional support. School management can then share this information with the commune council, commune council for women and children (CCWC), or DOE to advocate for scholarships or other support for the students or families. The above examples show there is no single path to achieving good collaboration, but many ways school management can work together to best utilize their individual and collective skill sets.

Collaboration between school management and community

Some strategies to enhance collaboration between SSCs and principals can also be applied to building collaboration between school management and the community. For example, involving the community in drafting the school development plan signifies collective ownership over children’s education and encourages community members to become more involved in school development. Additionally, it is an opportunity to annually update the

community on school successes and challenges.

Involving community members in drafting the school development plan also provides them with a forum to voice their priorities and concerns related to education and discuss these with school management. Many SSCs then follow up with community members throughout the year, either by visiting parents or attending commune council or other community forums.

In fact, many principals and SSCs with strong collaboration use existing community forums to share school developments and plans, receive feedback, and solicit support from the community. Instead of asking community members, who already are busy with many responsibilities, to attend a school activity, it is often easier for school representatives to attend an existing community forum. Attending commune council meetings is one of the most cited ways of engaging the community.

One principal says he attends every commune council meeting while other principals and SSCs send a school or SSC representative to as many meetings as possible. Some school management teams share their monthly report to DOE with the commune council as well to keep the council informed and solicit their input. SSC members and principals also feel it is helpful to build strong relationships with the village and commune chiefs, as they are key connections to the wider community. Other forums such as the CCWC can also be effective partners in engaging the community in school development.

Just as with SSC and principal collaboration, financial transparency is important to building trust and collective ownership with the community. Many principals and SSCs invite parents and community members to school activities and hold events specifically aimed at showing school developments to the community. One SSC member remarked that many community members were not engaged in school activities and had few ideas for school development. However, the SSC was persistent in engaging the community in fundraising and after infrastructure improvements had been made with the funds raised, school management invited the community to the school. Many community members were surprised to see how the school had developed and the SSC emphasized to the community that this positive development was a result of their contributions.

Getting community members to travel to the school can be difficult in rural areas, so it is important for school management to use multiple communication methods. Some SSC members and principals travel around the villages to discuss school development with parents and community members. If a child is having difficulty in school, the principal informs the SSC and an SSC member visits the parents to discuss how to improve the child's school performance. One principal regularly posts photos of school activities and progress on his Facebook page to share these with the community.

Many principals and SSCs also value their relationships with local pagodas. Monks can use their prominent role in the community to raise awareness and support for education, for example when they speak at ceremonies. It is common for monks to hold community fundraisers to support the local pagoda. Some SSCs and principals invited local monks to fundraise jointly, with a portion of the funds raised going to the pagoda and a portion supporting the school.

One challenge to utilizing existing community structures, such as pagodas and commune councils, to promote school development is that it still does not bring community members to see the school firsthand. However, if existing community structures are initially used to strengthen community engagement, it may be easier to get community members to attend school events in the future once engagement with school development has increased. One school management team interviewed took another approach to this challenge and built an event space at the school to rent out for holidays and other community celebrations. This not only raises funds for the school, but helps ensure community members visit the school and see its development firsthand.

Decentralization and de-concentration

Knowledge of the upcoming decentralization and de-concentration (D&D) functional transfers is limited among principals and SSC members interviewed. Most identify D&D as generally a shift in decision-making from 'top down' to 'bottom up.' One principal remarked that D&D was discussed at a commune council meeting. Many principal and SSC members are aware that D&D in the education sector is currently being piloted in neighbouring Battambang province. However, they have a weak understanding of how functions will be transferred and how school management roles will change as a result.

SSC members and principals highlight similar potential pros and cons of D&D. The benefit most often cited is that shifting decision-making to the subnational level will result in increased input over budget and resource allocation at the local level. Multiple principals and SSC members cite examples of school management prioritising certain school expenses, but DOE or POE deciding to allocate school funding to other priorities that school management feel are less important. In one case, a principal said DOE and POE recommended spending part of the budget to plant trees and raise the level of land, even though school management consistently expressed other more pressing needs, and did not feel the school needed additional trees or land levelling.

Another SSC member conveyed difficulty in obtaining certain documents, such as student certifications, from MOEYS in a timely manner. If any documents school management receive require changes, even small corrections can be expensive and take up to three months. Even if this specific task is not transferred to the subnational level as part of D&D,

transferring other financial and administrative tasks would help relieve some of the burden on MOEYS and allow for quicker turnaround on tasks that only have to go through DOE, rather than being passed all the way up to the national level.

The major concerns school principals and SSC members express about D&D are lack of understanding of what responsibilities will be transferred and uncertainties about the capacity to take on more responsibility at the school management level. Multiple principals and SSC members admit that human resources is currently a challenge at the school management level, and worry D&D could exacerbate this challenge if not paired with proper training. The specific topics of training requested are computer training and human resources training, such as recruiting and training new staff and monitoring staff performance.

