



Country-led Evaluation of the National Education Scholarship Programmes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia (2015-2018)

Final Report – Volume I

August 2018 – March 2019

Cambodia



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EVALUATION REPORT

MAY 2019

Country-led Evaluation of the National Education Scholarship Programmes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia 2015-2018

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Pratima Singh

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COUNTRY-LED EVALUATION OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMMES OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, YOUTH AND SPORTS IN CAMBODIA 2015-2018 (Volume I)

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The Country-led Evaluation of the National Education Scholarship Programmes of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia (2015-2018) was prepared by Ian MacAuslan, Maham Farhat, Seng Bunly, Russell Craig, Saroeun Huy, and Pratima Singh. The evaluation was commissioned by UNICEF Cambodia on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. It was managed by a team led by Erica Mattellone (Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF Cambodia) with support provided by Elizabeth Fisher (Research and Evaluation Associate, UNICEF Cambodia) and Saky Lim (Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, UNICEF Cambodia), Katheryn Bennett (Chief, Education, UNICEF Cambodia), Sovannarem Ngoy (Education Officer, UNICEF Cambodia), Sokhon Nuom (Education Officer, UNICEF Cambodia) and Miguel Pugliese Garcia (Evaluation Intern, UNICEF Cambodia).

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This version of the report is a revised final draft following review by the evaluation Reference Group. The draft submitted to the Reference Group had been revised following comments from UNICEF, presentations to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and their development partners, and a multi-stakeholder workshop on 7 February 2019 in Phnom Penh in which findings and recommendations were validated. Elizabeth Fisher provided editing for the report. We are very grateful to the Reference Group for comments and to all participants in the workshop, and in particular Excellency Put Samith from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports for chairing and guidance.

List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CDPF	Capacity Development Partnership Fund
CSES	Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey
DOE	Department of Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EFA	Education for All
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
EU	European Union
FGD	focus group discussion
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HRMIS	Human Resources Management Information System
KII	key informant interview
LFCLS	Labour Force and Child Labour Survey
LSMC	Local Scholarship Management Committee
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MIS	management information system
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSPPF	National Social Protection Policy Framework
OECD- DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
PETS	public expenditure tracking survey
POE	Provincial Office of Education
PPP	purchasing power parity
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SED	Secondary Education Department
SES	Socio-Economic Survey
Sida	Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency
TOR	terms of reference
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Figure 1: Country map with research sites

Provincial, district and school-based fieldwork was conducted in Banteay Meanchey, Stung Treng, Kampot, and Prey Veng, and provincial and section level fieldwork in Phnom Penh. These are highlighted in red on the map below.



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Executive Summary

Introduction and Purpose

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation of the Royal Government of Cambodia's primary and secondary scholarship programmes from 2015 to 2018. It has been conducted by a team managed by Oxford Policy Management (OPM) and BN Consult, and commissioned by UNICEF on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. This Volume is the first part of a two-volume report. Volume II contains more detail on background context, a description of the scholarship programme, the evaluation methodology including lists of interviewees and interview tools, and results from all data sources organised around the key design issues identified during the inception phase.

The evaluation takes place in the context of impressive achievements in Cambodia in terms of economic growth, poverty reduction and improvements in educational attainment. The proportion of children out of school is lower than the average in East Asia and the Pacific (5 per cent at primary and 14 per cent at lower secondary are out of school in Cambodia, compared with 6 per cent and 15 per cent regionally).¹ However, primary completion rates, particularly for boys, are still poor in Cambodia, as only 76 per cent completed primary in 2017-2018.² Attainment rates are typically worse for children from poorer rural households. Learning as measured by standardised tests also leaves room for improvement, particularly for marginalised households.³

The scholarship programmes – which build on earlier development partner pilots, but which are now firmly administered and financed by the Government of Cambodia – are a key part of the Government's policy response to challenges in equity in education, as set out in the Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018, and the Government's social protection agenda, as set out in the National Social Protection Strategy 2016-2025. They aim to select students from poor households, make three payments of US\$ 20 each at upper primary and lower secondary level, provided they regularly attend school and have good results, in order to support them to stay in school, be better prepared, and learn more.

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a formative and summative assessment of the scholarships, with a particular focus on the primary scholarship programme, in order to support improvements to their design and operations. The evaluation will be used by the Ministry of Education and its development partners to support the preparation of an equity-focused primary scholarship framework, and to make ongoing improvements to the design and delivery of the scholarship programmes. It is expected that these improvements will benefit vulnerable students in Cambodia (i.e., the primary rights holders) and improve education outcomes for the country. In turn, this would strengthen the prestige and confidence of the Ministry of Education and of its sub-national departments, including schools (i.e., the duty bearers). The evaluation objectives are to reconstruct the scholarships' theory of change, analyse the extent to which they have met their objectives, assess the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarship programmes, understand recipients' use and perceptions, and document lessons learned, good practices and innovations, and provide recommendations. The evaluation focuses on the upper primary and lower secondary scholarships: it excludes development partner-led programmes and the recently rolled out scholarships in Grades 1-3. The scope is nationwide, but with a focus on where scholarships are operating.

¹ Presentation by Francisco Benevides, UNICEF, source data from UIS.

² Joint Sector Review, 2018.

³ For example, 58% of children from rural households scored 'below basic' on a Grade 6 mathematics test, compared with 33% of children in urban households, according to MoEYS (2016).

Methodology

The evaluation questions are structured around the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee criteria for evaluating development assistance.⁴ These are relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Equity is an additional criterion. The evaluation adheres to United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016).⁵

The evaluation is based on the scholarship programmes' theory of change, reconstructed by the evaluation team. This is used particularly to inform the approach to the effectiveness and impact questions, where data is used to trace the contribution of the scholarships along the programmes' causal chain. More operational questions are answered using the theory of change but focused on its operations.

The evaluation uses mixed methods and is non-experimental: it draws on existing literature and datasets relevant to the scholarship programmes, and in addition primary data collected for the evaluation. These primary data were a survey on fund flow and allocation practices collected from each Provincial Office of Education and Provincial Treasury; 27 semi-structured interviews or group discussions with provincial education officials in five provinces and with district education officials in ten districts across those provinces, and 363 semi-structured interviews (144 women, 40 per cent) and 46 focus group discussions with duty bearers and rights holders (including recipient and non-recipient parents and children) in 24 schools across eight districts. Sampling was done purposively to identify provinces that were indicative of the four regions, and districts that offered a variety of remoteness and high poverty rates. Interview data were analysed and triangulated by the evaluation team and compared with existing information from evaluations, the Education Management Information System, and other datasets. This approach allowed the evaluation team to pull out key themes and conclusions. In order to inform ongoing debates, the evaluation generated an early-findings note, a preliminary evaluation report, and this final evaluation report, which has been validated with key stakeholders in Phnom Penh on 7 February 2019 and improved following Reference Group comments.

Main Evaluation Findings

The criterion of **relevance** includes five questions, covering relevance to national plans and frameworks, complementarity of targeting with other programmes, adequacy and regularity of the payment, incorporation of human rights goals and processes, and effective feedback mechanisms. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the scholarship programmes are highly relevant: well-aligned with existing Government documents and priorities, in particular the Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018 and the National Social Protection Framework 2016-2025; somewhat (although imperfectly) complementary to other programmes, with approximately appropriate transfer sizes and modalities and clear equity objectives (although some risks to equity outcomes in aspects of design, particularly targeting and conditionalities). Monitoring and feedback processes, however, leave substantial room for improvement.

There are five questions relating to **effectiveness**, covering achieving its objectives around retention and attainment, targeting, risks and satisfaction. Overall recipients were very satisfied with the scholarships and there is clear evidence that the scholarships contributed to recipients staying in school longer. However, the scholarships have not been able to overcome major barriers to regular attendance such as a family crisis or a very uninterested student. Conditionalities around attendance supported achieving these objectives. Conditions around academic achievement were rarely implemented in practice, but if they had been, they would have risked being iniquitous. Neither

⁴ Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

⁵ UNEG, 'Detail of Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)' (The United Nations Evaluation Group, June 2016), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

geographical allocations nor individual student selection is perfect, partly by design and partly due to variable implementation, and this presents a risk.

There are three questions relating to **efficiency**, covering timeliness of transfers, effectiveness of governance arrangements and alternative ways to implement the programme. Overall, there are some inefficiencies in the scholarships because transfers are not made at the start of the school year and the absence of a budget allocation for travel for monitoring and selection both mean that impact is lower than it would be otherwise. It would be more cost effective to pay on time and allocate funding for monitoring.

There are three questions the evaluation is answering in relation to **impact**, covering how and by whom scholarships are spent, their contribution to transition to lower secondary, and unintended or negative impacts. Overall, there is clear evidence that scholarships were spent – typically by mothers or grandmothers – on educational material or expenses, or food. The scholarships have not been able to support transition from upper primary to lower secondary, because these programmes are poorly coordinated. There were some negative impacts on non-recipients who were envious and, in some cases, demoralised by not being selected. These negative impacts were exacerbated when schools emphasised the difference between recipients and non-recipients.

Overall, **sustainability** is strong, with high levels of ownership by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and the use of Cambodian financial and human resources to run the programmes, speaking to Government priorities around educational access and equity. Scaling up would require additional resources and capacity, and the development of some new procedures to ensure coherence across primary and secondary scholarships.

A cross-cutting question asked about **equity** and monitoring. Monitoring processes are weak, and data is rarely communicated up through levels in any detail. The Ministry of Education has access to data on scholarships disaggregated by gender, but these data are very limited. There is no centralised place for data on primary and secondary scholarships. Major improvements to monitoring processes are possible.

Conclusions, Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Overall, **the scholarship programmes are working well, improving attainment, and are rightly a source of pride for ministry officials, school-level officials and rights holders who receive scholarships. There are, however, various areas where the design and implementation of the scholarships can be improved**, including around timeliness, consistent implementation (especially of targeting) and monitoring and feedback. The scholarships pay attention to equity in selection and administration, but there is limited equity monitoring (or monitoring in general).

Set against the evaluation objectives, the report concludes as follows:

- The evaluation team reconstructed the theory of change for the scholarship programmes, which did not previously exist in a clearly written form. The scholarship programmes were fully implemented as part of the Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018. In addition, the scholarships will be continued as a core part of the next Education Strategic Plan.
- The primary and secondary scholarships have achieved their objectives around keeping children in school, enabled by broadly effective implementation and a culture that is very supportive of education. However, they have been less effective in supporting transition from primary to secondary school, and there are still children who are unable to attend school regularly despite the existence of the scholarships. Barriers to the scholarships' effectiveness include: very limited coordination between primary and secondary scholarships, late payments, high opportunity costs of education, particularly at secondary level, and the inability to easily add students who drop out of school following an income shock to their household. Key bottlenecks around achieving the scholarships' objectives include the duration of the process of selection and then payment and

the collection and management of information about the scholarships, in particular the lack of student-specific information.

- The strengths of the scholarship programmes include the widespread support they receive from most duty bearers and rights holders across Cambodia. With the exception of some school directors of small schools who felt that implementing the scholarships was a major administrative burden, respondents were enthusiastic about and felt a strong sense of ownership of the scholarships. This bodes well for their continued implementation and effectiveness. In addition, the core processes articulated in the scholarships' theory of change work: students from poor households are identified and paid US\$ 60/year, and this helps them remain in school and encourages them to study hard. The weaknesses of the scholarships are not fundamental, but there are weaknesses that reduce the scholarships' positive impact and efficiency. These include late payments, poor coordination between primary and secondary scholarships, imperfections in targeting, and weak monitoring, feedback and communication processes. A feature of the scholarships that is both a potential strength and weakness is the flexibility of implementation that is afforded to school level duty bearers, especially directors. Where these individuals are committed, altruistic and well informed, this flexibility is a strength. Where they are not, it is a weakness.
- Recipients typically use the scholarships for educational materials and expenses, and basic household needs. Their perception of the scholarship programmes is overwhelmingly positive.
- The variability of implementation means that there are good practices and innovations that could be spread across the programme, though this is not straightforward. For instance, in most schools, teachers and directors take a very lenient view of the condition on academic performance and in some cases attendance, preferring to talk to students about how to improve rather than remove them from the programme. Another example of a good practice is when primary school directors travel to secondary schools to ensure that primary scholarship students leaving Grade 6 are enrolled in the scholarship programme when they start Grade 7. Finally, directors and teachers visit recipients at home during targeting and payment – usually at their own expense.

There are some interesting lessons to learn from the evaluation, structured around the evaluation criteria:

Relevance

- Cambodian parents and students have high aspirations, which will be challenging to meet but offers an excellent basis for designing and delivering education related programmes.

Effectiveness and Impact

- Scholarships do appear an effective way to reinforce perceptions of the importance of education in parents and students.
- Scholarships are very unlikely to entirely address problems of dropout, even if they made very large payments, so there are limits to the effectiveness of the scholarship programmes in the context of continued poverty, migration, and issues with school quality. This is in line with the out of school children studies in Cambodia and elsewhere.

Efficiency

- The scholarship programme has many forms in different schools, which is both a source of strength and weakness for the programme. In practice, this means that the efficiency of implementation – and subsequent effectiveness, impact and equity – is quite heavily determined by local level duty bearers. This is very common in many programmes and to service delivery, especially in education, where 'frontline worker discretion' is essential (to e.g., good teaching). It

puts a high premium, however, on effective monitoring, training, support and communication. The scholarship programme underinvests in these areas and this is inefficient.

Equity

- Rights holders and duty bearers emphasised the importance of equity and indeed equality throughout. This has implications for expansion, targeting and setting transfer size – in general that rights holders and local level duty bearers would prefer that more people get smaller transfers than fewer people get larger transfers.
- The absence of child-specific information in Cambodia (e.g., not having child-specific information in the Education Management Information System) hampers the effectiveness of the scholarships, as it does other aspects of education service delivery.

These conclusions underpin a basic recommendation that the scholarships be continued.

A mix of more detailed recommendations derive from these findings, which are presented below (in order of priority) and were validated and revised in the multi-stakeholder workshop on 7 February 2019. They include the following:

1. The Ministry of Education should pay further attention to the issue of timely payments, in particular the process by which schools select students and communicate this list to districts and provinces, and by which Provincial Offices of Education requisition transfers from the Provincial Treasuries. Once this requisition is made, the transfers can be made quickly, and the money should (now) be available in provincial treasuries in the last quarter of the fiscal year. However, the process leading up to this requisition should be carefully examined, as it is most likely the timing of selection that delays payments now that the fiscal year issue is addressed.
2. The Ministry of Education should take steps to develop a detailed manual for school-level duty bearers covering all areas of activity and make some plans to provide training to key duty bearers such as the school director, secretary and local chief.
3. The Ministry of Education should communicate through Provincial and District Offices of Education that schools should not label scholarship students in class and should downplay within classrooms the fact that some students receive a scholarship.
4. The Ministry of Education should develop and implement a more consistent basis for the allocation of scholarships to provinces, districts and schools across primary and secondary scholarships. This should include allocating both primary and secondary scholarships to districts on the (same) basis of poverty or education indicators (for example, allocate scholarships in proportion to the number of poor households with school-age children in that district). Districts could then allocate scholarships to schools on the basis of poverty, education indicators (such as drop-out) and the relationship between primary and secondary schools, to ensure transition. In practice, the programmes will need to honour existing scholarships and change allocations over a three-year period (as current Grade 4 students maintain their scholarships and move through Grades 5 and 6 and into secondary school).
5. The Ministry of Education, requesting support from development partners, should develop a costed monitoring and learning strategy for the scholarship programmes that articulates what data they want to collect on the programme, how and when they want to collect, and what they want to do to communicate it, in order to improve the quality of implementation and communication of success.
6. The Ministry of Education at the same time should invest in communications around rights and entitlements, feedback systems, and the use of these data, so that rights holders know their rights and are able to complain when these are not met, and duty bearers respond to these complaints.

7. The Ministry of Economy and Finance should allocate funding for monitoring, including household visits, by duty bearers at school and district level, and for training on how to do this.
8. The Ministry of Education should include in the framework a commitment to develop a strategy for how the scholarship programmes can support improved student transition between Grades 6 and 7. This should consider: whether scholarship students in Grade 6 can be guaranteed a scholarship in Grade 7 if they enrol and attend regularly, irrespective of their gender; and whether the lower secondary scholarship value could be more than the upper primary value (which would address the higher education costs but avoid creating envy within the same school). A long-term strategy to ensure Grade 6 recipients receive scholarships in Grade 7 will probably require some form of unique student identification, whether through IDPoor or a Ministry of Education unique student identifier. In the short-term, the Ministry of Education should pilot and evaluate an approach to improving transition within a district or province.
9. The Ministry of Education should remove the condition on results or performance. Scholarships should be received conditional on regular attendance (though school-level duty bearers should continue to implement this sympathetically), but not on results. School level duty bearers should continue to collect data on attendance, results, completion and progression, and tell parents and students that they do this.
10. The Ministry of Education should consider the long-term design of the scholarships as a single coherent programme covering all grades.

