

# Education

UNICEF Country Programme 2019–2023



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# Situation

All children have the right to learn, whatever their circumstances, and adequate support to learning is crucial if children are to develop to their full potential. Quality and inclusive education is central to the overall development of inclusive societies.

Cambodia is known internationally as a success story in educational reconstruction and transformation, following the Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s when much of the country's education system was destroyed. Significant progress has been made since then, with remarkable expansion in children's access to education.

Today, more Cambodian children are entering school than ever before. The number of children enrolled in primary education increased from 82 per cent in 1997 to over 97.8 per cent in school year 2017/18, while enrolment in early childhood education (ECE) has more than doubled since 2007.

Research shows that learning in preschool, from 3 to 5 years of age, results in the highest return on investment in education. Children with access to ECE are better prepared for further learning and more likely to go to, and complete, primary school. Yet in Cambodia, only 43 per cent of children aged 3 to 5 years are enrolled in ECE, while 68.5 per cent of children aged 5 years are enrolled in various forms of ECE.

There are lingering challenges in Cambodia in relation to education quality and school attendance. Many girls and boys are not reaching age-appropriate learning standards: at the primary level, nearly 25 per cent of children in Grade 3 cannot

write a single word in a dictation test. A child who started Grade 1 in school year 2016/17 has a 51 per cent chance of reaching Grade 9, which is the end of lower secondary school. Key factors behind these challenges include: children being unprepared for school, lacking motivation to stay in school, violence against children in schools—with teachers being common perpetrators—financial constraints within households, and the poor quality of teaching and learning. This is compounded by high pupil-teacher ratios.

There are growing disparities between the education attainment of girls and boys, with far fewer boys completing primary and secondary school than girls. At the primary level, 82.6 per cent of girls complete school, compared to only 75.6 per cent of boys. These numbers decline even further at lower secondary level, with 49 per cent of girls completing, compared with only 40 per cent of boys.

While progress is being made in improving education opportunities for children, in Cambodia too many children are struggling to learn and realize their potential, particularly children from poor, rural families, indigenous, ethnic minorities and those with disabilities.

Additional efforts are required to ensure that girls and boys have access to inclusive, equitable, relevant and quality early childhood and basic education that promotes life-long learning in safe, protective environments. This includes during emergency situations.



UNICEF is committed to supporting the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Cambodia. We work with partners to put children at the heart of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to see that the Goals deliver results for every child and for generations to come. In the descriptions of the following programme areas, relevant Sustainable Development Goals have been identified with icons.

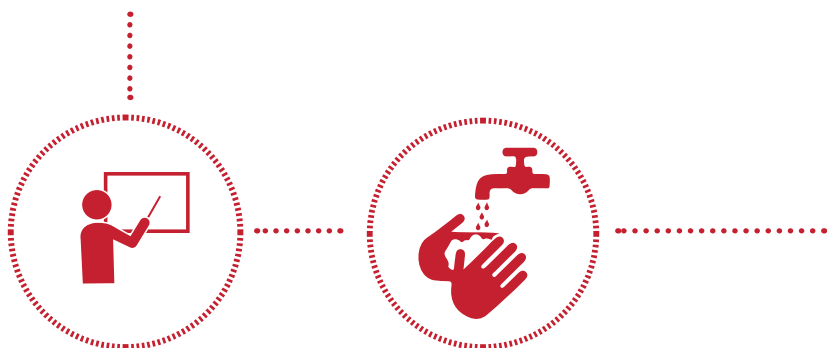
# Nurturing children to go to school and stay in school

Strong leadership, quality teaching and a healthy school environment encourage parents to send their children to school, and encourage students to stay in school.

Real progress comes from involving families and communities. UNICEF works with school support committees to promote education among families, focusing on communicating with families to improve the way they perceive and value education. This is to stimulate a demand for inclusive, gender-responsive, equitable, relevant and quality education services, so that girls and boys are increasingly nurtured by parents and communities to attend and complete early childhood and basic education.

Cambodia's schooling environment is not always conducive to children's learning. This is because many schools do not have adequate and well-maintained water and sanitation facilities. The provision of clean drinking water, toilets, hand basins and hygiene education are major determinants of the quality of education in schools. Children in schools without adequate water and sanitation facilities are more likely to suffer from diarrhoea and respiratory infections, which can lead them to attend irregularly or to drop out all together. Adolescent girls who cannot manage menstruation hygienically at school are more likely to drop out.

UNICEF continues to provide technical and financial support to the government to equip schools with adequate water, sanitation and hand-washing facilities to ensure that children go to school and stay in school.







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## Improving the quality of teaching and learning

Offering high quality education is critical to attracting and keeping children in school. Together with the government and other partners, UNICEF works to improve the quality of education so that Cambodian children can embark on a life-long learning journey.

UNICEF advocates for financial investment in teacher training, from early childhood to secondary education, and assists Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) in its efforts to revise the national curriculum (including the syllabus, learning standards, teacher training and textbooks), so that 21st century skills are integrated into the Cambodian education system. A priority is to include health, nutrition and life skills in the curriculum, so that adolescents can learn how to become healthy, capable and responsible adults.