DOE and POE officials have a firmer understanding of upcoming D&D policy changes. They are aware of functions being transferred in Battambang and know these transfers will occur in Siem Reap province in coming years. They describe the general goal of shifting from a 'top down' to a 'bottom up' approach, but would like more clarification on how certain tasks will be delegated. They believe increased local control over school budgets will make spending more responsive to local needs. Similar to SSCs and school principals, DOE and POE officials cite past examples when some schools strongly advocated spending funds on certain school development activities but MOEYS did not approve. Now schools will have more power to prioritize their own needs.

Echoing SSC and principal concerns, DOE and POE officials see a need for training at the provincial, district and local level on the functions to be transferred under D&D implementation. DOE and POE officials believe human resources training is needed as well, specifically how to manage hiring, dismissal, and resignation of staff. They also raise concerns that some principals and school staff are not following all their current management responsibilities, so adding further responsibilities may be difficult.

DOE officials also cite a potential need for additional staff to fulfil the newly transferred responsibilities. Both DOE and POE officials hope to learn from the pilot in Battambang, especially regarding how DOE and POE supported principals and school staff who did not have strong skills or were not ready to take on additional functions. As highlighted earlier (see *Literature Review: Decentralization and de-concentration*), D&D reforms must balance the positive potential to empower local actors with the negative potential to exacerbate existing regional inequalities. Increased authority at the local level will be ineffective without the support or knowledge of how to act on that authority.

Many principals and SSC members in this study highlighted budget and finance as areas of strong collaboration between school management and community. In these instances, it will be helpful for government officials to work with school management and advise on how to

incorporate new financial responsibilities into the existing process so as not to disrupt existing good collaboration.

Notably, this study examines a small number of schools with strong collaboration practices, so other schools may have weaker financial processes and therefore face greater challenges taking on additional responsibilities. It will be important for DOE and POE to assess the varying capacity among schools and ensure the upcoming functional transfers include flexibility to adapt to differing school management contexts and skill levels.

The school principal is currently the lynchpin of many school development responsibilities. One POE representative said about D&D transfer of responsibilities: “if principal is strong and ready, no problem, but if principal is not strong, it will be a challenge.” Involving the SSC, teachers, or other community actors in D&D rollout will be critical to ensuring the principal is not overwhelmed with unrealistic additions to his or her workload. This is again an instance where flexibility is important. If one school’s SSC is active and works well with the principal, it will be beneficial to involve that SSC in D&D rollout and trainings. However, if at another school the principal has weak collaboration with the SSC but strong collaboration with the commune council or with certain influential community members, it may be better to involve those actors who can best support the principal during D&D rollout.

CASE STUDIES OF STRONG COLLABORATION

Case study #1: Vessvan Primary School

Vessvan Primary School demonstrates strong collaboration practices between POE/DOE and school management as well as between school management and the community. Until recently, the community did not have a primary school. A few teachers and community members came together to change this because students had to travel such a long distance to attend school. The dedicated group made tables and chairs and lessons were taught under a grass shelter. Then, the teachers, principal, and parents drafted a proposal to DOE for a school building. DOE and POE worked with school management to assess the proposal and submit it to MOEYS. MOEYS accepted the proposal and funded a classroom structure for Vessvan. School management and parents raised additional funds from the community to build fences around school grounds and raise the level of land. The classroom construction was finished in 2012.

A key aspect of their collaboration is strong, persistent communication. The principal regularly communicates with DOE by attending monthly DOE meetings and by inviting DOE officials to visit the school. Through regular contact, the principal not only keeps DOE updated on school conditions, but is able to seek advice and guidance when issues arise. Consistent communication also demonstrates to DOE that school management are highly

engaged and committed to school development.

When the principal faces a challenge and is unable to resolve it at the school or community level, the principal calls DOE and asks for support and advice. For example, when school enrollment increased sharply, the school was short on teachers, desks, and other materials. The principal contacted DOE and POE for assistance and DOE and POE worked with school management to obtain new desks and find additional teachers.



Vessvan Primary School

During a past DOE visit to the school, the principal and the SSC were both present and asked for advice on school development. DOE officials advised them on creating a strong annual school development plan to better engage the community and potential donors. The SSC also requested technical training for teachers and SSC members, and DOE partnered with an NGO to provide management and monitoring and evaluation training.

In another example, the school needed a new building to house a library but school management was only able to raise funds to cover part of the construction costs. They approached DOE officials as well as the commune council, explaining the challenges and how a new library would positively contribute to children's education in the community. DOE officials worked with school management to brainstorm ideas on how to find the remaining funds and connected the school with a local NGO who was able to contribute funds to the library construction.