1 Introduction

This report presents findings, conclusions and recommendations from an independent evaluation of the scholarship programmes implemented in upper primary and lower secondary by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) in Cambodia between 2015 and 2018. The evaluation is designed to provide the Ministry and partners with a summative and formative evaluation to help inform improvements to the design and implementation of the scholarships. The evaluation is summative in that it provides an overall judgement on the scholarships, and formative in that it provides feedback about how well different parts of the scholarships are working. This is a country-led evaluation in the sense that it is intended primarily for the MoEYS to use, and the MoEYS are chairing the evaluation Reference Group to ensure that the evaluation responds to their needs and questions. The United Nations Children’s Fund in Cambodia, hereafter referred to as UNICEF, in their role as administrator of the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF) to the MoEYS, are managing the evaluation, through their Evaluation Section, working closely with the UNICEF Education Section.⁶ Other members of the Reference Group are from the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the National Social Protection Council, and development partners supporting the CDPF.

The report is structured as follows. Section 1 introduces the report. Section 2 provides the context and background to the evaluation. Section 3 presents the evaluation purpose, objectives and scope. Section 4 introduces the evaluation approach and methodology. Section 5 presents an analysis of the findings in terms of the evaluation criteria specified in the terms of reference (TOR). Section 6 discusses the main evaluation conclusions and Section 7 discusses lessons learned. Section 8 offers recommendations based on the evaluation findings. Further details on all aspects are provided in Volume II.

⁶ The CDPF was established in 2011 by Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) together with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the European Union (EU), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

2 Context and Background to the Evaluation

2.1 Background to the Evaluation

This section sets out the background to the evaluation, particularly the Cambodian context and key stakeholders to the evaluation. Further details are available in the **Annexes 3 and 4** in Volume II.

Cambodia has experienced robust economic growth and steady progress reducing poverty in recent years. The latest substantive poverty analysis – from 2014 – indicated that 10 per cent of Cambodia’s 14.68 million people lived on less than US\$ 1.25/day (the international poverty line) in 2011.⁷ This is a substantial reduction. However, millions of Cambodians still live very close to the poverty line and are extremely vulnerable to shocks.⁸ Poverty is overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas, and in particular the north and north east, though there is substantial internal migration and migration to Thailand.

Patterns of work have shifted in recent decades. Agriculture, which in 2000 employed nearly three in four Cambodian workers, now employs only around a quarter. Employment in the informal sector, manufacturing and tourism has grown rapidly, which has left Cambodia with a skills gap.

Education has received significant attention from the Royal Government of Cambodia. The Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2014-2018 seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) has pursued a multi-faceted strategy to achieve this, including through the provision of scholarship packages for vulnerable children in primary and secondary education.

Following the abolition of formal school fees in Cambodia (although informal fees remain),⁹ the proportion of children out of school is low relative to the region, with 5 per cent of children of primary age and 14 per cent of children of secondary age out of school (compared to 6 per cent and 15 per cent in South East Asia as a whole).¹⁰ However, the likelihood of not completing school increases substantially for students from poorer and rural households, for children with disabilities and for children from ethnic minorities.¹¹ Girls are more likely to be out of school in rural areas, and boys in urban areas.¹²

As in many countries, dropout rates at the end of primary, when students often need to start travelling to a secondary school in a different village or town, are high. Stagnant or falling primary completion rates, particularly for boys, are a major concern. Only 76 per cent of boys completed primary school in 2017/18.¹³ Overage enrolment is prevalent, and overage students often drop out. At 44.5 per cent nationwide and 40 per cent for boys in 2016/17, completion rates at lower secondary are worse than

⁷ ADB, ‘Cambodia Country Poverty Analysis 2014’ (Manila, Philippines: Asian Development Bank, 2014), <https://www.adb.org/documents/cambodia-country-poverty-analysis-2014>.

⁸ The World Bank estimated that 4.5 million Cambodians were in this category in 2014.

⁹ For instance, UNICEF (2017) notes that extra tuition fees cause exclusion.

¹⁰ World Bank, ‘World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education’s Promise’, Text/HTML (Washington D.C: World Bank, 2018), <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018>; Francisco Bevanides, ‘Out-of-School Children Initiative. Global and Regional Perspectives’ (Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, 29 March 2018).

¹¹ According to the Out of School Children Study (UNICEF 2017), 37% of primary age and 27% of lower secondary age children from ethnic minorities have never attended school. 57% of children with disabilities aged 15-19 have never attended school or completed primary school; higher than for any other group. Children from the poorest quintile are eight times more likely to be out of school at lower secondary age than children from the richest quintile.

¹² MoEYS and UNICEF, ‘Global Initiative on Out of School Children Cambodia Country Study’ (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Policy, MoEYS, 2017).

¹³ RGC, ‘Joint Sector Review’ (RGC, 2018).

at primary.¹⁴ Exclusion is caused by a mix of factors, including high opportunity costs, requirements for extra tuition/private classes, and quality issues.¹⁵

Measures of learning indicate only modest improvements over time at average levels typically below those expected by the national standards.¹⁶ Students in urban areas, and those who are of the appropriate age for their grade, and those who attend school regularly, perform better in standardised tests. Often these students are also wealthier.¹⁷

This close relationship between poverty and poor education outcomes implies that the scholarships have the potential – if effective – to help Cambodians escape the poverty traps they seem to remain in today. This is the perception of most stakeholders in Phnom Penh interviewed as part of the evaluation, and part of the scholarships' theory of change.

2.2 Object of the Evaluation

This section contains summary information on the object of the evaluation: the upper primary (Grades 4-6) and lower secondary (Grades 7-9) scholarship programmes of the Government of Cambodia, and their operations between 2015 and 2018. **Annex 3** in Volume II provide further detail on the nature of scholarship programmes.

The scholarships were framed by Vision 2030, the ESP 2014-2018¹⁸ and the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF 2016-2025)¹⁹, to contribute to their objectives of avoiding the inter-generational poverty trap and building a sustainable, competitive and harmonious economy. By making transfers to households with poor students (the primary rights holders) who attend school between Grades 4 and 9, the scholarships aim to increase the enrolment, attendance and completion (and reduce the drop-out and propensity to work) of poor students, meaning that they learn more, develop better skills and find better jobs.

The scholarships are a significant part of the government's approach to reducing inter-generational poverty. This is clear from the importance given to them in key policy documents, particularly the ESP and NSPPF. While the proportion of the overall budget allocated to scholarships remains small, they receive a significant proportion of the budget allocated to social assistance. In 2017/18, these programmes provide scholarships to students in:

- Grades 4-6, nationwide: 86,126 students (52 per cent female), in 4,611 schools (in 2016/17, 77,654 students, and in 2015/16, 68,234 students).
- Grades 7-9, nationwide: 71,669 students (60 per cent female), in 809 schools
- Grades 10-12: nationwide: 7,196 students (60 per cent female), in 120 schools (this is not covered in the evaluation).

The scholarships are operationalised in Anukret 34 (from 2015), and Prakas 2457 (2015), with detail provided in two manuals for the primary and secondary scholarships. The manuals build on earlier versions of the scholarship programmes supported by various different development partners. The approaches to the primary and secondary scholarships differ in some important respects on paper, particularly in the process for allocating scholarships to districts and schools. These documents contain the following provisions:

¹⁴ Although completion rates have been rising since 2012/13, according to the Joint Sector Review 2018.

¹⁵ MoEYS and UNICEF, 2017 'Global Initiative on Out of School Children Cambodia Country Study'.

¹⁶ MoEYS, 'Mid-Term Review Report in 2016 of the Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018 and Projection to 2020' (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Policy, MoEYS, November 2016).

¹⁷ For example, 58% of children from rural households scored 'below basic' on a Grade 6 mathematics test, compared with 33% of children in urban households, according to MoEYS (2016).

¹⁸ MoEYS, 'Education Strategic Plan 2014-2018' (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Policy, MoEYS, March 2014).

¹⁹ MEF, 'National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025' (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2017).

- Provinces, districts and schools are allocated scholarships on the basis of poverty and education outcomes. The primary scholarship programme allows some discretion by the centre, provinces and districts as to the allocation, but the secondary scholarship programme requires 30 students (of which 18 female students) per school and allocates schools centrally.
- Schools select students for scholarships on the basis of poverty before the start of the school year in November.
- Households with students in upper primary and lower secondary are paid US\$ 60 per year in three tranches provided they attend regularly. The first tranche is intended to be transferred towards the start of the school year. Payments are made by schools to households using cash that has been transferred to the school accounts.
- Students that do not attend regularly are supposed to be removed from the programme and replaced.

In practice there is substantial variation in the way in which the scholarships are implemented. For example:

- Officials at all levels have discretion over selection of schools and students for the primary scholarship programme and use this differently.
- Payments are made differently in different provinces. In some provinces, payments are made directly from treasuries to schools; in others via districts; in others via provinces. Payments have to date not been made on time.
- Students who do not attend regularly are very rarely if ever replaced.

The theory of change for the scholarships is depicted below. This has been developed by the evaluation team in the absence of an official theory of change or results framework for the scholarships. The theory of change below includes duty bearers (those who have duties in relation to the scholarship programme) and rights holders. Key stakeholders are in the table below.

Table 1: Right holders and duty bearers

Right Holders	Duty Bearers
Children who receive scholarships and their parents	School directors, teachers and other members of scholarship committees (direct duty bearers)
Children (and their parents) who are within the scholarships' intended group of recipients but do not receive scholarship	<p>At sub-national level, the provincial and district offices of education and related scholarship committees are duty bearers responsible for allocation of schools and scholarships, overseeing fund transfer, and monitoring</p> <p>At national level, the MoEYS Primary and General Secondary Education Departments, and particularly the scholarship units within them, are primary duty-bearers</p> <p>Outside government, several development partners play roles in the scholarship programmes through the provision of financial or technical assistance to the government and therefore also bear a duty. These include parties to the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF)</p>

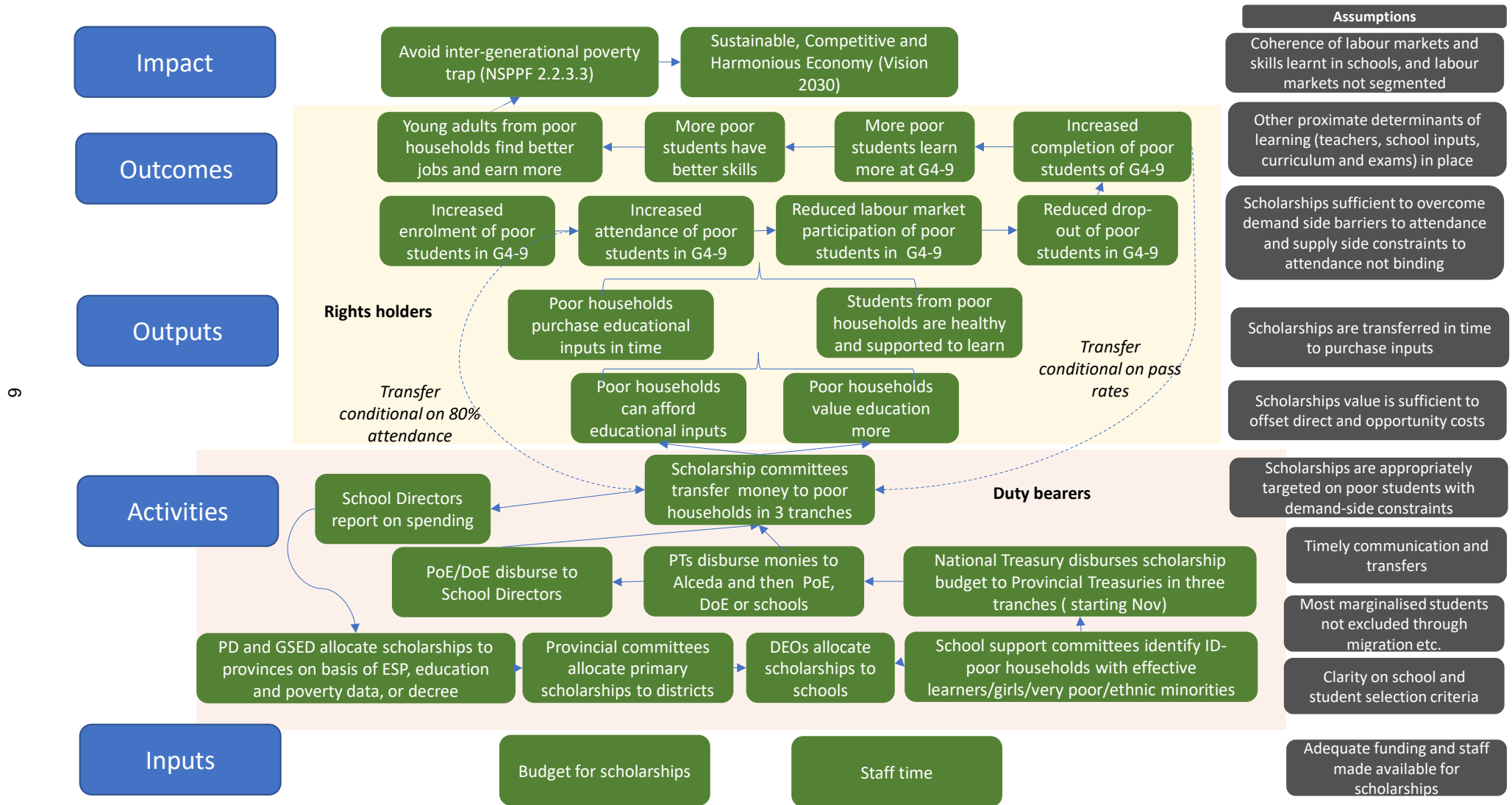
The evaluation is structured around this theory of change. This draws on recent work by the World Bank and UNICEF on the complexity of factors contributing to learning and to children attending

school regularly.²⁰ In brief, the goal of education is considered to be students learning skills, attitudes and values that are useful to their future lives and societies. This is more likely when there is effective teaching, learning-focused inputs, skilled management and governance, and when learners are prepared. Learners are prepared by attending school regularly at the appropriate ages, by being supported to do their homework and by being adequately nourished, rested and supported. The scholarships contribute to helping with learner preparedness. As such, they may make a contribution – subject to other determinants of learning being in place – to learning. However, not only are these determinants rarely in place, there are several other barriers to school attendance that scholarships may not be able to address, notably the quality of schooling and school infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

Expressed in if-then logic, if appropriately targeted households receive scholarships of an appropriate amount at the right time of year to cover direct and opportunity costs of education, then they will spend more on education related inputs and provide more attention to their children's education. If this happens, then at-risk students will attend school more regularly, and be better prepared to learn (through e.g., better nourishment). If this happens, and there are adequate supply-side inputs to learning (such as qualified teachers, appropriate curriculum and materials and school inputs), then these students will learn more and progress. If this happens, and they have access to fair labour markets that value skills and qualifications, then they are more likely to be employed in a good job.

²⁰ These sources are the World Development Report 2018 on Education and the Out of School Children Initiative.

Figure 2: Theory of change for the scholarship programmes



Source: Evaluation team, presented in the inception report (OPM and BN Consult, 2018).

3 Evaluation Purpose, Objectives and Scope

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide a formative and summative assessment of the scholarships, with a particular focus on the primary scholarship programme, in order to support improvements to their design and operations. This evaluation seeks to assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, interim outcomes, sustainability and equity/gender of the scholarship programmes.

The evaluation will be used by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and its partners (including UNICEF, the European Union (EU), the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Bank). Another key user is the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) in order to support the design of the equity-focused scholarship framework, and to make ongoing improvements to the design and delivery of the scholarship programmes. It is expected that these improvements will benefit vulnerable students in Cambodia (i.e., the primary rights holders) and improve education outcomes for the country. In turn, this would strengthen the prestige and confidence of the MoEYS and of its sub-national departments, including schools (i.e., the duty bearers).

The evaluation has both a summative component assessing the current scholarship programmes and a formative component, which focuses on documenting learnings and providing recommendations to inform the design and delivery of future scholarship programmes. The evaluation will support the implementation of the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF 2016-2025), as well as the formulation of the forthcoming Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2019-22).