Alongside strengthening the capacity of government officials to deliver education results for children, UNICEF also works with its partners to help build effective leadership and management of school leaders and teachers. This is done through the Capacity

Development Partnership Fund Phase III, which includes MoEYS, the EU, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Global Partnership for Education (GPE), USAID and UNICEF in partnership with non-governmental organizations. This fund helps school leaders and teachers plan and allocate their resources more effectively and equitably.

Importantly, UNICEF supports the government to provide qualified multilingual teachers for ethnic minority children, particularly in the north-eastern provinces, and skilled teachers to teach children with disabilities. This is to ensure that schools are places where children's talents are nurtured and all children can learn.

Through mobilization campaigns and training, UNICEF promotes positive discipline in the classroom without using corporal punishment, and encourages school leaders and teachers to replace violence with positive reinforcement—which protects children and helps them learn. To complement this, UNICEF advocates for positive parenting practices within communities.





# Increasing access to education

Education is critically important for the development of Cambodia. With one third of its citizens under 15 years of age, Cambodia has one of the youngest populations in Southeast Asia. The country's development strategy focuses on its young, dynamic and mobile population as a major contributor to sustainable development and economic growth. In the Country Programme 2019–2023, UNICEF focuses its efforts on ECE and basic education, including primary and lower secondary education as the foundations on which to build incremental progress.

UNICEF continues to work with MoEYS and other partners to ensure that children go to and stay in school, and importantly, learn well while they are there. UNICEF's work focuses on strengthening the education system at both national and sub-national levels to address the root causes of poor learning outcomes for Cambodian children.

Specifically, UNICEF supports MoEYS to increase its capacity to plan, execute and monitor results-based budgets, and it promotes the use of data so that government officials can make informed decisions when planning, implementing and monitoring education policies and programmes.

By helping the government to put robust and accountable systems

in place, UNICEF assists teachers to provide quality learning in classrooms, and ensure that girls and boys, particularly the most vulnerable, have access to relevant learning resources to meet their needs.

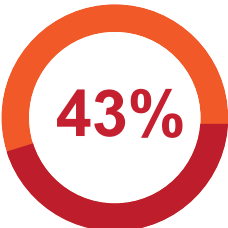
UNICEF continues to advocate for ECE to give Cambodian children the best start in life. UNICEF works closely with the government to ensure that parents and caregivers understand children's early development needs, and provides support to develop educational resources that stimulate children in these crucial early years of life.

UNICEF places particular emphasis on gender equity, at both the school and government levels. At the school level, we promote activities that eliminate gender-based violence and provide health and life skills education. Importantly, UNICEF supports vulnerable girls and boys from ethnic indigenous communities with scholarships. At the government level, UNICEF supports gender-responsive planning and budgeting, as well as closing gender gaps within the education workforce, understanding that equal participation of women and men, especially at decision-making levels, is a necessary condition for inclusive and gender-responsive public service delivery.





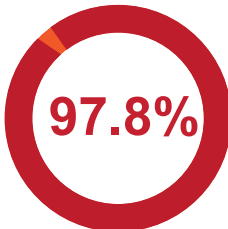
# Cambodia at a glance



43% of children aged **3-5 years** were enrolled in **early childhood** education in the school year 2017/18



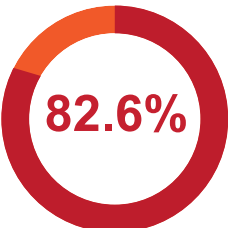
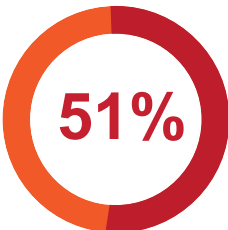
97.8 % of children (98.1% of girls) were enrolled in **primary school** in the school year 2017/18



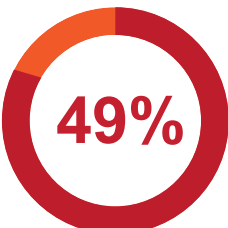
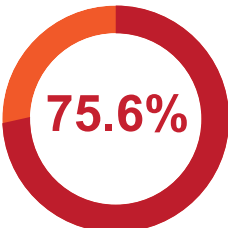
At the primary level, nearly 25% of children in Grade 3 **cannot write a single word in a dictation test.**



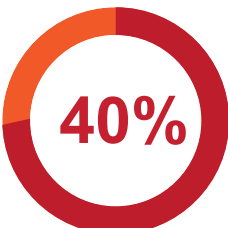
A child who started Grade 1 in school year 2016/17 has a 51% chance of **reaching the end of lower secondary school** (Grade 9)



82.6% of girls completed **primary school**, compared with 75.6% of boys in school year 2017/18



49% of girls completed lower **secondary school**, compared with 40% of boys in school year 2017/18.







## Partners

To improve the inclusiveness, quality and relevance of education in Cambodia, UNICEF works with the following government partners (listed in alphabetical order): the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS); the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF); the Ministry of Interior (MoI); the Ministry of Cults and Religion (MoCR); and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA).

Other key partners include: the European Union (EU); the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA); the US Agency for International Development (USAID); the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UN agencies (UNESCO and its Institute for Statistics, UIS), and the World Bank (WB). We also collaborate with local and international non-governmental organizations such as the NGO Education Partnership (NEP), CARE International and Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).



**Estimated budget required for the  
EDUCATION programme:**

**US\$ 55,532,000**





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