Whenever DOE officials provide policies or updates to the school principal, the principal

quickly passes this information on to the SSC. This helps the SSC and principal work closely in supporting one another, and also helps the SSC keep the community informed on education developments in their community and the larger district and province. The principal and SSC also demonstrate financial transparency. According to one SSC member, “Every income, the principal reports to the SSC and we track together. So we are very open and transparent and therefore there are no obstacles to working together.”

Though the SSC has few active members, they travel to every village to talk to parents about school development and raise funds. One SSC member said even when parents complain about being asked to donate funds or are sceptical of where the funds might go, he explains that no funds raised go to personal use and that all funds go to the school to benefit the entire community’s children.

To consistently build trust, the principal says school management hold community consultations at least twice per year. In these meetings, school management provide updates on development and listen to community priorities and feedback. One SSC member explained that SSC members, “call many parents in the community to inform them of [school development] meetings. We communicate school challenges in the meeting, then prioritize next steps together.”



Vessvan Primary School

Case study #2: Samky Lower Secondary School

At Samky Lower Secondary School, school development is owned collectively by school management, teachers, and community members. The principal consults the SSC on all decisions and rarely, if ever, makes a decision on school development without SSC involvement. The SSC and principal invite the community to meet and discuss the school development plan twice per year and by the SSC's estimate about 40 percent of the community join the meetings. Before the community consultation, the SSC and principal draft a strong agenda and meeting plan to ensure the meeting stays on schedule and there is ample time for discussion and community feedback.

Once the school development plan is drafted, the SSC and principal discuss with community members how to achieve the plan's goals. For example, if the school development plan involves construction, school management invites the community to come to the school, see the site and details of the planned construction, and give feedback or approval. School management then follows up with the community by providing updates on the project's expenses. In another instance when the school land flooded, the principal and SSC came together to plan a solution. The SSC reached out to potential sponsors for funding to raise the level of the land and prevent future flooding.

SSC members also regularly visit the school to observe activities and the state of school infrastructure. After their visit, they report any issues and requests for support to the principal and local authorities. The SSC and principal work together with the teachers to keep the community informed about school development. They report on school development and activities every month at the commune council meeting. If a student drops out of school or is not performing well, SSC members visit the student's parents, inform them of the student's challenges, and discuss potential solutions to help the student improve. Sometimes when families do not see the value of education, SSC members explain the economic opportunities available to children who have a good education.

In working closely with the community, Samky school management has been responsive to community challenges and suggestions. When community members were feeling tired of being solicited to raise funds for the school, they urged school management to switch from fundraising in the community to fundraising from donors. School management wrote a funding proposal, and shared it with the commune chief for approval. The principal then reached out to another school that had received funding for construction and asked to meet with that school's leadership. At the meeting, the Samky principal asked to be connected with the donor. The principal and SSC then submitted their proposal to the donor as well as local authorities and DOE, and finally received funding for some of their school development needs. In relaying this experience, the school principal remarked that communication was crucial to this success.

The principal and SSC also work closely with the Commune Chief and Village Chief, meeting periodically to discuss school needs and report on any students who need additional assistance. School management and village and commune chiefs compiled a list of vulnerable students who were struggling in school and brought it to DOE and POE. POE then helped find support for these students, such as scholarships, uniforms, and bicycles to travel to and from school. Through this collaboration, school management, DOE, POE, and the village and commune chiefs helped relieve the financial burden poor families face to support their children in school. POE also asked the Samky principal last year to submit a proposal for a high school, since the community currently only has a primary and secondary school. School management submitted the proposal last year and continue to work with the community and DOE and POE to move plans for the high school forward.

CONCLUSION

While previous research has found collaboration and communication to be a major barrier to school development, some school management teams are drawing on their strengths to build strong collaboration and communication practices. This research examined schools with strong collaboration practices in Siem Reap province to provide ideas and recommendations for school management and POE and DOE officials.

There is no one best practice or best methodology to strengthen collaboration as each school community has different resources, skills, and challenges. However, involving a range of actors throughout the school development process brings more perspectives to inform development plans and more hands to share the work. In some schools this may include an active SSC, while in others it may be strong partnerships with commune councils and local authorities, or in others just an informal network of engaged parents or community members. Involving community members who have many existing commitments is difficult, but starting by engaging just a few members, completing one or two school development projects, and sharing progress widely through existing community forums can raise awareness and start to peak interest among the broader community.

Transparency in decision-making by school management helps to build trust among school and community actors. This is especially true in the case of financial decisions, as many schools face tight budget constraints and decide to supplement their budgets with fundraising from the community or external donors. Regular communication between actors through appropriate methods is also critical to effective collaboration. School management should invite the community to school activities and events, and reach out to the community through existing forums such as commune council meetings or holiday celebrations.