3.2 Objectives

The main objectives of the evaluation are to:

- Reconstruct a theory of change of the scholarship programmes and review to what extent the programmes have been implemented as part of the ESP 2014-2018;
- Analyse the extent to which the primary and secondary scholarship programmes have met their objectives, including the identification of enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks;
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarship programmes (primary and secondary);
- Understand the scholarship recipients' use and perception of the scholarship programmes; and
- Document lessons learned, good practices and innovations as well as provide recommendations on how the scholarship programmes can be strengthened.

The evaluation is required now because the new mandate is paying substantial attention to cash transfers, including the design of an equity-focused scholarship framework to be completed by March 2019.

The evaluation is relevant to UNICEF's objectives of supporting children from vulnerable households to realise their rights to a decent quality education, and to avoid entering into harmful work. It contributes to UNICEF's work in Cambodia supporting the MoEYS through the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF) and their work seeking to improve social protection through the MEF.

3.3 Scope

The scope of the evaluation is the primary and secondary scholarship programmes run by the MoEYS from 2015 onwards. This excludes several development partner-led scholarship programmes (e.g., UNICEF, ADB, and WFP scholarships), and the recently agreed roll-out of scholarships to Grades 1-3. The evaluation is focused on Grades 4-9, not Grades 10 and 11. The geographical scope is nationwide, although the scholarships are targeted on particular districts (around the partner-led scholarships to some extent) and the evaluation focuses on provinces and districts that represent particular regions of Cambodia: Phnom Penh, Kampot, Stung Treng, Banteay Meanchey and Prey Veng. As the scholarship programmes are implemented through Phnom Penh (national level), provinces, districts and schools, the evaluation will encompass all of these levels. The evaluation scope does not include a detailed assessment of the capacity of the MoEYS or of the available finances to expand the scholarship programme, and it does not include assessing the cost effectiveness of the scholarships (which was an original question and objective), due to data limitations.



Photo Credit: ©UNICEF 2017/Cambodia/Bona KHOY

4 Methodology

The methodology used to answer the evaluation questions is set out in detail in **Annexes 5-15** in Volume II. Here is a brief summary. Overall, the methodology is theory-based, using a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide evidence of the scholarship's contribution to desired outcomes by providing evidence of change along the theory of change. The findings, conclusions and recommendations presented here were validated in a multi-stakeholder workshop on 7 February 2019.

The evaluation questions are organised around the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) criteria for evaluation: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability with additional cross-cutting issues raised by UNICEF.²¹ These criteria were outlined in the terms of reference (TOR) and are the standard evaluation criteria for evaluations of development programmes and for the United Nations. The evaluation matrix provided in **Annex 2** sets out the detailed questions, for each question indicators, disaggregated by gender and other human rights considerations where appropriate, and approaches to data collection and analysis. The evaluation questions are reproduced below:

Table 2: Evaluation questions

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
Relevance	R1: To what degree are the objectives of the scholarship programmes relevant to the Education Strategic Plan (ESP), the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF), the Decentralisation and De-concentration process, the National Strategic Development Plan, and other relevant policies and strategies?
	R2: To what extent has the selection of beneficiaries or geographical areas complemented the targeting of other social programmes to reach to the worst-off and most vulnerable children? Have there been any gaps in relation to targeting and coverage of the scholarships?
	R3: How adequate has the size (value) and regularity of the scholarship been to achieve the scholarship programme objectives? Has the allocated funding reflected the level of needs of scholarship recipients and the operating needs?
	R4: To what extent have equity, gender equality and human rights goals and processes been incorporated into the planning of the scholarship programme? Has the scholarship been designed to provide for equal participation by all relevant groups (i.e., girls and boys)?
	R5: To what degree has the scholarship programme included processes and mechanisms to support the effective design and implementation of the programme and elicit feedback from scholarship recipients?
Effectiveness	Effe1: To what extent have the expected objectives of the scholarship programmes been achieved or likely to be achieved in terms of reduced drop-out, improved promotion and completion rates, improved attendance and to some extent learning outcomes?
	Effe2: How effectively have the scholarship programmes identified children who are not-in-school for socio-economic reasons and brought them back, and maintained them into the school system? Has the scholarship promoted equal access by girls and boys to primary and secondary education? How have the conditionalities attached to scholarship receipt affected this in practice at primary and secondary school?
	Effe3: How well have the design and implementation of the programmes' geographic allocation and student targeting mechanisms, such as IDPoor or other targeting mechanisms being used to target potential scholarship recipients? Are these targeting mechanisms effective in reaching the most vulnerable children?

²¹ OECD, 'DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance - OECD', The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, accessed 2 November 2018, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>.

Evaluation criteria	Evaluation questions
	Effe4: What have been the risks to achieving the scholarship programmes' objectives? Have been risks managed appropriately (i.e., in the transfer of funds)? Effe5: How satisfied have the parents and their children been with the scholarship programmes?
Efficiency	Effi1: How timely and effectively has the scholarship delivery process been managed, including the timeliness and frequency of payments to recipients? What are the consequences of late payments for recipients? Effi2: How effective have the current governance arrangements been, including staffing resources and roles and responsibilities of partners in the delivery and monitoring of the programmes? Effi3: Are there other feasibly ways to implement the scholarship programmes that would be more cost-efficient?
Impact	I1: To what degree and how have the scholarship programmes contributed to influence households' investment decisions regarding education? What do households spend the scholarships on and who spends it? I2: To what extent have the scholarship programmes contributed to student transition from primary to secondary education? How can the coordination between primary and secondary scholarships be improved to increase this impact? I3: Are there any unintended results either positive or negative associated with the implementation of scholarship programmes?
Sustainability	S1: To what extent does Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) have ownership, capacity and resources and maintain the scholarship programmes after external funding ceases? S2: To what extent can the primary scholarship be expanded to include Grades 1-3? How should the scholarship programme be scaled-up? What would be reasonable as a scholarship size?
Cross-cutting	X1: To what extent are age, gender, ethnicity, etc. disaggregated data collected and monitored? How can the current programme performance indicators and monitoring and evaluation framework (including the Management Information System (MIS)) be strengthened?

4.1 Evaluation Approach and Studies

The evaluation takes a theory-based approach and uses mixed methods, structured around the theory of change presented above. It is not an experimental evaluation. The theory-based approach applies particularly to questions of effectiveness and impact, but the theory of change informs the approach to all the evaluation questions. The evaluation is based on the scholarship programmes' theory of change, reconstructed by the evaluation team. This is used particularly to inform the approach to the effectiveness and impact questions, where data is used to trace the contribution of the scholarships along the programmes causal chain. More operational questions are answered using the theory of change but focused on its operations.

Following inception, the Reference Group agreed to structure the evaluation around six studies on issues that were of primary importance to key stakeholders:

1. The timeliness of fund flows from the central treasury to recipients;
2. The size of the transfer;
3. The process of allocating scholarships to schools and selecting students;
4. The coordination between the primary and secondary scholarships;
5. The effectiveness and impact of the scholarships; and

6. Remaining key issues around the design of the scholarships.

This approach was taken because each study addresses a clearly expressed need from primary duty bearers in the MoEYS and has a methodological coherence. Each study covered a set of evaluation questions, and each evaluation question was captured by one study. The studies all had a methodological coherence to them – i.e., the study on fund flows (which involved tracing the process by which funds were moved and reported on) took a different approach to the study on the size of the transfer (which focused on a comparison with expenditures in Cambodia and with other scholarship programmes). Each study lead worked with others to contribute to the design of data collection tools and the analysis of the data collected. Details of the studies are provided in **Annexes 5-10** in Volume II.

4.1.1 Data Sources

The inception report outlined and agreed a proposal to focus the data collection on qualitative case studies of impact and a short phone survey of each province rather than the ‘structured surveys’ suggested in the TOR. This was because structured surveys at school level were unlikely at this scale to add any rigour to the evaluation results, and the questions on educational outcomes are well addressed by existing evidence. These were replaced with structured surveys communicated by Telegram²² and followed up with a phone call, and then face to face interviews with provincial and district officials in five provinces.

The evaluation therefore draws on four principal data sources:

- i) Existing data and documents such as the Education Management Information System (EMIS), programme reviews and other literature;
- ii) A structured Telegram/phone survey of every (25) Provincial Office of Education (POE) and Treasury on fund flows, allocation and coordination. This meant the team aimed for interviews with officials in primary and secondary education offices and provincial treasuries in all 24 provinces and Phnom Penh, 25 provinces in all and 75 interviews. In practice, 19 out of 25 primary offices of education responded to questions about the selection process, and 18 out of 25 primary offices of education responded to questions about fund flow. For secondary offices, only 11 responded on selection and 10 on fund flow. 18 out of 25 Provincial Treasuries provided information about fund flow;
- iii) Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) with five provincial education officials in five provinces (Phnom Penh, Kampot, Banteay Meanchey, Stung Treng, and Prey Veng) and with up to four district officials in two districts in each province, covering topics on fund flow, allocation, coordination and design. In total, 27 POE and District Office of Education (DOE) officials were interviewed.
- iv) School-based data collection in 24 schools across four provinces (focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews of rights holders and duty bearers across all issues). The team conducted 363 semi-structured interviews, 144 (40 per cent) of which were with women, and 46 focus group discussions (FGDs) of mixed gender.

Our approach to sampling is set out in detail in **Annex 13**. Sample sizes for school-level interviews are presented below. The following provinces were sampled purposively in order to offer regional variation and insight into different types of provinces:

- Phnom Penh because it has a unique province to school fund flow process, and because conditions in Phnom Penh are typically different from the rest of the country;

²² Telegram is a messaging App (similar to WhatsApp) used routinely by many government officials in Cambodia.

- Kampot in the coastal region, because it has poor education and poverty indicators, but is more typical than Koh Kong (which is the poorest province in the region but has a large Thai diaspora population and is less typical);
- Banteay Meanchey in the north-western region, because there are high drop outs especially at secondary level as many students go to Thailand;
- Stung Treng in the Eastern Region, because while Ratanakiri is poorer, there is less material available on Stung Treng; and
- Prey Veng in the lowlands, because it has a more typical poverty profile than Svay Rieng (which has lot of industry).

In each selected province interviews were conducted at the provincial head office and in two districts that are receiving both primary and secondary scholarships. These districts were selected on the basis of providing a mix of remote and less remote districts, and above average poverty rates for the district.

School level interviewees were selected on the basis of snowball sampling through schools, to ensure a gender balance of students and parents where possible, although the duty bearers were interviewed irrespective of gender.

Figure 3: School level interviewees

Interviewee	Total Female	Per cent Female	Total Male	Total
School director	2	10%	19	21
School secretary	9	41%	13	22
Teacher	21	47%	24	45
Village chief	3	9%	31	34
School support committee	3	14%	18	21
Commune councillor	2	50%	2	4
Recipient student - FGD				23
Recipient parent - FGD				23
Recipient student - KII	11	24%	35	46
Non-recipient student - KII	20	45%	24	44
Recipient parent - KII	24	52%	22	46
Non-recipient parent - KII	37	84%	7	44
OOS child	7	41%	10	17
OOS parent	5	26%	14	19
	144	35%	219	409

A full list of interviewees, sampling and data collection tools is in **Annexes 12-14** in Volume II.

4.1.2 Data Analysis

The approach to data analysis was based on programme theory, as detailed in the inception report, attempting to trace processes by which the scholarships delivered desired outputs and achieved outcomes or impacts. Interview data were triangulated by the evaluation team, meaning that information produced by different respondents and different sources about the same phenomenon at the same level were compared to check where they aligned. This is achieved by:

- Organising and coding data around questions, studies and themes;
- Comparing data on a particular theme to identify patterns and outliers; and
- Generating judgements through debate within the team about which outliers to retain and which to discard.

In the event, this triangulation process did not yield major discrepancies.

The data were compared with existing information from evaluations, EMIS and other datasets to pull out key themes and conclusions. Data analysis was conducted around the following framework, reproduced from the inception report:

Table 3: Data analysis framework

Study	Criteria being analysed	Data source	Area of analysis
Fund flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeliness of payment • Frequency of payment • Causes of lateness • Consequences of lateness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manuals • Transfer orders and reconciliation slips • Central officials • Provincial officials • District officials • Directors • Recipients 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison with stated objectives • Timing of transfer orders and reconciliation • Perceptions of causes and consequences of payment delays
Transfer size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size of transfer relative to key comparators, over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarship manual • Consumer price index • Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) • Wage data • Existing data from other countries • Central officials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison correcting for inflation and purchasing power parity (PPP) with opportunity cost, educational need, and similar countries • Perceptions of key respondents of process of setting transfer
Allocation and selection study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targeting effectiveness at different levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central, provincial, district and school officials • Recipients and non-recipients • Scholarship MIS • Education MIS/Existing data • IDPoor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of respondents of the quality of the targeting criteria and process • Evidence of adherence to process as designed • Overlap between intended recipients and actual recipients
Coordination study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination between primary and secondary scholarships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central, provincial, district and school officials • Recipients and non-recipients • Scholarship MIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression of students from Grade 6 to 7, keeping scholarship. • Perceptions of officials of desirability of progression • Mechanism to ensure progression
Effectiveness and impact study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment, attendance, progression, drop-out and learning • Other unanticipated impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central, provincial, district and school officials • Recipients and non-recipients • Scholarship MIS • Existing studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student educational outcomes data compared with poorest quintile overall • Perceptions of impact and tracing of stories of impact along the theory of change • Credible triangulated evidence of other impact

An important stage in the analysis and write up process was a multi-stakeholder workshop held in Phnom Penh on 7 February 2019. At this workshop, preliminary findings and recommendations were presented by the evaluation team to a group of stakeholders including MoEYS and MEF officials, provincial and district education officials, teachers, rights holders, including children and development partner staff. The group gave feedback in plenary on the headline conclusions, and then divided into groups to scrutinise conclusions in different themes and endorse or suggest improvements in the recommendations. These proposals have been reflected here.

4.1.3 Equity and Human Rights

Equity and human rights are central to the scholarship programmes and the evaluation. The scholarships are targeted on poverty as recorded by the IDPoor database²³ and have explicit poverty reduction objectives. There are more female than male scholarship recipients, and for the secondary scholarships this is mandated at school level, where 18 of 30 recipients must be girls.

The evaluation is specifically tasked to answer questions related to equity and human rights, in particular in the selection and monitoring processes. Analysis is disaggregated where possible by dimensions of inequity, such as gender and disability. The perspectives of different stakeholders are taken into account, including female and male children who receive the scholarships and their parents, and female and male children who do not receive the scholarships.

4.1.4 Limitations

There is more detail about the limitations of the evaluation in **Annex 15** in Volume II. In particular:

- Existing quantitative data limits the types of analysis that can be conducted. In particular, the EMIS does not provide child-specific data and does not contain fields on the scholarship. The scholarship programmes themselves do not have consolidated comprehensive digital records of any kind. This was mitigated by using other data sources, such as a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey, but this is an imperfect substitute. Current data do not allow us to identify what percentage of primary scholarship students transition to lower secondary school, and what percentage of lower secondary scholarship students transition to upper secondary school. There are no comparative aggregated data on scholarship versus non-scholarship students from the same schools.
- Collecting representative primary quantitative data at school level was not possible given the timeframe and budget for the evaluation. The evaluation does not therefore provide representative findings at community level. This was mitigated by gathering and presenting qualitative data that is indicative of different types of location.
- The diversity of approaches to implementation across provinces limits the extent to which there is 'one scholarship programme'. This in turn limits the generalisability of conclusions. To mitigate this, the evaluation collected data from each province on how scholarship processes work in practice, through a phone/Telegram survey.

4.1.5 Ethics

The evaluation adheres to the United Nations Evaluation Group's Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)²⁴, the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis (2015)²⁵, the obligations of evaluators in the United Nations Evaluation Group Ethical Guidelines (2008)²⁶, United Nations Evaluation Group Guidance on Integrating Human Rights

²³ IDPoor is a nationwide, community-based poverty identification system or a social registry. IDPoor1 stands for extremely poor and IDPoor2 stands for moderately poor. See Kaba et al for more details. Mary White Kaba et al., 'IDPoor: A Poverty Identification Programme That Enables Collaboration across Sectors for Maternal and Child Health in Cambodia', *BMJ*, 7 December 2018, k4698, <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.k4698>.

²⁴ UNEG, 'Detail of Norms and Standards for Evaluation (2016)' (The United Nations Evaluation Group, June 2016), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>.