School management should communicate to DOE regularly through a combination of attending monthly principal meetings, inviting DOE officials to visit the school, and providing updates via phone, email, social media, or another convenient method. School management should share progress and new approaches they are testing to address problems, as well as share challenges they feel unable to address at the community level. In multiple examples cited in this report, DOE and POE could not provide direct funding or assistance but could offer advice or make connections to actors who could directly provide funding, trainings, or other support.

However, this reliance on external donors and NGOs continues to be problematic. As mentioned throughout the report, this creates inequalities among schools rather than a cohesive approach to improving education. As demonstrated in both case studies, even schools that successfully collaborate with government to receive support — such as infrastructure funds, teachers, and support for vulnerable students — continue to rely on NGOs for additional support such as infrastructure funds and providing trainings to teachers and school management. This highlights the limitations of good practices. While ideally the government funds education without need for NGOs to supplement with additional funds, that is not the current reality. However, even if school management continues to seek support from NGOs, they should continue to advocate to MOEYS for funding and support to demonstrate the needs and encourage MOEYS to expand funding and support where necessary.

The rollout of school-based management practices under MOEYS D&D policies can provide an opportunity for school communities to assess their strengths and weaknesses and consider what changes they could make to more effectively support school development. School management, community leadership, and DOE and POE should communicate about what gaps in capacity exist and what training and support could address these gaps. As mentioned above (see *Discussion of Lessons Learned: Decentralization and de-concentration*), MOEYS should ensure the discussions and actions under D&D include key community partners in school development.

The scope of this research was limited to one province and a small number of schools and districts. There are undoubtedly many additional examples of strong collaboration practices between school management and DOE or POE across Cambodia. The goal of this study is to provide a platform from which to launch further discussion, knowledge sharing, and action to empower school communities to enhance collaboration and in turn build a stronger educational environment.

KEY CHALLENGES

- 1) DOE and POE officials' ability to conduct monitoring visits is limited by: (a) lack of funds to support visiting all schools; (b) lack of staff time to visit each school as many times as MOEYS plan dictates, especially rural schools which require significant travel time and expense.

- 2) DOE and POE monitoring visits sometimes focus solely on ensuring adherence to rules and budgets rather than on providing support to school management and teachers.
- 3) Policy updates from MOEYS, DOE, and POE are frequently shared by disseminating paper copies of policies, without sufficient follow up to ensure understanding.
- 4) Reliance on NGOs to provide training, funding, or other assistance results in inequalities between schools and sporadic, short-term supports rather than coordinated, long-term support.
- 5) School principals rarely pass the trainings they receive on to SSC members.
- 6) School management struggle to receive the funds in their training budget, even when they submit requests for these funds.
- 7) Though policies such as the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and Teacher Policy Action Plan (TPAP) call for strengthening the roles of SSCs, no policy states required trainings for SSC members.
- 8) Principals and SSCs often view “skills” as obtained from formal education or training. Therefore, some principals lack confidence in their SSC members and SSC members lack confidence in themselves. This results in the SSC being minimally involved in school development, even though they likely have significant experience and skills to contribute.

GOOD PRACTICES

DOE and POE Officials:

- 1) DOE officials use school monitoring visits to identify opportunities for future support, such as specific training, funding, or personnel requests.
- 2) POE and DOE officials utilize social media, such as Facebook groups, as a platform to share challenges and knowledge between POE, DOE, and school principals.
- 3) Most new principals receive trainings in topics such as management, leadership, gender, and finance and reporting to prepare them for their role.
- 4) DTMT use monitoring visits to advise school management on school development plan creation, financial reporting, or other management challenges, and advise teachers on teaching methods.
- 5) DOEs host monthly meetings of school principals and POEs host monthly meetings of DOE officials to facilitate a smooth chain of communication between the local, district, and provincial level.
- 6) DOE and POE members attend school events when possible, such as school development plan consultations or year-end student awards ceremonies, to witness school activities firsthand.
- 7) DOE and POE work with school management and CCWC or commune councils to identify vulnerable students and provide additional support to keep these children in school including materials, uniforms, and bicycles.

School Management:

- 8) SSC members and the principal meet annually to draft a school development plan collaboratively, and they include community consultation in this process.
- 9) If there is conflict between teachers and parents, the SSC visits parents to help mediate tensions and identify potential solutions.
- 10) SSCs and principals conduct learning visits to meet with school management teams of nearby schools, share knowledge, and learn new approaches to management and school development.
- 11) School management is transparent with each other and with the community on how school finances are obtained and spent.
- 12) SSC members pair up to work on school development tasks, pairing one more skilled SSC member with one less skilled SSC member. This provides opportunities for mentorship, learning, and building confidence.
- 13) Principals and SSC members use community events, such as commune council meetings or holiday celebrations, to update the community on school activities and encourage community participation in education.
- 14) School management constructs an event space on school grounds or uses an existing school facility as space that can be rented out for events. This raises funds for the school and draws community members to school grounds to view developments firsthand.
- 15) School management and community members work together to conduct an informal census of poor or vulnerable students in the community to identify which children may need additional support. School management can then share this information with the commune council, commune council for women and children, or DOE to advocate for scholarships or other support for the students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For District and Provincial Offices of Education:

- 1) **Improve consistency and comprehensiveness of trainings provided to school management:** Many principals report receiving training only when they are new to the role, and SSC members report receiving little government training.
 - a) Work with principals and MOEYS to identify the specific reasons principals, and DOE/POE have difficulty accessing monitoring and training budgets. Once identified, POE/DOE and MOEYS should implement actions to alleviate these barriers to receiving funds.
 - b) Organize trainings in series or cycles rather than one-time trainings. This repetition encourages retention and gives trainees opportunities to try out what they learned in their roles and come back to the next training with questions or feedback.
 - c) Use school monitoring visits not only to evaluate adherence to rules and policies, but to recommend trainings or other supports to increase the abilities of school management and teachers to perform their roles.

- d) Principals and SSC members request training in human resources management, leadership, financial management, computers, communication, English language, and community engagement.

2) Facilitate learning visits and knowledge sharing between school management teams: While trainings and support from DOE and POE are valuable, school management teams can also learn a lot from one another. However it is difficult for principals and SSCs to find the time and funds to travel to nearby schools, especially from rural communities.

- a) Assist SSCs and principals to utilize networks (such as school clusters) or create networks where they can share knowledge and work through challenges together. Provide funding or travel support for learning exchange visits if possible.
- b) Assist SSC members to identify their existing skills and discuss how members with different skills can contribute to school development and management. This helps clarify SSC members' roles & responsibilities and reminds SSC members they do not need extensive formal education or training to contribute to school management and development.

3) Ensure the training and communication plans associated with D&D functional transfers allow time for DOE and POE officials to provide information and training to all schools and key community partners: While school management teams know broadly that the concept of D&D means transfer of authority and responsibility to the local level, understanding of how these roles will be transferred is limited. D&D trainings should:

- a) Cover not just *what* roles are being transferred but *how* those duties are currently performed and how DOE or school management should perform these new duties.
- b) Include not just DOE/POE officials and principals, but also community partners that are significantly involved in supporting school development. Which stakeholders to include can vary depending on which are most involved in school development in each community, such as SSCs, commune councils, or monks.

For School Management:

4) The Principal, on behalf of the school and SSC, should regularly communicate with DOE. The principal should:

- a) Attend DOE monthly meetings to stay informed on policy updates and seek support in addressing school challenges.
- b) Regularly update DOE officials on school successes and challenges, rather than only communicating when asking for assistance.

- c) Use DOE monthly meetings to communicate with neighbouring school management and set up knowledge sharing visits between school management teams.

5) The SSC, or a subcommittee of SSC members, regularly visits the school to become involved in advising students: Many SSCs work mostly on fundraising and school infrastructure development. SSCs can strengthen their roles by being more active in monitoring and contributing to student learning.

- a) In line with the 2012 SSC Guidelines, SSC members can advise and teach on life skills, such as agriculture, business development, and ethics.
- b) The SSC should also contribute to documenting community history and life skills for future learning.
- c) Regularly visiting the school will also help SSC members better understand the status and needs of infrastructure, materials, and teaching.

6) Encourage community involvement in school decision-making: Though many parents and community members have numerous demands on their time and may find involvement in school activities difficult, there are steps school management can take to encourage community participation.

- a) Build trust among school management and community members by seeking input on financial decisions, sharing fundraising and spending updates, and making financial records accessible to the community.
- b) Use the school development plan as a tool to engage teachers, students, parents, community members, and local authorities in school activities. Hold community consultation events to solicit priorities and recommended next steps from the community. Share the school development plan at meetings of local authorities such as commune councils and law enforcement. Follow up by sharing school development plan successes throughout the year.

7) Partner with existing community institutions:

- a) Engage existing community forums such as commune councils, CCWCs, and pagodas to regularly share school progress and needs.
- b) Work with community institutions to track vulnerable students and prepare proposals to DOE and POE for scholarships, bicycles, school materials, or other support that will lift the financial burden of education for vulnerable families.
- c) Build relationships with local monks and discuss how education benefits the entire community. Ask monks to discuss education or share school progress at events where appropriate, or to partner on fundraising events, so half the funds raised go to the pagoda and half go to support the school.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Oral Interview Consent Form

Siem Reap Education Support Team (SEST) and This Life Cambodia (TLC)

Interview Consent Form

This interview is being conducted as part of a research study on **Enhancing Collaboration Between School Management and District and Provincial Offices of Education**, led by This Life Cambodia (TLC) and Siem Reap Education Support Team (SEST).