²⁵ UNICEF, 'UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis' (UNICEF, 2015), https://www.unicef.org/supply/files/ATTACHMENT_IV-UNICEF_Procedure_for_Ethical_Standards.PDF.

²⁶ UNEG, 'Detail of UNEG Ethical Guidelines' (The United Nations Evaluation Group, June 2008), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102>.

and Gender Equality in Evaluation (2014)²⁷ as well as the UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator (2018)²⁸. Specifically, the team respected the obligations of evaluators: independence, impartiality, credibility, the avoidance of conflicts of interest, honesty and integrity, and accountability.

The evaluation design and data collection tools were reviewed from an ethical standpoint by UNICEF. Since the evaluation directly collected data from human subjects, including members from vulnerable and marginalised groups and children, fieldwork training set out a range of principles that researchers adhered to, including around safeguarding. Field teams received specific training on ethics and processes for identifying and reporting abuse of participants' ethics (such as a child reporting she had been abused). Field teams were to report ethical issues to the Evaluation manager and Chief of Child Protection in UNICEF as soon as possible for resolution by an NGO or government; happily, none were encountered so this was not required. During data collection, researchers observed the following guidelines:

- **Ensuring the safety of participants:** this meant that the environment in which research is conducted was physically safe, that there were at least two facilitators present at all times.
- **Recognising the participants are vulnerable:** this meant that the researchers were aware of local conditions and made sure that the exercise and interactions are carried out in a manner that was respectful to all respondents.
- **Ensuring that people understand what is happening at all times:** this was ensured through the use of local enumerators, so that research was conducted in the appropriate language and dialect through fieldworkers who are familiar with local customs and terminology.
- **Clarifying the purpose:** this involved setting and communicating clear parameters for the interviews to the respondents, which included clearly stating the purpose, the limits and what the follow up will entail.
- **Informed consent:** potential respondents were given enough information about the research. Researchers were trained to ensure that there was no explicit or implicit coercion so that potential respondents made an informed and free decision on their possible involvement in the fieldwork. Respondents were informed that they can choose to not respond to all or any questions at any time. The team obtained explicit oral consent from each respondent before carrying out any research activity.
- **Anonymity:** given that research respondents could share considerable amounts of personal information with us, it is the evaluation team's responsibility to ensure that their confidentiality is maintained, and personal information is protected. This was operationalised by ensuring that all datasets are *anonymised*, in the sense that all names of people are removed before any data is shared publicly.

²⁷ UNEG, 'Detail of Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations' (The United Nations Evaluation Group, August 2014), <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/1616>.

²⁸ UNEG, 'UN-SWAP Evaluation Performance Indicator Technical Note' (The United Nations Evaluation Group, April 2018), <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1452>.

5 Findings

Volume II presents more detailed findings structured around the six studies, whereas this section sets out findings organised around the evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and equity. Overall, the evaluation concludes that the scholarships are relevant, sustainable, equitable and have positive impacts and effectiveness. However, there is room for improvement in terms of efficiency (particularly in terms of making payments on time and allocating some budget to monitoring), and effectiveness (particularly in terms of improving allocation and in coordination between primary and secondary and monitoring). **Annex 17** in Volume II contains questions, findings, conclusions and recommendations in a single matrix.

5.1 Relevance

The criterion of relevance covers five questions.

Main findings:

The scholarship programmes are highly relevant and in particular:

- Well-aligned with existing national plans, documents and priorities;
- Complementary to other programmes;
Approximately appropriate transfer sizes and modalities; and
- Clear equity objectives.

Monitoring and feedback processes, however, leave substantial room for improvement.

5.1.1 R1: Relevance to national plans and priorities

On the basis of a review of documents, the objectives of the scholarship programmes are highly relevant to the Education Strategic Plan (ESP 2015-2018), National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF 2016-2025)²⁹ and National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP 2014-2018)³⁰. All documents make explicit reference to the scholarship programmes, and the scholarship programmes' stated objectives align closely with the ESP's objectives of improving equitable access and the NSPPF's objectives of reducing inter-generational poverty through supporting human capital development amongst poor households. Providing scholarships to poorer students is one of the key priorities of the ESP to address equity of access. The NSDP also references scholarships, noting they are an ESP priority, and a means to improve equity and educational access, both contributing to the NSDP's long-term goals of Cambodia becoming an upper middle-income country.

5.1.2 R2: Complementarity with other social programmes

All provinces in Cambodia receive both primary and secondary scholarships. However, not all districts, nor all schools receive scholarships. Furthermore, not all eligible students receive scholarships. This is explained in detail below.

The targeting process starts at the provincial level. Research at the provincial and district level indicates a significant amount of variation in selection and allocation of both scholarships amongst districts. This is further compounded by a lack of documentation on how this *should* be done (no information in manuals), nor how allocation is *actually* done in practice. In addition, the process of allocating primary and secondary scholarships is different by design, with 30 secondary scholarships

²⁹ MEF, 'National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025'.

³⁰ RGC, 'Cambodia National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018', 29 April 2015, http://www.ilo.org/asia/info/WCMS_364549/lang--en/index.htm.

(18 of which are for girls) allocated by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to each grade in selected schools, but much more flexibility by numbers and at provincial level in primary.

For both primary and secondary, MoEYS provides a quota of scholarships to the Provincial Office of Education (POE) every school year but POEs typically do not know what specific criteria is used for this. Then POE allocates a quota of these scholarships to certain districts in the province. The way of allocating scholarships to districts is not unique: it differs from one province to another, and between the primary and secondary scholarship programmes. DOE officials do not know exactly how POEs makes these allocations. This variation is illustrated in the Box below.

Box 1: Scholarship allocation – Prey Veng vs Stung Treng

Primary Scholarship: Scholarship allocation from POE to DOE is different from one province to another.

Prey Veng: The POE allocates a quota of scholarships based on a fixed percentage (i.e., 12 per cent) of the sum of enrolments of eligible grades (Grade 4, 5, and 6) of all primary schools in each district. This practice was used by WFP before 2015. The allocation does not depend on poverty levels of each district, or other parameters such as remoteness and ethnicity of the population.

Stung Treng: Since 2015, MoEYS has provided a list of primary scholarships for each province. By 2018, this list had not been updated. The list was received from GPE, who was responsible for primary scholarship before 2015.

In the latest school year 2018-2019, MoEYS allocated an additional quota of primary scholarships to the province. The POE organized meetings with the DOE to allocate the additional scholarships to each district in the province. Allocation was based on a request from the DOE and discussion among DOE. There is no formula used for allocation.

Secondary Scholarship: MoEYS allocated a quota of scholarships to the POE, DOE, at school level. Currently, the lower secondary list of scholarship schools, in each province, is provided by MoEYS. The number of scholarships per school is fixed at 90, regardless of the size. Interviews with the POE reveal that, since 2015, when they started to implement the program, the list of schools in each province has never changed.

Complementarity with other social programmes is limited in practice. In allocating scholarships to districts and schools, it is not apparent that the MoEYS take into account any other social programmes (besides other scholarships). In selecting students at school level, duty bearers (school directors and teachers) will use IDPoor but also their discretion to narrow targeting (since there are roughly twice as many IDPoor holders as scholarships available). This means that the implementation of the scholarships is not consistent with the approach to selection taken by other poverty transfers in Cambodia – a point noted by the National Social Protection Council during the validation workshop.

Our analysis of Education Management Information System (EMIS) and IDPoor data suggests that at a high level, the scholarships are targeted on provinces and districts on the basis of poverty. Figure 4 and Figure 5 below illustrates this. **Annex 7** in Volume II has more details.

However, the targeting is not perfect in terms of the proportion of scholarships allocated to provinces on the basis of poverty alone, partly because the allocation incorporates education outcomes as well. MoEYS officials indicate that scholarships are not allocated to districts where other scholarships are running, but this is likely to have a certain amount of provincial discretion (at least for primary scholarships). It is not obvious that there has been active allocation of scholarships on the basis of where other (non-MoEYS) programmes are being implemented.

Figure 4: Primary scholarship and poor household numbers, by province

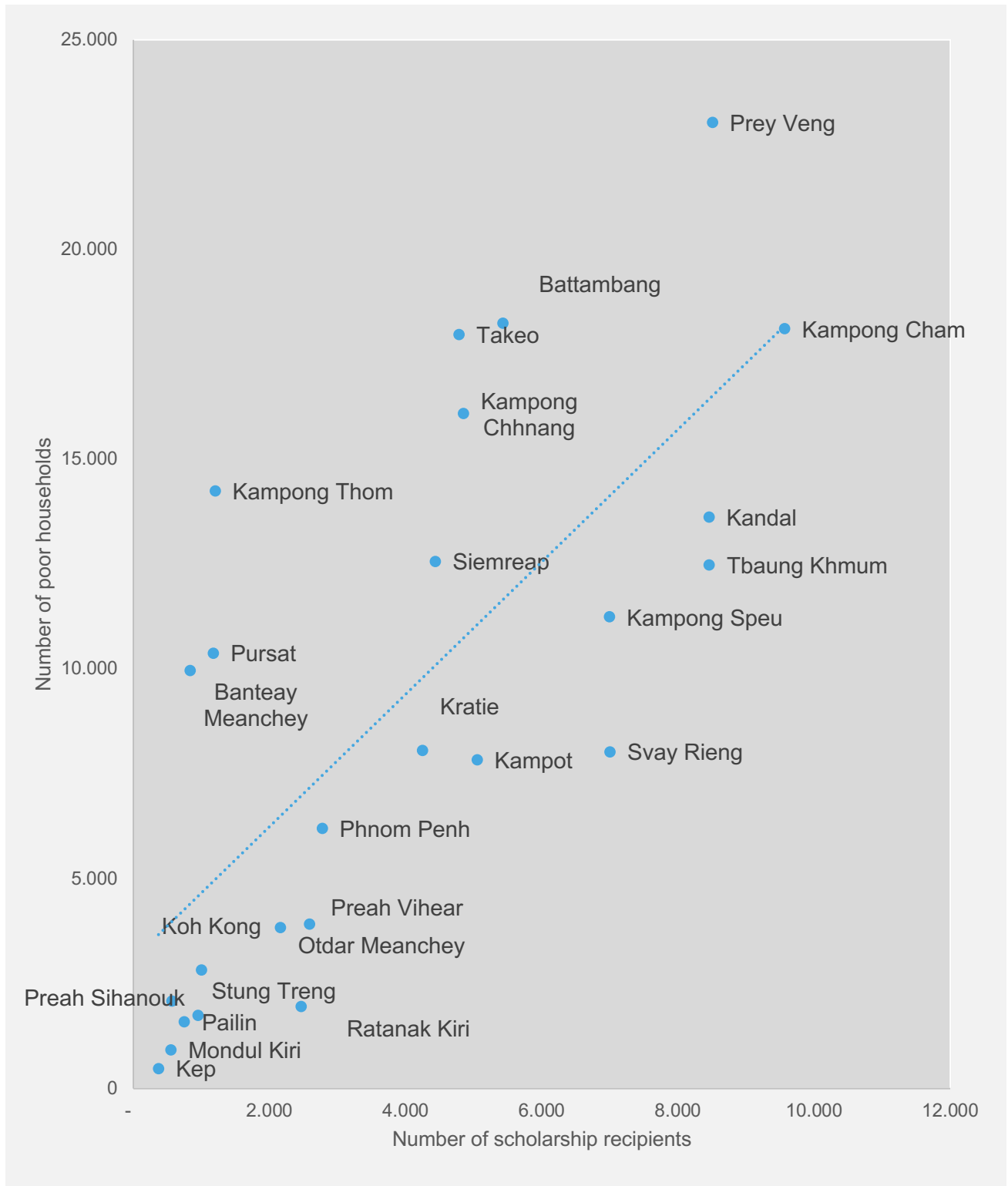
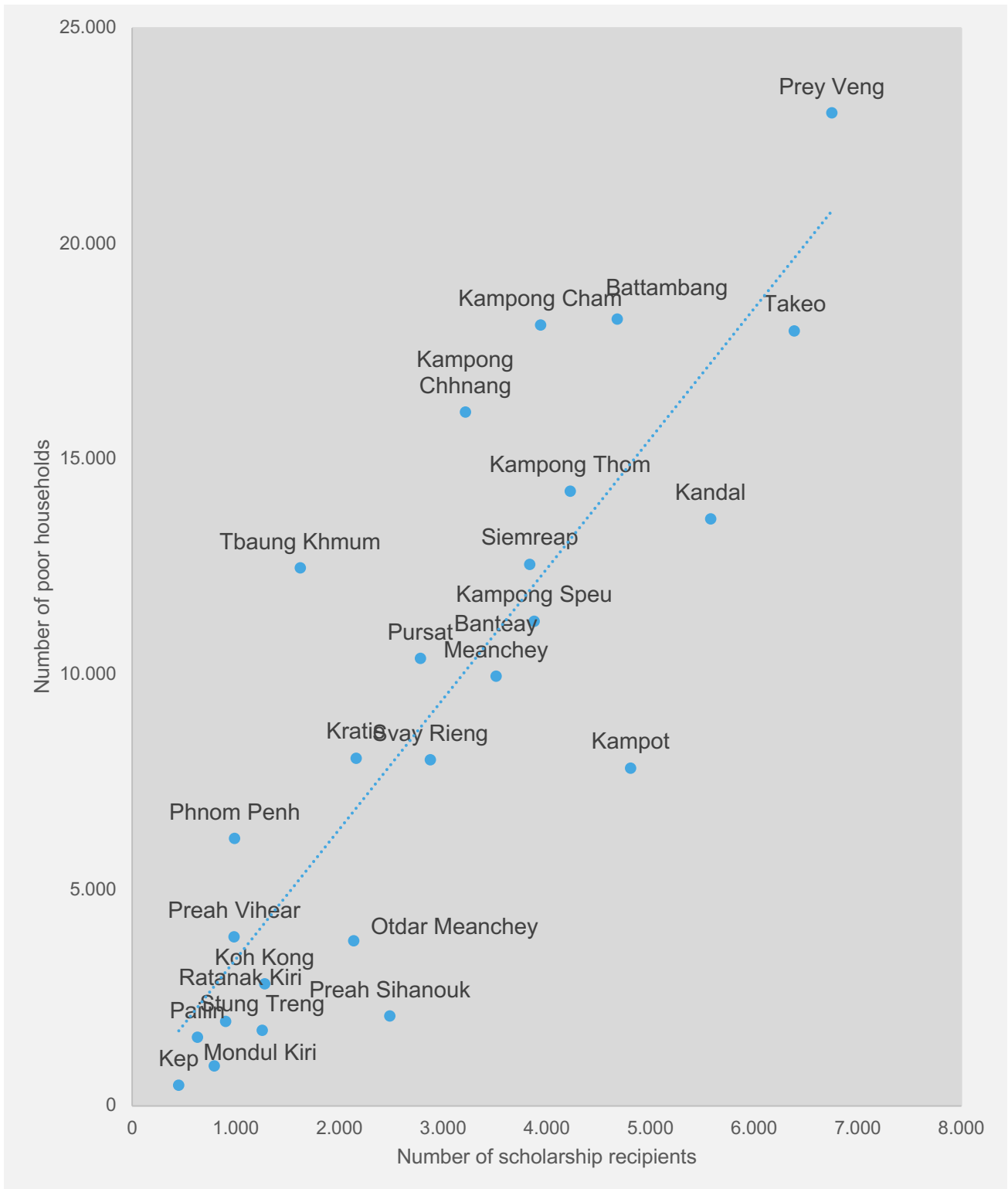


Figure 5: Lower secondary scholarship and poor household numbers, by province



At the school level, Local Scholarship Management Committees (LSMCs) including School Directors use the manuals as far as they can but exercise a certain amount of discretion in doing so. This is necessitated by the fact that the number of poor students exceeds the quota available in most schools. The manuals provide little specific guidance on how to ration scholarships in this instance. School-level research indicated that in some instances secondary scholarship committees ensured that primary scholarship recipients were considered for secondary scholarships – in other cases this was a specific criterion for excluding primary scholarship students from secondary scholarships. In

practice, teachers play a major role in generating an initial list of recipients from their classes, in some cases asking students to complete a form or even comment on each other (in both cases likely provoking embarrassment or envy). This means that a high-level conclusion on whether student selection is based on receipt of other programmes is unlikely to be viable. However, given that selection is (in theory but not always in practice) based on IDPoor plus a poverty scorecard in most schools, and given that the selection committee will have a reasonable idea of what students are receiving from other sources, it is likely that in practice there is some incorporation of what other programmes are doing. This is discussed further below.

In terms of gaps in coverage, it is clear that there are many more children out of school than scholarships. School level interviews almost universally suggested that schools covered by the scholarships have substantial numbers of poor students not in receipt of the scholarship. One school secretary cited 30 per cent of poor students not in receipt. However, a small number of schools in areas with lower poverty areas felt the number of scholarships in their schools was sufficient. This conclusion is reinforced by the finding from school data that many non-recipient respondents had IDPoor cards.

At a high level, therefore, there are large exclusion errors (i.e., children who would be eligible for the scholarships that do not receive them). Given the limited budget allocated to scholarships and the poor availability of data on the number of children out of school, this is by design. More than this, however, it appears likely from the high level analysis of education data and information on pockets of exclusion that there are likely particular categories of children who are more likely to be excluded: those who live in provinces or districts or communities with higher than average poverty rates where this is not reflected by the scholarship allocation (and in turn these are likely rural and with ethnic minorities); children who migrate; and children in particularly vulnerable schools such as floating schools. At secondary level in particular, these children are difficult for the LSMC to 'see' because they may not live close to the school and there is no budget to visit households.

A major category of excluded students are those from near-poor but non-poor households who experienced crises after Grade 4 selection. These students were unlikely to be selected for scholarships unless someone else drops out, because there are no more scholarships to allocate. As noted in the introduction, the group of near poor households is very large, and school-level data indicates that this is a fairly common occurrence.

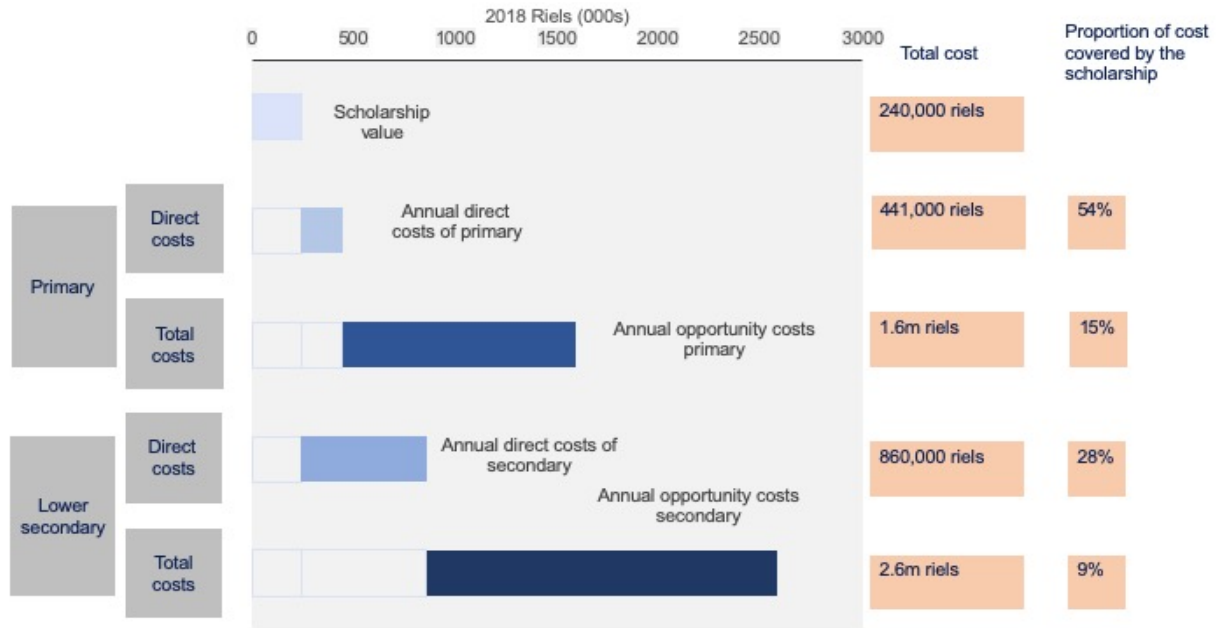
There are also inclusion errors (i.e., recipients that are not eligible according to the design of the programme). This is indicated by the EMIS data and confirmed by school level data: the research team interviewed many recipients without IDPoor cards. This is hard to interpret: given that IDPoor is not a perfect marker of poverty and poverty changes over time, this need not indicate that targeting was done badly on the basis of actual poverty. However, it does indicate that targeting was not always done in strict accordance with the design. In some schools (especially in Stung Treng), ethnicity – rather than just poverty – was an important marker of selection. In others, duty bearers noted that the situation of households had changed (and it appeared poverty was particularly dynamic in Banteay Meanchey). Again, and especially at secondary level, it was difficult for the LSMC to check for inclusion errors as they rarely visited households. The combination of using discretion (i.e., not always following IDPoor) with limited information (i.e., not visiting households) is likely to lead to targeting errors and complaints. Indeed, in almost every school there were instances (though not as many as might have been expected) of non-recipients arguing that selection was biased, and that rich households received the scholarship while poor households did not.

A related issue is the fact that scholarship students are often replaced and there is no tracking of students at an individual level. Therefore, scholarship students who drop out are highly likely to not attend school, nor receive further scholarships in the same school. These students, initially identified by LSMCs to be poor, are likely to drop out due to poor performance, poor attendance or migration. When they are replaced and effectively unmonitored, their chances of continuing education become slim.

5.1.3 R3: Adequacy of size and regularity of payment and funding

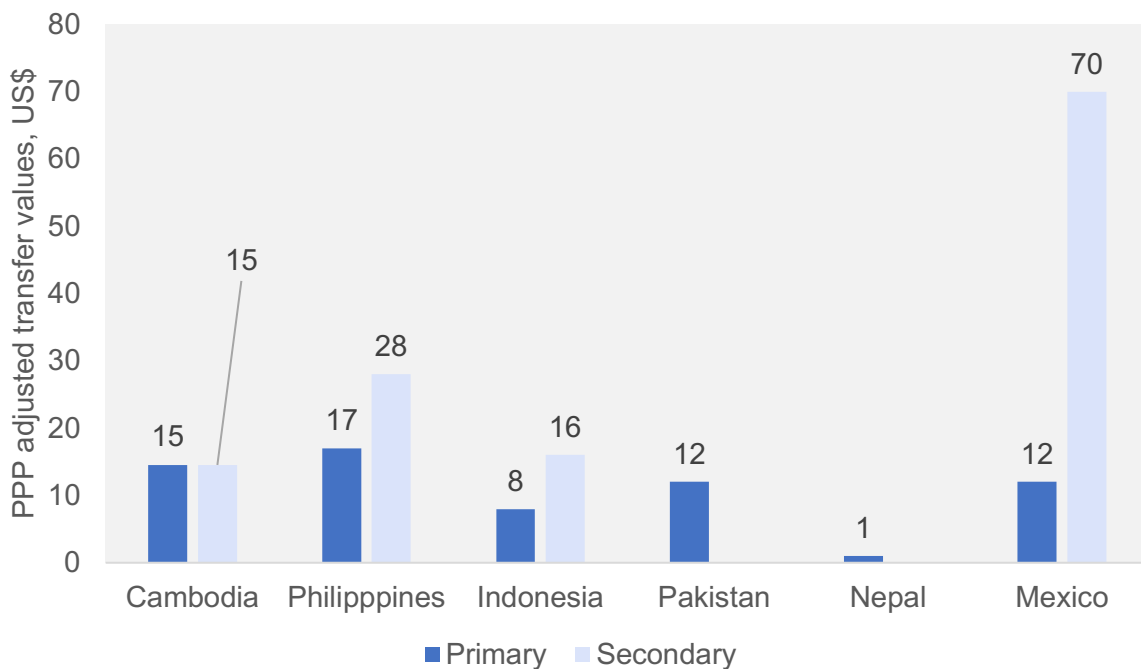
Analysis of survey data suggests that on the basis of comparisons with expenditure requirements and wages in Cambodia, and with other scholarship programmes, the transfer size is approximately appropriate. The figures below show that Cambodia is in line with similar programmes elsewhere, and that the scholarship covers between 15 and 9 per cent of total direct and opportunity costs of education. **Annex 6** in Volume II has more details.

Figure 6: Scholarship value as a proportion of estimated costs of schooling



Source: Authors' calculations based on Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2016 and Labour Force and Child Labour Survey (LFCLS) 2013.

Figure 7: Transfer size in international comparison



Research at the school level, predictably, revealed a preference from amongst school staff and parents to have larger scholarship payments. Suggestions usually varied between an increase to between 300,000 – 400,000 riels³¹, with the highest suggestion at 800,000 riels³². However, these suggestions should be set against that the fact that a) the scholarships are having a positive impact as they stand, b) opportunity costs for most respondents seem far in excess of the value of the scholarship, and c) that most respondents indicated that if they had to choose, they preferred giving out more scholarships to giving more to existing recipients (because of a strong concern about envy).

Earlier, this report suggested that in line with recommendations made in 2014 the transfer size could be graded – i.e., increase from Grades 4 to 9 – to reflect rising direct and opportunity costs of education. While some respondents did point towards greater expenses (especially of private tutoring) as children progress over grades, there was at best mixed support for gradually increasing payments by grade. A common sentiment was that ‘everyone is the same – they are all poor’. In addition, a majority of respondents felt graded payments would cause jealousy towards those receiving more.

Based on this evidence, an increase in or a grading of transfer size is not a policy priority. Rather the process by which the size is adjusted needs to be relaxed – transferring this from an Anukret to the MoEYS manual – in case inflation increases in future or a decision is made to alter the value by grade. However, given the views of many respondents that a graded transfer would cause jealousy and confusion, graded transfers would be appropriate only as a difference between the value in upper primary and lower secondary (for instance paying Riel 200,000 in upper primary and Riel 300,000 in lower secondary).

The school level data is somewhat ambiguous about the desirable frequency of payments. Some rights holders and duty bearers argued for fewer payments because it would be simpler and because rights holders need to spend on occasional major items (such as a bicycle). Some duty bearers suggested maintaining spaced payments (three being largely right) on the basis of needing to maintain incentives to attend consistently.

In any case, so far, the transfer timeliness has been poor. Transfers are almost never made at the start of the school year when evidence and intuition suggest that recipients will need to spend money. This is due to the process of selection and fund flow (related in part to the school year starting in November and the fiscal year in January). This means that the planned three tranches are typically bunched towards the end of the school year. Research at the school level clearly pointed towards the irregularity of transfers as being problematic. Many school directors had to inform parents about expected dates of payments and the lack of uncertainty posed a challenge to their work. One respondent stressed that:

“Scholarship money should be transferred from DOE on time as set out in the scholarship conditions”.
- School Director, Primary School, Kampot

The funding allocated to the scholarship is largely appropriate in terms of the transfer value, but inappropriate in the sense that there are large exclusion errors (i.e., not enough scholarships for all the children out of school) and that there is insufficient budget for effective monitoring and gathering of feedback. This is strongly supported by research at the provincial, district and school level. Almost all DOE and POE respondents noted their desire to conduct more, and better monitoring but pointed towards a lack of funds and time. Some also noted a need for more training:

“We have enough people at DOE but we don’t have skilful staff to support the scholarship programme during monitoring in schools because we have not been trained.”
- DOE official, Kampot

³¹ US\$ 75-US\$ 99

³² US\$ 199

The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) and MoEYS could explore adding further budget particularly to strengthen this monitoring function.

At school level, the administrative costs appear to be felt by some to be high, and this affected programme implementation.

“This is a large school with too many students and the scholarship money is for both secondary and high school so we give the money to parents only two times, they miss one time of the disbursement”.
- Secondary School Director, Kampot

In two of our surveyed schools, duty bearers felt that administrative costs were so high in relation to the number of recipients that the scholarship programme was not a worthwhile use of time. These were schools with small numbers of recipients. This is an important finding in that it raises a question about efficiency where the design is to have few students in a school.

5.1.4 R4: Incorporation of gender and equity in design

On the basis of a review of the scholarship documents and interviews with MoEYS officials, equity, gender quality and human rights goals have been important in informing the planning and design of the scholarship programme. In the design of both primary and secondary scholarships, student selection is on the basis of poverty, and school selection is on the basis of a mix of poverty and education indicators, and there are explicit equity goals in the key strategy and programme documents. For the secondary scholarships, 18 out of 30 scholarships in each school are reserved for girls. Sam Or Angkearoat & Kang Sophanna (2017)³³ write that all of their respondents felt that there were more girls than boys receiving scholarships, and they supported this. They also felt that the programme was typically successful in promoting gender empowerment. Latest available data on scholarship numbers confirm that more girls than boys receive the scholarships. 52 per cent of primary recipients and 60 per cent of secondary recipients in 2017 were female.

The selection of students at local level varies significantly. This makes it difficult to provide an overall assessment of how equitable the programme is by design. The scholarships have established some quotas by programme design: 60 per cent female students and 15 per cent ethnic minority students. This was done, presumably, to counter gender disparities in favour of male students. However, existing data shows that at an aggregate level, gender disparities are likely to favour female students instead of male students at the lower secondary level. If this is the case, then the established quotas are not achieving the objective of gender equality, because the scholarships are more likely to be given to girls but there are fewer boys in school, as Figures 8 and 9 below from the public expenditure tracking survey (PETS) data below indicate (**Annex 7** in Volume II has more detail). In almost every province and for both primary and lower secondary schools the Gender Parity Index (GPI) is much higher for scholarship recipients than in the provinces schools at the same level. This is the case even when girls' enrolment in schools is higher than that of boys.

Quotas for ethnic minority students continue to be necessary as existing evidence does point towards significant education disadvantage faced by these students. It is worth highlighting that reporting on scholarships (EMIS data) does include disaggregation by gender, allowing policy makers (in theory) to track the percentage of scholarship recipients who are female or male. However, there is no disaggregation by ethnicity (perhaps for good reason) so it is difficult to assess whether the programme has actually maintained the 15 per cent quota on ethnic minority students (in specific schools).

³³ Sam Or Angkearoat and Kang Sophanna, 'The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Scholarship Program at Primary School and Secondary School' (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Policy, MoEYS, 2017).