This research has been approved by the Provincial of Education, Youth, and Sport, DoE and your school principal. The interview should take approximately 1:30minutes to complete.

The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To uncover what support currently is available for principals and SSC members.
2. To examine what support school principals and SSC members are aware of and able to access in practice.
3. To examine schools with strong collaboration between school management and DoE/PoE
4. To compile lessons learned for enhancing collaboration between school management and DoE/PoE to inform clear, accessible advocacy materials for use by P-ESWG, schools, communities, and other stakeholders.

We hope this research will provide helpful information, especially to school principals and SSCs, about how to improve collaboration on school development. It is important for this research to consult a number of actors in local school development, including school principal, SSC, DOE, and POE, to gain a comprehensive understanding of how collaboration between these actors currently works and what can be done to enhance collaboration and make it easier for actors to work together on school development.

The interview is completely not affected to anyone, or schools and it is helpful for other school to learn how to collaborate between their school to district and provincial office toward school development. The interview is completely voluntary, which means you can stop the interview at any times.

We going to use voice recorder to verify with our notes to ensure the important information has been collected. The data collected will be destroyed within five years after report launched.

Since your oral consent was audio recorded, you do not need to sign a consent form. If you have questions or concerns, please contact us at the phone number or email address listed below. Thank you very much for your times.

Kimsorn Ngam
This Life Cambodia (TLC)
063 96 60 50
kimsorn@thislifecambodia.org

Appendix II: Data Collection Tools

Date:

Total Interview Subject(s):

Male:

Female:

Interviewer:

Observers:

Location:

Enhancing Collaboration Between School Management and District and Provincial Offices of Education

Principal Interview Question Guide

1. What are your main roles and responsibilities as school principal?
2. How much have you played and implemented the roles and responsibilities? Why?
(Prompt: What make you difficult in implementing the roles and responsibilities? What would help you to overcome these obstacles?)
3. How long have you been school principal?
4. What do you think are the key achievements you have done for the school since you have worked as the school principal?
5. What other people and groups do you work closely with to support the school? (Prompt if needed: SSC, teachers, parents, community members, local authorities, etc.?)
6. How do you consult the SSC and community to obtain local input and priorities? How often is this done?
7. After receiving community input, how do you share community priorities with local authorities, DOE, or POE?
8. Do you feel the priorities and concerns you express to local authorities are listened to and addressed?
(Prompt: Do you feel you have addressed the concerns expressed by the SSC and local authorities? Why or why not? Could you raise an example of what you have addressed?)
9. How closely do you work with the SSC? Do the school director & SSC frequently work together on school development issues, or do you usually work on separate tasks?
10. What are some examples of school development issues you collaborate with the SSC on? Why you need to collaborate with them?
11. What are some examples of school development issues you do NOT collaborate with the SSC on? Why you don't need to collaborate with them?
12. Do you think the SSC work well with you? Why or Why not?
13. What training, orientation or other support did you receive from the government as a new principal? Or what training, orientation or other support did you receive from the government so far as a principal?

14. Do you feel the training or orientation you received prepared you well for the role & responsibilities of a school principal? Why or why not?
15. What ongoing government support and training for school principals or SSC members are you aware of? How do you find out about available training and support?

(Prompt: Have you accessed the support and training you are aware of? Why? Do you feel like you are able to access the support and training you are aware of? Why?)
16. *(If the answer to questions 14-16 indicate any training was received)*: What training have you found most helpful to communicate and work with SSC, the community, or local authorities?
17. Do you share lessons with or learn from other school principals? If yes, how is this done? (Prompt if needed: Talk to other principals? Visit other schools and communities to learn how other school principals work?)
18. Do you think you collaborate well with local authorities? Why or why not?
19. Can you give an example of when you worked with the DoE/PoE to achieve a positive result for the school?
20. What lessons have you learned about how to work well with DoE/PoE?
21. Can you give an example of when you worked with the SSC to achieve a positive result for the school?
22. What lessons have you learned about how to work well with SSC?
23. What do you know about Decentralization and De-concentration in education government policy?
24. The MoEYS Decentralization and De-concentration policy aims to transfer more authority and accountability for education to the local level. Do you think allowing more decision making at the local level will make it easier for you to accomplish your responsibilities related to school development? Why or why not?
25. What training or support would better equip you to perform your role and accomplish school development goals?
26. What would enable you to make effective communication with DOE and POE for the sake of development of your school?
27. What could help you to work more closely and productively with SSC? What is your plan to improve the communication with SSC more collaboratively?