Figure 8: Primary provincial and scholarship Gender Parity Index

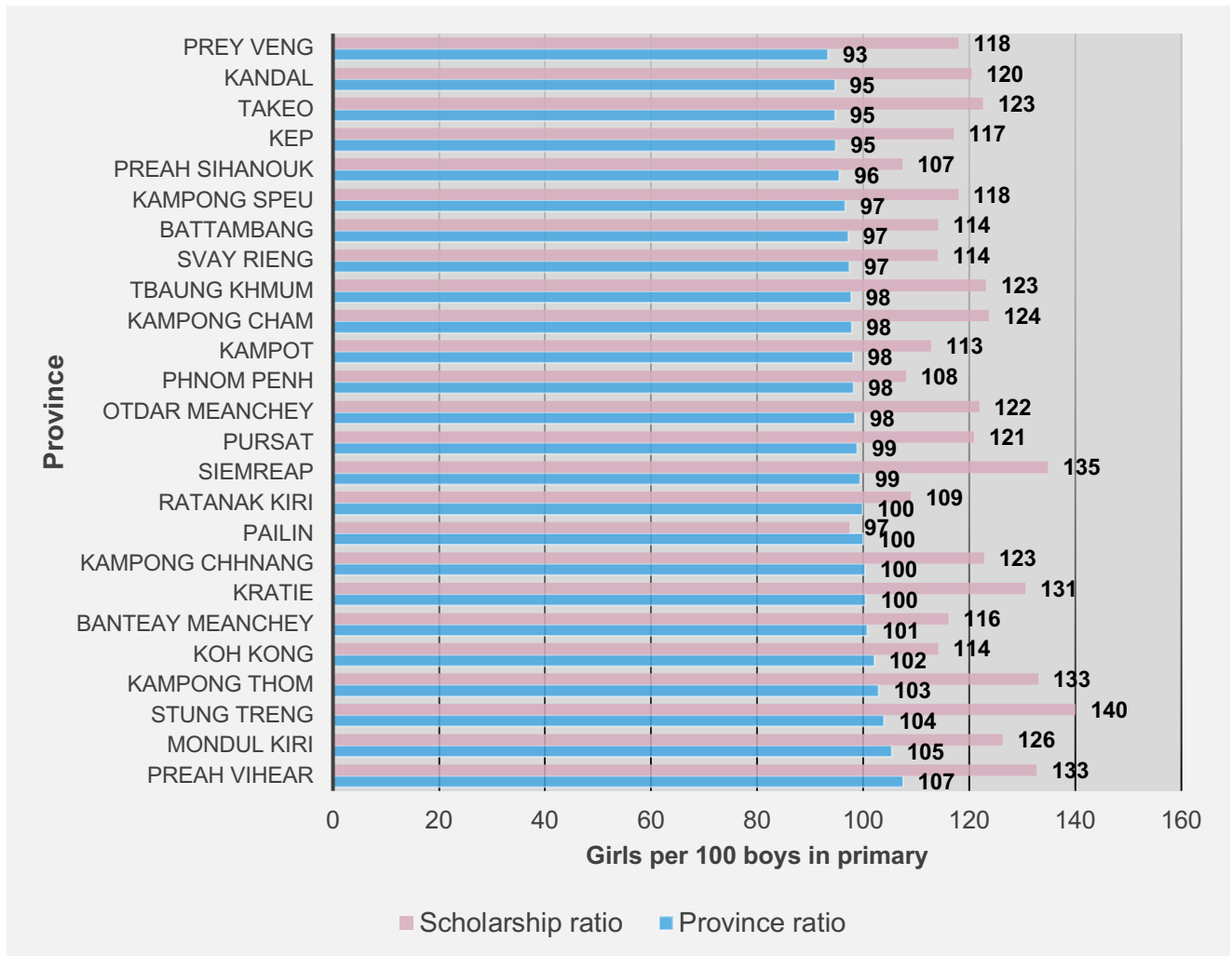
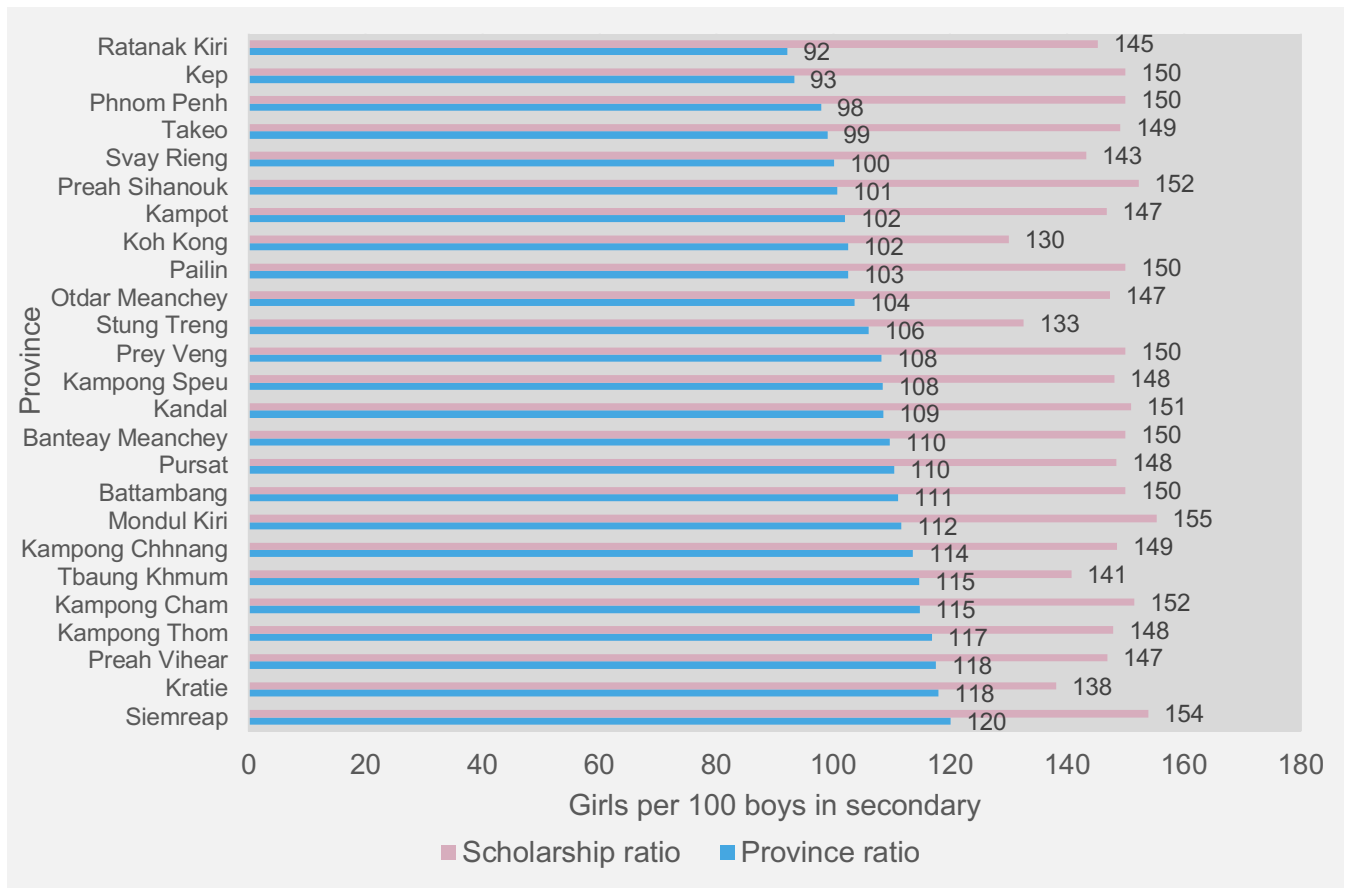


Figure 9: Provincial and lower secondary scholarship Gender Parity Index by province

An important aspect of respecting the rights of all duty bearers (school staff, and community leaders) and right holders (parents and students) is that they have sufficient information on the selection process for scholarships and are able to monitor its implementation, as well as communicate grievances through an independent mechanism. Our research to date has shown that in the majority of cases, this does not hold: school committees are disproportionately represented by school staff and there is virtually no independent mechanism for grievance redressal (with respect to student selection or payments). During research at the school level, very few respondents noted any complaints about the selection or payments process. This suggests a strong possibility of a) right holders not being aware of their right to complain and b) right holders not being aware of independent mechanisms through which they would complain. This is compounded in a cultural context where people typically do not want to raise complaints with administrative authorities and often accept decisions made by 'higher level'.

For instance, most school staff reported that any complaints by parents or students for not being selected were dealt by:

"We explain to them about the conditions (criteria) of scholarship and therefore not every student can get it, only a limited number of students."

- Primary school teacher, Prey Veng

DOE officials also noted that during their visits to schools (typically for payment disbursement), complaints around selection are dealt by assuring parents that they are following 'government guidelines'.

Labelling

The evaluation, together with previous research on scholarships has shown that conditionalities associated with receiving primary and secondary scholarships (attendance and performance) are not enforced in practice. This seems to hold true for both primary and secondary scholarships. The evaluation finds that this non-enforcement of conditionalities is not necessarily a problem: students from poorer families are more likely to ‘break’ the conditionality and discontinuing their scholarships would make it even more likely for them to drop out. At the same time, current implementation does not maximise the potential of this ‘soft conditionality’. Recent evidence³⁴ has shown positive impact of two types of behavioural interventions – ‘framing’ or labelling cash transfers in schools as being for high potential or talented students; as well as providing ‘information nudges’ such as information on returns to schooling (in terms of wages paid after graduation) and using role models to share success stories and provide positive aspiration to students. Future changes to the scholarship programme could improve its effectiveness by capitalising on how it is framed at the school level. If the scholarship is framed primarily as reward for ‘poor’ students (only) then it is unlikely to mitigate factors which pull students to drop out. However, framing the scholarships as rewards for high-potential students may have positive behavioural effects. Announcing the scholarships in school assemblies, signing certificates and publicly disbursing cash will all reinforce this messaging (though giving scholarship recipients special badges probably goes too far to emphasise the difference, as discussed below). Poor implementation of these aspects (as underlined in the manual) may be actually preventing the scholarships from achieving their intended impact on attendance and performance.

Understanding of the scholarships’ conditionalities at the school level is varied. While the condition of poverty was universally understood among recipients, and school staff, a considerable minority of respondents believed that academic performance was a key criterion. Given that in a small number of instances those involved in selection of scholarship recipients shared this understanding, it is probable that in some cases scholarships are intentionally being awarded to ‘bright’ or more motivated students over more disadvantaged students. A very small number of respondents had also come to understand that the scholarships target orphans.

5.1.5 R5: Feedback mechanisms

The practical working of the mechanisms by which people can provide feedback on or complaints about the scholarships is not entirely clear. On paper, the process appears strong. The scholarship manuals suggest that complaints can be made ‘in writing if possible’, or orally to the Local Scholarship Management Committee (LSMC), or via telephone.³⁵ Complaints should be resolved by the LSMC, and if complainants are not satisfied with this they can make an oral complaint to the district, provincial or national groups. They should receive feedback on their complaint. Sam Or Angkearoat & Kang Sophanna (2017)³⁶ write that 5.6 per cent of their respondents had made a complaint, either about selection or about late, partial or non-payment of the money. They do not indicate whether these complaints were satisfactorily resolved.

In practice, data from the provincial and district interviews indicate that very limited feedback was sought, and in some districts no feedback was collected. Typically, provincial or district officials obtained feedback from parents of recipients through interviews or public meetings conducting during scholarship processes or school inspections and in some cases a hotline. This was not systematic, partly because some respondents feel they have no human or financial resources to conduct monitoring visits, and no demands or templates to record and communicate it. The feedback that they

³⁴ Mette Trier Damgaard and Helena Skyt Nielsen, ‘Nudging in Education’, *Economics of Education Review* 64, no. C (2018): 313–42, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/econedu/v64y2018icp313-342.html>.

³⁵ The committee includes: the school director as chair, the chair of the school support committee as deputy chair, and as members the secretary, a teacher, a representative of the commune council in charge of women’s affairs and – for secondary schools – the director of the core primary school.

³⁶ Angkearoat and Sophanna, ‘The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Scholarship Program at Primary School and Secondary School’.

reported was only positive, with suggestions from recipients to increase the amount. Provincial and district officials reported that there was no process for responding to this feedback or communicating it upwards to the ministry. Some officials suggested being provided with a tablet to record and communicate feedback (without offering suggestions for how to respond to it).

Data from the school and community level indicate that complaints were only made about selection, rather than feedback about operational processes (although rights holders did express complaints about processes to the research team – in two cases of having to pay duty bearers, in several cases that they did not know how to complain, and many cases feeling targeting was unfair). Extremely few respondents reported understanding how to make a complaint. In most of the 24 research schools the list of selected names was published for a week or ten days before the list was finalised. Several directors, chiefs, teachers, school support committee members and commune councillors reported receiving complaints from non-recipients about the selection process and outcome, and several non-recipients reported making these complaints. However, the research found no cases where this complaint was recorded and passed 'upwards'. Instead, in every case duty bearers reported that they 'explained' to rights holders how the process worked and why the selection would not be changed. This practice essentially removes the possibility of structured comprehensive feedback reaching the ears or eyes of central duty bearers other than through reviews or evaluations such as this one. This limits the possibility that the scholarship 'learns' and improves.

These findings – that complaints were limited and that local duty bearers dealt with complaints locally rather than escalating them – are in keeping both with the wider scholarship operational practice and experience in other countries. Local duty bearers exercise a considerable amount of discretion over many aspects of implementation. Experience from other cash transfer programmes suggests that vulnerable groups often struggle practically to provide critical feedback, often because it is very difficult to complain to groups that are more powerful and control resources.

5.2 Effectiveness

There are five questions relating to effectiveness, covering achieving its objectives around retention and attainment, targeting, risks and satisfaction.

Main findings:

Recipients were very satisfied with the scholarships and there is clear evidence that the scholarships contributed to recipients staying in school longer.

However, the scholarships:

- Have not been able to support transition from upper primary to lower secondary;
- Have not been able to overcome major barriers to regular attendance such as a family crisis or a very uninterested student; and
- Targeting is not perfect, partly by design and partly due to variable implementation, and this presents a risk.

5.2.1 Effe1: Achievement of expected objectives

This question is answered using data on perceptions of impact from focus groups and interviews with experts, school directors, teachers, parents and children, and existing research, including the World Bank evaluation of scholarship programmes³⁷.

Effectiveness on educational attainment

The direct objectives of the scholarship programmes are to increase the enrolment, attendance, and completion rates of poor students (educational attainment). These outcomes are presented in green boxes in the theory of change diagram in Section 2 (Figure 2). As outlined in the inception report, data on these objectives come from school level interviews (qualitative data) and existing evaluations of similar programmes. There are no data sources available that provide quantitative data on changes in attainment resulting from the current scholarship programmes.

Barrera-Osorio et al (2018)³⁸ provides robust evidence on the impact on students from poor households of receiving three years of scholarships from Grade 4 to 6. While not directly on the 2015-2018 scholarship programmes, these data are about the same programme in previous years, and since the design is reasonably similar, this is likely to be highly comparable to the impact of the current scholarship programmes. They find that for students selected on the basis of poverty, the scholarships increased attainment by about four additional months of schooling over three years and increased primary school completion by 11.3 percentage points. The impact on poor students of receiving the scholarships from 2008 to 2011 on participation in any form of education between 2011 and 2016 was ten percentage points. They do not find any significant difference by gender. Their findings suggest slightly larger impacts on attainment for students targeted on the basis of poverty than on students targeted on the basis of merit. There is an indication – but not statistically significant – that receiving a scholarship delayed entry into work, especially for those selected on the basis of poverty.

Sam Or Angkeroat & Kang Sophanna (2017)³⁹ present findings that corroborate evidence of a positive impact of poverty-targeted scholarships on attainment. They cite data from provincial scholarship committees showing a reduction in drop-out. Most local scholarship committees they interviewed felt the scholarship was ‘highly successful’ in minimising drop-out rate. Nevertheless, the authors note that students with scholarships still drop out, due to late and inadequate scholarship payment, student, family and societal factors, and in some cases geographical distance from schools.

Biradavolu 2018⁴⁰ reports that the Grade 11 and 12 scholarships for ethnic minority students had a direct impact on student attendance, and in some cases had been used to pay for additional tuition. Biradavolu reasonably argues that this is likely to increase their chances of covering the curriculum but does not have evidence on performance.

Together, these studies provide a reasonable basis for concluding that the (poverty-targeted) scholarships increase the educational attainment of students from poor households. However, they also indicate that they are not sufficient to overcome all barriers to attainment.

The impression is confirmed by the school level data, which was very consistent on this point. Both duty bearers and rights holders in every school were very clear that the scholarship was almost always spent (typically by mothers or other family members) on school materials or related expenses

³⁷ Felipe Barrera-Osorio, Andreas De Barros, and Deon P. Filmer, ‘Long-Term Impacts of Alternative Approaches to Increase Schooling: Evidence from a Scholarship Program in Cambodia’ (The World Bank, 23 August 2018), <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/838871535033752683/Long-term-impacts-of-alternative-approaches-to-increase-schooling-evidence-from-a-scholarship-program-in-Cambodia>.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Angkeroat and Sophanna, ‘The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Scholarship Program at Primary School and Secondary School’.

⁴⁰ Monica R. Biradavolu, ‘Independent Review of Scholarship Programme for Ethnic Minority Students in Grades 11 and 12 in North-Eastern Provinces of Cambodia’ (UNICEF, May 2018).

(uniforms, transport or extra tuition) and household food. There was a very strong consensus from all interviewees that the scholarships enabled students to attend school more regularly and to be better prepared to learn. As one Grade 8 boy from Stung Treng put it, “*I have the power to continue my study.*” Likewise, one school secretary reported that “we see that most of poor students face to drop out, [but] when we gave them the scholarship it reduced drop out”.

Respondents emphasised the importance of educational attainment. All rights holders (both students and guardians, recipients and non-recipients, male and female, all ages) were clear that it was important to attend school regularly, get good results and progress. Almost all enjoy(ed) school, mainly because they can be with friends but also because they learn. Most shared aspirations to continue in school up to Grade 12 or above, and then to get jobs that required education (most commonly as a teacher). While non-recipients had this view as well, interviews and focus groups make clear that the perceived importance of school was reinforced by the scholarship and the communication around it, and almost all rights holders knew that a condition of the scholarship was regular attendance. As one female recipient in Kampot put it, “*it encourages me to study even harder.*”⁴¹ Duty bearers in most schools also knew this and reported carrying out some form of monitoring of attendance and results. In a few cases, scholarship recipients had been removed for not meeting these conditions, but this was rare.

However, in line with the existing literature, the school level data indicates limits to the scholarships’ effectiveness. First, interviews with out of school children (of both primary and secondary age and boys and girls) show that in some cases scholarships were insufficient to overcome all barriers to regular attendance. These cases included deaths or illness in families that required recipients to provide care, earn income (the *minimum* monthly earning of such a student was Riel 100,000⁴², so far more than the scholarship), or in two cases (both boys), join a monastery to pray for their family. They also included recipients who struggled academically, “felt shy”, and dropped out of their own accord to work, stay at home or (for boys) join a monastery. Children from poorer families or with incapacitated parents were much more likely to start working (and drop out) sooner, and this appeared to be more the case for students from ethnic minorities (such as Kavaet or Lao, both in Stung Treng). One respondent from Stung Treng felt that although her son studied hard and attended regularly, the teacher did not allow them to pass the grade, so they had to relinquish the scholarship at Grade 6, and her son then took a job that he would not give up now.

Second, interviews with parents and children show that most recipients would have attended school anyway, even without the scholarships. Moreover, it was rare for respondents to report that their views on whether they (or their children) should work had changed as a result of receiving the scholarship.

⁴¹ This view – that the scholarship encouraged students to study hard – was echoed by other rights holders and by duty bearers, consistently across provinces.

⁴² US\$ 25

Box 2: Case study: Dropping out of school

The team interviewed a 13-year-old boy living in Prey Veng in a rural area. He attended school till Grade 7 and even received a scholarship in Grade 6. However, in 2017, he dropped out.

He liked going to school and playing with his classmates. Now, he spends his time helping his grandfather in pumping water for the paddy field. He also cuts grass, cooks rice, and gathers cattle manure.

When he was asked why he left school, he responded:

“My mother took me with her to Thailand. When I came back to homeland, I went to school and checked my name that I did not pass because I did not attend school and exam. So, I decided to drop out of school because I did not pass to upper grade.”

His mother had taken him along to Thailand because she feared he would abuse drugs. When they came back, she discouraged him from dropping out. In his own words:

“She told me to go back to/enrol at school because she believes that when I acquire knowledge, I will get a well-paid job and I will have a better life than her. She also mentioned that construction work is difficult, heavy, and tiring.”

His grandfather, whose paddy he works on, also discouraged him from dropping out.

“I told him that if he drops out of school, he will not acquire knowledge and then he cannot have a good job like other people. I also said one phrase to him too ‘When you are illiterate, you will be a servant’.”

This story illustrates that there are multiple factors why children may drop out of school – and that monetary incentives may not be sufficient, on their own, to improve retention. Repetition at school, and the stigma and challenge associated with that is often a key factor in children dropping out.

Box 3: Case study: Drop out and how the scholarship could help

A 16-year-old girl from a rural school reported that: *“I enjoyed school, but my parents got divorced. I decided to drop out of school to earn some money to support my family because my father has chronic disease, and no one earn any income to the family. Teacher told me to get back to school. My friends also told me to come back to school because it is such a regret thing to drop out of school. My father is sick so no income for the family. Then he asked me to drop out of school to earn money to support family. Earns about Riel 400,000/month on solid waste recycling. I might return with scholarship but depends on permission from father.”*

Her father noted: *“Daughter (above) was an outstanding student but had to drop out because I, father, is sick and my next wife (step mother) has just gave birth to a baby. And also, there is no one help doing housework and buying recycled solid waste. They told me that my child is still young and should not drop out of school. They also told me that I should let my child to continue to study because my child is an outstanding student at school and if my child continues to school, my child will be able to get a good job and has bright future. If a scholarship is offered, would allow her back to school. When my wife gets stronger after giving birth to my baby, she will be able to help doing house works. And I also get little recovery from my sickness now. So, I can get back to buy recycled solid waste sometimes.”*

Effectiveness on learning outcomes

The question also asks about learning outcomes. This is further down the theory of change, and the evidence for impact is correspondingly weaker.

Barrera-Osorio et al (2018)⁴³ estimate the impact of the scholarships on cognitive (knowledge, problem solving and fluid intelligence) and socio-emotional (such as openness, conscientiousness, and so on) skills at age 21. There are no detectable impacts on socio-emotional skills. They find that

⁴³ Barrera-Osorio, De Barros, and Filmer, ‘Long-Term Impacts of Alternative Approaches to Increase Schooling’.

scholarships have no detectable impact on cognitive skills for students selected on the basis of poverty, but a positive impact for the students selected on merit. However, there were positive impacts on cognitive skills for students from poor households who were selected by merit, but not high merit students selected on the basis of poverty. The authors suggest this may be due to a 'labelling' effect – i.e., that telling a student they are selected for a scholarship because they are talented *causes* them to perform better than if the same student were told they are selected because they are poor.

Sam Or Angkearot & Kang Sophanna (2017)⁴⁴ report that most students felt their academic performance had improved after receiving the scholarships but did not present any direct evidence of this. Biradavolu (2018) does not have evidence on performance.

Again, the absence of detectable impacts of the scholarship on skills for students from poor households would not be surprising, given the assumptions this would require about other proximate determinants of learning (effective teachers, school inputs, curriculum and exams) and other aspects of learner preparedness. That there does appear to be evidence of a positive impact on skills for poor students selected on the basis of merit is impressive.

School-level data confirms the impression of Sam Or Angkearot & Kang Sophanna (2017)⁴⁵ that academic performance of scholarship recipients improved. While more regular attendance surely contributed to this and spending on private tuition may have helped, the principal mechanism discussed by duty bearers and rights holders was that scholarship recipients felt more motivated to study hard. This was reinforced by their families recognising the government had made a commitment to their education, and further by the often-ceremonial selection and distribution processes, and by the communication around the conditions of receipt – sometimes called awareness-raising. There was no suggestion from anyone that recipients performed better than non-recipients, but instead that their performance improved (though no hard evidence was offered to support this). Again, this is in line with existing data from Cambodia, and indeed elsewhere.

Respondents consistently made the link between schooling and a better life. All rights holders felt that they learned useful skills at school (such as the ability to read, write, and calculate). These skills were felt to be useful in terms principally of being able to get better jobs (and most aspired to jobs that require an education such as a teacher, doctor, or civil servant), but also of being able to avoid being cheated by others.

However – alas – it is highly unlikely that these aspirations will be met. Most respondents recognised that while they may aspire to these salaried jobs, realistically most boys and girls would help their households before the age of 18 by working in fields (in rural areas), forests (in Stung Treng), factories (especially in Prey Veng) or in Thailand (especially but not only in Banteay Meanchey). In addition, parents spending on private tuition may suggest that they are concerned about the quality of education provided through the government schooling system.

A small number of respondents referred to negative unintended consequences of the scholarship on learning outcomes. Namely, that “*students come to study just for money [and] do not pay attention to learning,*” raising the risk that the scholarships may have eroded students’ intrinsic motivation to study – which the data show is otherwise substantial.

5.2.2 Effe2: Targeting, conditions and return to school

The analysis undertaken for the early findings note indicates that selection at the level of province, district and as far as can be told school and student reflects socio-economic status and education outcomes. Provincial and district interviews confirm that officials have manuals and claim to follow them for selection, and the manuals indicate that socio-economic status is the key criterion for

⁴⁴ Angkearot and Sophanna, ‘The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Scholarship Program at Primary School and Secondary School’.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

selection. However, this is not quite the same as saying that the scholarships have identified children not in school for socio-economic reasons and brought them back.

The current selection process of scholarships focuses on children who are in school and likely to drop out (as they are assessed to be poor). The initial lists are drawn usually by teachers in classrooms. This means that children who *never* attended school are unlikely to be included in this list. Furthermore, the current process of replacements and the enforcement of conditionalities (see below), combined with the lack of individual level student data and poor monitoring is unlikely to enable the systematic tracking and retention of students who drop out. This is compounded by the issues around transition of Grade 6 scholarship students to Grade 7 scholarships. Overall, the scholarship programmes are not designed to systematically track or maintain children in school.

Data from the scholarship programmes indicate that more girls than boys receive the scholarships (52 per cent at primary and 60 per cent at secondary). However, again, the evaluation relies on qualitative school level data to explore the extent to which this has contributed to equality of access. Inequities in access by gender at different levels and locations of the education is a major study in itself. The latest work on out of school children in Cambodia does start to explore this but uses data from 2012 that precede the period of the evaluation (2015-2018). This would be a major study, using the more recent CSES survey data, and lies rather beyond the scope of the evaluation.

Conditionalities

Conditionalities aim to help improve educational attainment of recipients because they are told that if they do not attend or if they perform poorly, they will no longer receive the scholarships. The threat of removal from the programme aims to cause compliance. Data from rights holders and duty bearers in the schools visited make clear that this condition is communicated, and most rights holders are aware of it. The mere existence of the condition appears to play an important part in encouraging students to work hard, as discussed above.

In keeping with general findings of a large amount of discretion exercised by duty bearers at school level, the conditions seem to be irregularly enforced. This picture is slightly different from the 2018 Department of Policy review that found conditions were never applied.

In most schools, the attendance and results of scholarship students is monitored regularly by teachers, who pass this information to the school directors, who pass it to district officials. In only some schools did duty bearers report that students were excluded on the basis of poor attendance or performance, and this was typically only at the end of the year rather than during it. In one school, duty bearers were clear that they saw it as their role to present higher figures to help scholarship students retain the scholarship. For instance, one of the respondents noted:

“If the (scholarship) student got scores below the passing score, we add more scores to make it to the passing score. If the students have many absences from class, we just make it less.”

- Secondary School Director, Prey Veng

In at least one school, teachers were quite zealous about monitoring and removing students, in order that they could add new poor and talented students.

The condition that students' results are good is more problematic. First, international experience shows that it is very difficult to accurately judge student performance, especially at primary but also at lower secondary level. In Cambodia, there are no standardised tests that would help this judgement. Teachers in any individual school therefore have no basis for comparing their students' performance with that of students in other schools. Second, even if performance could accurately be judged, the scholarships are designed primarily to improve *attainment*. In terms of the scholarships' objectives, students who are struggling to perform would arguably be better supported rather than penalised. Finally, using performance as a condition of receipt introduces risks of bias (or accusations of bias). An out of school child felt (and his parents felt) that his teacher discriminated against him by

saying his performance was poor (which he denied), and so removed his scholarship, causing him to drop out.

5.2.3 Effe3: Targeting the most vulnerable

For sensible practical reasons, the scholarship programmes currently identify students in a two-stage process: allocating scholarships to schools and then selecting students in those schools. A member of the National Social Protection Council pointed out that this will lead to more errors than a process that simply identifies the most vulnerable children irrespective of where they study.

Nevertheless, the secondary data analysis (see Volume II) suggests that overall, the scholarships' geographical and students targeting mechanisms are quite well targeted on poverty, using IDPoor data (for school selection) and databases (for student selection). As far as the data from EMIS and the public expenditure tracking survey (PETS) in 2016 are able to tell us, the targeting mechanisms are working reasonably well in the sense that they are related to poverty at both allocation and student selection level. There are typically, however, more students in the IDPoor database and who are out of school than the scholarships can cover, meaning that at school level officials use additional poverty scorecard approaches and their own discretion (informed by the manual but with some variability).

The government scholarship programmes (both primary and secondary) are not designed, nor implemented to specifically include children with disabilities, ethnic minorities or children from single-parent households. Scholarship monitoring data or EMIS does not currently record such information on such student characteristics. It is possible that these characteristics are taken into account by LSMCs during student selection process but in the event that children with these characteristics are out of school, it is unlikely that scholarships are playing any significant role in bringing them back to school.

Previous UNICEF research⁴⁶ suggests that as of 2017, there are 34 floating schools (under MoEYS), 272 Buddhist primary schools, 87 Buddhist secondary schools, and 520 Buddhist Dharma schools (under the Ministry of Cults and Religions or MoCR) and 363 Islamic schools (MoCR). EMIS data available to us does not allow to ascertain if government scholarships are being provided in these schools⁴⁷. Lunsford et al (2018) provide an indication not all floating schools in their (limited) sample received government scholarships.

Many respondents at the DOE and POE offices were unsure about the allocation criteria.

"We do not know how they allocate the number of scholarships to each province, or on which criteria it is based."

- DOE official, Stung Treng

This was more common for secondary scholarships where the centre communicated directly with lower secondary schools and POE and DOE officials were simply given a quota and school lists.

More than this, there appears to be significant variation in practice in how primary scholarships are allocated to provinces, districts and schools, given the lack of clarity in the guidance documents. For instance, in Prey Veng scholarships are allocated to districts based on enrolment in each district, not poverty or remoteness (this was the World Food Programme's approach before 2015). In Stung Treng, allocations are based on historical allocation (from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)-supported scholarship before 2015) and discussion. These processes – based on discretion and history – are very likely to lead to major targeting inaccuracies.

⁴⁶ Meredith Lunsford, Solyda Say, and Safa Shahkhalili, 'Inclusion and Quality in Islamic Schools, Buddhist Monastic Schools and Floating Schools in Cambodia - DRAFT', Unpublished (UNICEF Cambodia, September 2018).

⁴⁷ We also did not sample floating schools for qualitative data collection.

At school level, the school director and class teachers are typically dominant in the selection process. School selection committees are also usually dominated by school staff and village leaders are either less involved or only concerned with verification of students. The initial selection of 'poor' students is typically done in class by teachers. Some schools reported teachers filling out forms, whilst others simply nominated students based on their assessment of poverty. Our research at the provincial level, as well as school level indicated a desire for clearer selection forms – currently, most scholarship committees resort to their own modifications to an existing form which presumably comes from non-government scholarship programmes. Methods for assessment included asking poor students to raise their hands; and asking proposed poor students' friends to verify the level of poverty of their friend. There were also some reports of teachers administering tests to selected (poor) students and choosing the high performing candidates. These lists were then sent to the School Director and often, but not always, verified at the community level (by school staff or members of the local scholarship management committees (LSMC)). Although the manual prescribes that the initial list is displayed publicly in schools – and many did report following this process – it is unclear to what extent the wider community knows about this display and has a chance to provide their suggestions

Overall, whilst there is scope for gaming by better off families, school-based fieldwork suggested that most respondents felt that the scholarships were given to poor students. Teachers, especially at the primary level, are also often well placed to assess student's poverty background and living conditions. Whilst harmonisation of all selection processes is not necessary, nor efficient at the school level, it must be documented with strong, independent oversight. With a lack of effective monitoring, as well as no independent means of complaints or grievance redressal, the selection process is amenable to errors and fraud.

A bigger issue for the scholarship programmes is very large exclusion errors (see section 5.1.2), either because there were more poor students than scholarships or because households experienced crises after the selection happened. It was very common for school staff, parents and other respondents to note that there many deserving, poor, students who also deserved scholarships but that the supply of scholarships was limited. It is also worth noting that not all sampled recipient students possessed ID poor cards, and not all ID poor families were deemed to be poor. This was a concern also raised by POE and DOE officials. For instance, one respondent noted:

"We faced small problems with some students held ID poor 1 because their parents sold land and they moved location. After selling the land, they have money and opened their business in the community or far away from home so they are not poor again."

- DOE official, Kampot

Another research respondent noted:

"ID poor cards do not confirm actual family situation. It is difficult to find poor livelihood students' house because some of them do not have an actual house."

- Secondary POE official, Telegram survey

5.2.4 Effe4: Risks and risk management

The major risks to achieving the scholarship programmes' objectives are outlined in the theory of change's assumptions: imperfections in the labour market; challenges with education quality; substantial other barriers to student attendance (such as migration); and imperfect operational processes (principally targeting and payment). On the basis of evidence available, it appears that there are major risks around the higher order assumptions, and potentially some quite significant risks around:

- The process of allocating scholarships to districts, schools and students;
- The timeliness of payments (though not, so far, significant risks around the amount that recipients actually receive);

- Monitoring and recording information about scholarship recipients and school-based processes; and
- The variability of implementation procedures – though this is also a potential strength if at local level well informed and well-meaning people are able to make decisions benefitting the most vulnerable.

5.2.5 Effe5: Satisfaction

Rights holders were typically very satisfied with the scholarship. All recipient children and their parents were asked to rate the scholarship on a scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 5 (very dissatisfied). Other than in eight cases (which were both parents and students, and boys and girls), this rating was always 1: very satisfied. This was because it contributed to reducing the family burdens and encouraging students to study hard. As one parent noted, “*when we have no money we have scholarship money*”. In those eight, the reasons for being only ‘satisfied’ or ‘neither’ were either that the money was insufficient, or that (in one case) they had to make payments to the school director.

This high level of satisfaction indicates that the scholarship programmes are essentially working well but is also fairly typical of this sort of poverty-focused transfer programme. In very few contexts worldwide do rights holders ever think of themselves as actually having rights or entitlements to the support they receive. This leads to few complaints (see section 5.1.5) and high levels of satisfaction. This may sound appealing to duty bearers but can also reduce opportunities for programme learning.