Date:
Total Interview Subject(s):
 Male:
 Female:
Interviewer:
Observers:
Location:

Enhancing Collaboration Between School Management and District and Provincial Offices of Education

SSC Focus Group Question Guide

1. What are the main roles and responsibilities of your SSC? (Spontaneous)
(Prompt: Base on the guideline, there are key roles and responsibilities of the SSC as below, so how much have you played or implemented each roles and responsibilities? Why?)
(Note to Interviewer: Please ask them one by one with all the roles below)
 - a. Develop and implement school development plans (or school action plans)
 - b. Collect children and promote enrolment
 - c. Follow up on children's learning outcomes
 - d. Generate income and manage the school budget
 - e. Involvement in development and maintenance of school infrastructure
 - f. Share experiences and life (vocational) skills
 - g. Prevent irregularities in and out of school
 - h. Strengthen the capacity of the school support committee
2. What make you or your SSC difficult in implementing the roles and responsibilities? What would help you to overcome these obstacles?)
3. What other people and groups do you work closely with to support the school?
(Prompt if needed: School Directors, teachers, parents, community members, local authorities, etc.?)
4. How do you consult the community and ask for their input and priorities? How often is this done?
5. After receiving community input, how does the SSC share community priorities with school director or local authorities?
6. Do you feel the priorities and concerns expressed by the SSC to school principal and local authorities are heard and addressed? Why? Or Why not?
If Yes, how they were addressed? If No, what SSC plan to do?
7. How closely does the SSC work with the school director? Do SSC & school director work together on many issues, or does school director handle many issues himself/herself?
8. Do you think your SSC works well with school director? Why or why not?

9. What are some examples of school development issues the school principal collaborates with the SSC on? Why it was so?
10. What are some examples of school development issues the school principal handles on his/her own and does NOT collaborate with the SSC on? Why it was so?
11. What training, orientation or other support do new SSC members receive?
(**Probe:** What support currently is available for SSC members? Who provide this support? How do you know about this available supports?)
12. What ongoing support and training for SSC members are you aware of?
13. Did the training you received help you understand your roles and prepare you well for the responsibilities of being an SSC member? Why or why not?
14. How do you find out about training and support opportunities?
15. (*If the answer to questions 11-14 indicate training was received*): What training have you found most helpful to communicate and work with school principal or local authorities?
16. Does your SSC share lessons with or learn from other SSCs? If yes, how is this done?
(*Prompt if needed:* Talk to other SSCs? Visit other schools and communities to learn how other SSCs work?)
17. Do you think your SSC works well with local authorities? Why or why not?
18. Can you give an example of when your SSC has worked with the school director or DoE/PoE to achieve a positive result for the school?
19. What lessons have you learned about how to work well with DoE and PoE?
20. What lessons have you learned about how to work well with school principal?
21. For SSCs having difficulties collaborating with school principal or DoE/PoE, do you have any advice on how to improve collaboration? (*Prompts: Ideas on how to better collaborate on the school development plan? On how to improve selection of SSC members? On how to improve training of SSC members or better ensure SSC members understand their roles & responsibilities?*)
22. What do you know about Decentralization and De-concentration in education government policy?
23. The MoEYS Decentralization and De-concentration policy aims to transfer more authority and accountability for education to the local level. Do SSC members think allowing more decision making at the local level will make it easier for the SSC to accomplish their school development work? Why or why not?
24. What training or support would better equip SSCs to perform their roles and further school development in their community?
25. What would be the suggestions for better enhancing school collaboration between SSC and school management/principal? Between school and DOE/POE?

Date:
Total Interview Subject(s):
 Male:
 Female:
Interviewer:
Observers:
Location:

Enhancing Collaboration Between School Management and District and Provincial Offices of Education

DOE Focus Group Question Guide

1. What is your role at DOE and what are your main responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in your current position?
3. In your role, how do you interact with school principals and SSCs?
4. What are the most difficulties/challenges you have when interacting with school principals or SSCs? How have you overcome it?)
5. What other people and groups do you work closely with to support schools in your district? (*Prompt if needed:* Other government officials, teachers, parents, community members, laypeople, etc.?)
6. How do you ensure government policies, updates, or resources are communicated from the DOE down to more local education stakeholders such as school principals and SSCs?
7. How do you and your staff stay knowledgeable about what is occurring on the ground at different schools in your district? (*Prompt:* Is there any monitoring mechanism? How DOE usually practiced? Is it effective?)
8. How do you and your staff communicate local updates and challenges from your district up to the POE or other higher levels of MOEYS?
9. What is the most helpful way local school management can share updates with or request support from the DOE? (*Prompt:* Have you observed that any school has done like what you suggested so far? If yes, which schools? How they were done?)
10. Can you give an example of a time when local school management communicated an update or problem to the DOE in an effective, helpful way? (*Prompt:* How they do it? And which schools?)
11. Which schools you have good collaboration with DOE? Which areas of collaboration you feel they do well and not well? Why or why not?
12. One challenge sometimes faced by SSCs is they feel the school principal is not engaged or does not communicate the priorities of the community and SSC to local authorities. What advice do you have for SSCs who feel their school principal makes it difficult for them to collaborate with local authorities on school development?
13. What advice do you have for local school management (school principals, SSCs) to improve their communication and collaboration with the DOE?

14. What trainings or support are offered by DoE or other local authorities to **new** school principals and SSC members? What trainings or support are offered by DoE or other local authorities to **existing** school principals and SSCs? What are the support available, but DOE have not provided to school principals and SSC members yet? Why it was so?
15. What is the best way for local school management to stay up to date on the trainings and support available to them?
16. The Decentralization and De-concentration policy reforms that are being rolled out by MOEYS over the next few years will transfer more autonomy and accountability to the local level. Do you think allowing more decision making at the local level will make it easier for you to accomplish your responsibilities related to school development and school management? Why or why not?
17. These are some of the responsibilities that are planned to transfer to District level under D&D. How prepared do you feel DOE will be to take on the following tasks?
(Note to facilitator: Please ask one by one about the tasks below)
 - a. hiring, dismissal & resignation
 - b. development of new infrastructure & procurement & monitoring of major repairs
 - c. write a training plan and manage induction training for new staff
18. What have DOE prepared or planned to implement the D&D policy reforms at your district level? What new roles under D&D do you feel will be hardest for DOE to fulfill? What support would you or DOE need to help you or DOE fulfill these roles?

Date:
Total Interview Subject(s):
 Male:
 Female:
Interviewer:
Observers:
Location:

Enhancing Collaboration Between School Management and District and Provincial Offices of Education

POE Interview Question Guide

1. What is your role at POE and what are your main responsibilities?
2. How long have you been in your current position?
3. In your role, how do you interact with school principals or SSCs?
(Prompt: What are the most difficulties/challenges you have when interacting with school principals or SSCs? How have you overcome it?)
4. What other people and groups do you work closely with to support schools in your province? *(Prompt if needed: Other government officials, school principals, community members, laypeople, etc.?)*
5. How do you ensure government policies, updates, or resources are communicated from the POE down to the local level, including DOE, school principal, and SSC?
6. How do you and your staff stay knowledgeable about what is occurring on the ground at different schools in your province? *(Prompt: Is there any monitoring mechanism? How POE usually practiced? Is it that effective?)*
7. What is the most helpful way local school management can share updates with or request support from the POE? *(Prompt: Have you observed that any school has done like what you suggested so far? If yes, which schools? How they were done?)*
8. Can you give an example of a time when local school management communicated an update or problem to the POE in an effective, helpful way? *(Prompt: How they do it? And which schools?)*
9. Which schools have good collaboration with POE? Which areas of collaboration do you feel they do well and not well? Why or why not?
10. What trainings or support are offered by POE or other local authorities to **new** school principals and SSC members?
11. What trainings or support are offered by POE or other local authorities to **existing** school principals and SSC members? What are the support available, but POE have not provided to school principals and SSC members yet? Why it was so?
12. What is the best way for local school management to stay up to date on the trainings and support available to them?
13. One challenge faced by some SSCs is they feel the school principal is not engaged or does not communicate the priorities of the community and SSC to local authorities.

What advice do you have for SSCs who feel their school principal makes it difficult for them to collaborate with local authorities on school development?

14. What advice do you have for local school management (school principals, SSCs) to improve their communication and collaboration with the POE?
15. The Decentralization and De-concentration policy reforms that are being rolled out by MOEYS over the next few years will transfer more autonomy and accountability to the local level. Do you think allowing more decision making at the local level will make it easier for you to accomplish your responsibilities related to school development and school management? Why or why not?
16. These are some of the responsibilities that are planned to transfer to District level under D&D. How prepared do you feel DOEs will be to take on the following tasks? And how prepared do you feel to support DOE as they take on new roles?
(Note to facilitator: Please ask one by one about the tasks below)
 - a. hiring, dismissal & resignation
 - b. development of new infrastructure & procurement & monitoring of major repairs
 - c. write a training plan and manage induction training for new staff
17. What have POE prepared or planned to implement the D&D policy reforms at your province? What new roles under D&D do you feel will be hardest for POE to fulfill? What support would you or POE need to help you or POE fulfill these roles?