5.3 Efficiency

There are three questions relating to efficiency, covering timeliness of transfers, effectiveness of governance arrangements and alternative ways to implement the programme.

Main findings:

There are some inefficiencies in the scholarships because:

- Transfers are not made at the start of the school year and the absence of a budget allocation for travel for monitoring and selection both mean that impact is lower than it would be otherwise; and
- It would be more cost efficient to pay on time and allocate funding for monitoring.

5.3.1 Effi1: Timeliness of payments

As noted above, interviews, the Telegram surveys and existing secondary data strongly suggest that transfers are almost never timely. This is for a combination of reasons: delays in allocating scholarships to schools particularly for primary schools when information on this needed to flow between the sub-national levels (central interviews with scholarship units); delays in the POE communicating to the MEF the amount required to transfer; delays in transferring monies to provincial treasuries caused by the start of the financial year (Finance Department interview); and delays in transferring monies to schools and then students. For example, in 2018 Provincial Treasuries reported that three quarters of the POE requests for the first tranche of 2017/18 scholarships arrived in March or later for the school year that commenced in November more than four months earlier (Telegram data). Three quarters of the Treasuries reported that they disbursed this money within eight calendar days for secondary and 14 calendar days for primary scholarships (Telegram data). Part of these challenges will be solved by the agreement from the school year starting in November 2018 that the MEF will allocate budget to scholarships from the fourth quarter of the previous fiscal year (i.e., that ending in December 2018) and three Provincial Treasuries reported receiving POE requests in the last week of December 2018.

However, this will not solve all of these problems because in part the delays are systemic issues related to the time necessary for the various activities at school, district and provincial level, and it is difficult to demonstrate this from the objective data of request and supply dates. General cash flows into the provincial treasuries from the centre determine the available funds for all provincial activities, including education and specifically scholarships. There is some anecdotal evidence that provincial MEF and Treasury officials indicate to POEs when it is best to submit requests for scholarship disbursements based on available funds and if this practice is widespread then late payments arise from a combination of central disbursement timing and provincial funding priorities and not from late POE submissions.

Making payments in three tranches provides staged incentives to remain in school. However, this is only useful if the first tranche arrives at the start of the school year, thus maintaining an incentive for students to remain in school throughout the year and helping parents space spending. On the other hand, administering and delivering each tranche has a cost at each level (POE, DOE and school) in terms of time and funds. Equal tranche payments also limit the usefulness of the scholarships as funds demands on households are greater at the beginning of the year for items such as uniforms and books, and bicycles for Grade 7 students switching to more distant secondary schools.

It is difficult fully to assess the consequences of late payments for recipients since they have never received payments on time. However, the data from the individual surveys indicate that late payments reduce the impact of the scholarships because students are unable to purchase educational items needed at the start of the school year and – perhaps more important – they do not receive until halfway through the year the psychological boost to their study that the scholarships provide.

5.3.2 Effi2: Staffing and governance

There are many duty bearers involved in the implementation of scholarships. At the central level, they include various departments within MoEYS, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and development partners such as UNICEF, ADB and World Bank. At the provincial and district level, they largely include POE and DOE staff. At the school level, they include LSMCs, school staff, and local authorities. The allocation of roles and responsibilities for all these actors, in principle is clear. At the school level, the availability of scholarship manuals helps clarify roles and responsibilities. Our research based on key information interviews (KIIs) and the Telegram survey shows that a majority of DOE and POE officials possessed a copy of the manual⁴⁸ and were satisfied with the instructions it provided.

However, in practice, there are challenges in coordination amongst partners at the central level – for instance development partners have different policy priorities focussing on different aspects on the scholarship programme. Whilst there is an education sector working group, this helps inform partners of various activities but does not always influence programming priorities. Within MoEYS, there is a lack of data available on secondary scholarships – and it is not clear to what extent monitoring data from schools is reported back to the central level.

At the provincial and district level, all DOE and POE officials reported making monitoring visits during student selection and payments; however, all respondents all noted the lack of funds available for monitoring. There was a strong demand to increase the budget available for operational costs so that more monitoring activities could be undertaken – although as noted below it is not clear what the additional monitoring information would be used for.

All provincial and district officials interviewed argued that they had insufficient resources, whether money, staff, training or guidelines or all of these, to implement the programme as they thought they should. In particular, this prevents them from monitoring effectively, from meeting parents and from supporting the LSMCs. These officials give the impression that, as a result, processes at school levels

⁴⁸ 64 per cent of provincial primary education officials (N=25) and 59 per cent (N=27) of provincial secondary education officials acknowledged there was a manual (noting that response rates for this survey were poor).

are fairly autonomous (especially given the lack of guidelines or training) and they are unable to observe, oversee or affect this. School-level respondents confirmed in some (but not all) schools that district or provincial officials visited the schools, but they never visited recipients' houses.

At the school level, the picture from duty bearers on the adequacy of resources to implement the scholarship was mixed. Some felt that there were sufficient human and financial resources. In most cases, school-level duty bearers felt that there were enough people to implement the scholarship programme and the duties were not onerous – and indeed several village chiefs and councillors wanted to be more involved than they were. In one school, however, duty bearers (who had been in post comparatively briefly – around 1.5-2 years) felt they lacked the skills and training to implement the scholarship effectively.

However, some duty bearers – typically (but not only) in secondary schools with large catchment areas – were clear that they lacked the financial resources to visit recipients' or potential recipients' houses, particularly when they were very far away from school, which made selection very difficult and introduced errors, and made monitoring impossible other than at school. This introduces various challenges – including, for instance, not being able to assess whether the poverty status of households has changed. Other respondents noted that the school had to spend their own (scarce) resources to provide water or snacks for parents and students during meetings related to the scholarship programme, or in remote schools where the closest bank was over 10km distant, to pay for transport to collect the scholarship monies.

5.3.3 Effi3: Alternative cost-efficient mechanisms

Overall, the design of the scholarship programmes is cost efficient. There are a few areas where tweaks could improve this. The data presented in this report indicate that the programme probably has an inefficient allocation of resources because too few resources are allocated to monitoring, feedback, and the part of the selection process that requires visits to recipient households. Stronger monitoring and feedback would enable the programme to improve learning but also its ability to advocate for additional resources from the MEF. Visiting a sample of households as part of selection would help reduce inclusion and exclusion errors. Finally, changing scholarship allocations such that all Grade 6 recipients could have scholarships if they started Grade 7 would help improve transition.

The MoEYS incurs costs in administration and monitoring at POE, DOE and school levels. The major costs in terms of time and travel revolve around the three tranches for scholarship disbursement. It might be more efficient to have a single disbursement at the commencement of the school year, thus eliminating the administrative costs for two of the three tranches. However, this approach may be less effective because it reduces the incentive value of periodic payments and the psychological value of the public presentation and emphasis on continuing at school. Further it would not address the inefficiency of fully funding students who drop out during the year.⁴⁹

At the same time, parents of scholarship students also face some costs in accessing scholarship payments. Payments are normally made in formal school assemblies to which the recipients' parents or guardians are invited to receive the money from the scholarship. These include costs such as transport fees to school or the opportunity cost of leaving work to collect payments in school assemblies. Our fieldwork also suggested that informal payments were made by parents to school directors or school secretaries as a goodwill gesture when parents received payments.

The current manuals for implementing scholarship programmes, whilst not perfect, are detailed and used by POE and DOE officials. In practice, LSMCs have a significant role on selection of students, enforcement of conditionalities and communication with parents. The exact selection criteria used by each committee may vary across schools – but in the view of the evaluation team this should be fine as long as it accurately represents the community's perspective of which students are 'poor and

⁴⁹ The lack of data on dropout by scholarship holders, either during or between grades or levels, prevents any assessment of the efficiency cost of a single payment approach

clever'. A more efficient way of ensuring fair selection, therefore, is to focus on better representation within these committees and adequate oversight by the DOE. This would necessitate an increase in their operational budget and specific reporting on how these monitoring visits are conducted – and what feedback is provided to scholarship committees.

One way of improving the governance of scholarship programmes, without adding significant costs, would be to use local scholarship committees and other community structures to create awareness of the scholarship processes from the start. Creating greater awareness about the selection criteria, payment amount and timing and feedback mechanisms would encourage greater engagement of parents and students with the implementation of scholarship programmes. This would reduce the need for significant increases in monitoring budgets for DOE and POE officials as parents and community members could report grievances regarding student selection and payments.

As set out in the inception report, it was beyond the scope of the evaluation to examine other modalities of delivering scholarships, such as development partner programmes. An impressionistic comparison would indicate that the overhead allocation in the government programme is low compared to other programmes' overhead, but this is actually not an efficiency because it leads to reductions in effectiveness. A more detailed comparison would be possible, but there are sufficiently obvious areas for improvement in the scholarships to mean that this comparison is not a priority.

5.4 Impact

There are three questions the evaluation is answering in relation to impact, covering how and by whom scholarships are spent, their contribution to transition to lower secondary, and unintended or negative impacts.

Main findings:

There is clear evidence that scholarships were spent – typically by mothers or grandmothers – on educational material or expenses, or food.

The scholarships did not, however, make any detectable contribution to transition from upper primary to lower secondary, because primary and secondary scholarships are poorly coordinated.

There were some negative impacts on non-recipients who were envious and, in some cases, demoralised by not being selected. These negative impacts were exacerbated when schools emphasised the difference between recipients and non-recipients.

5.4.1 I1: Impact on spending

Secondary studies suggest that expenditure on education does increase following scholarship receipt. 93 per cent of (a non-representative sample of) respondents studied in Sam Or Angkearot and Kang Sophanna (2017) reported spending on study material for children, and 82 per cent on uniform, with other spending being on transport and “easing the family condition.” Biradavolu (2018) finds a similar spending pattern for Grade 11 and 12 recipients⁵⁰.

Our school-level data found exactly the same pattern of spending (school related materials and expenses, alleviating the family condition). Respondents were very consistent across rights holders (guardians and students) in different locations, from different family backgrounds and of different genders. This consistency could indicate that respondents were telling researchers what they thought they wanted to hear, but it might also simply indicate that households in Cambodia do value education and spend additional (education-labelled) resources on it. This latter interpretation would be

⁵⁰ Biradavolu, 'Independent Review of Scholarship Programme for Ethnic Minority Students in Grades 11 and 12 in North-Eastern Provinces of Cambodia'.

consistent with other studies in Cambodia and responses to other questions that indicate education's high value.

There was only one instance in the data where a respondent mentioned expenditure on a different category (cosmetics, in the case of a female secondary student), but in all likelihood this was more common than reported. This would in itself be consistent with other studies.

In some schools there was a marked variation between the understanding of school and village authorities and what students and parents actually reported. Specifically, in one district school staff universally referred to bicycle purchase, which was almost entirely unreferenced by students or parents.

It is less clear whether – in the terms of the question – this amounted to a *change* in investment decisions. It is more likely, on the basis of the data, that spending patterns did not change very much, but recipients had more resources available to spend on school materials and expenses and household basic needs than previously. Given the value of the scholarship is comparatively small (see 5.1.3), the increase in the resource envelope was usually fairly small. However, it seems probable from the data that the additional spending was focused on the scholarship recipient (rather than their siblings), because the scholarship carries with it a sense of importance and responsibility that should be reflected in how well the family prepare the recipient for school.

Surprisingly, there seems little variation in spending patterns between primary and secondary students. Secondary recipients might be expected to spend more on transport to school or extra tuition, but this was not particularly evident in the data: both primary and secondary students spent on these items. Most respondents agreed that secondary students' costs were higher, so scholarship money went less far.

Most rights holders reported that the scholarship money was spent by the child's mother, as the typically responsible family member for education, children and food. In cases where the mother was not living in the household, the responsibility would fall to grandparents (usually grandmothers), or other guardians, or fathers (though typically they would be absent too if mothers were). Parents seemed more likely to be absent in provinces close to alternative work, such as Banteay Meanchey.

5.4.2 I2: Impact on transition to secondary

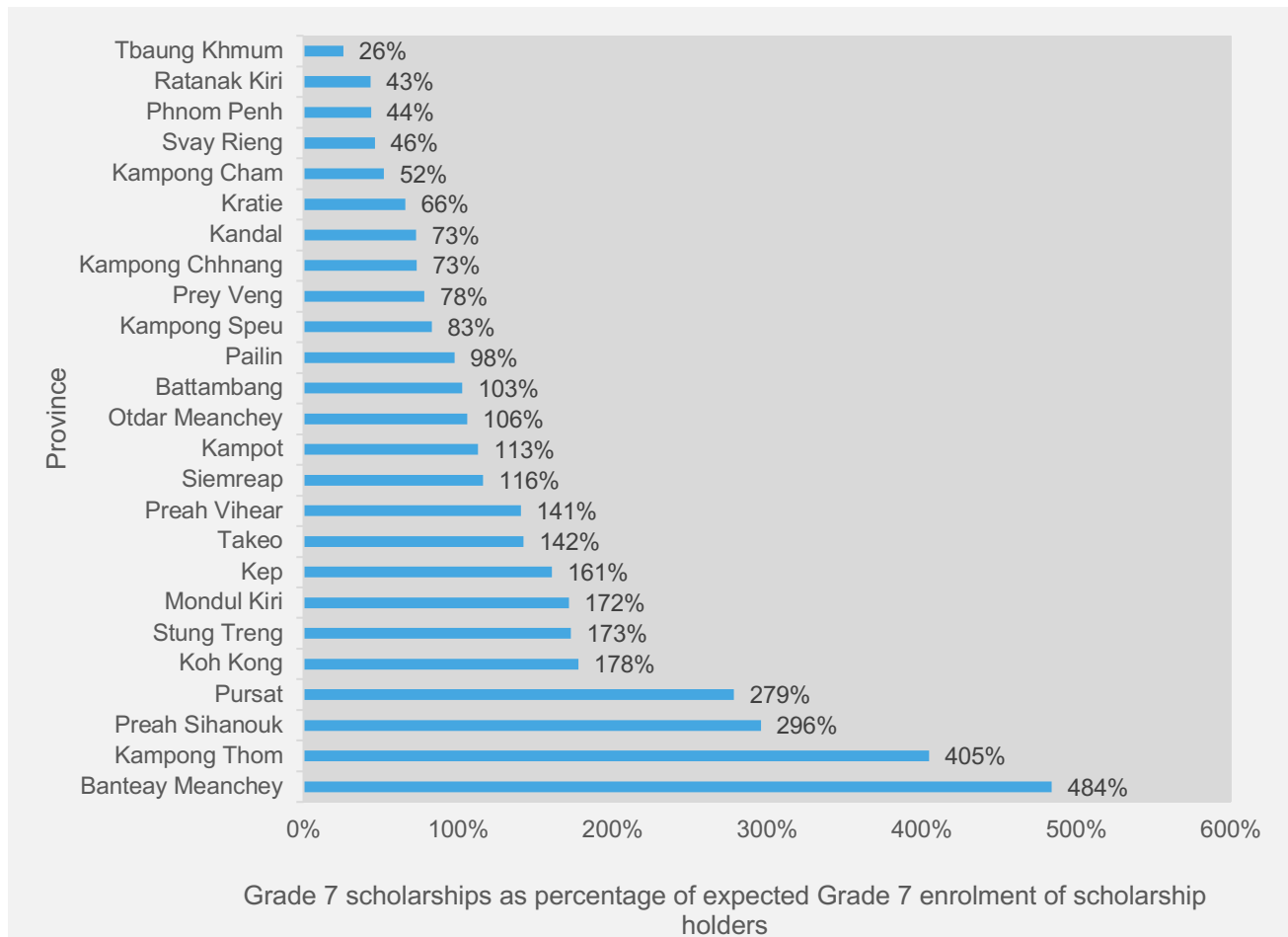
The theory of change presented in above illustrates the various pathways through which primary scholarship programmes can affect transition to secondary education. This section assesses this impact for both primary and lower secondary scholarships. As section 4.1.4 on limitations indicated, current data do not allow us to identify what percentage of primary scholarship students transition to lower secondary school, and what percentage of lower secondary scholarship students transition to upper secondary school. There are no comparative aggregated data on scholarship versus non-scholarship students from the same schools.

As demonstrated in section 5.2.1 on expected achievement, the scholarships appear to have improved educational attainment with students attending more, studying harder and to an extent getting better results, and being less likely to drop out. However, while this may increase the likelihood that scholarship students reach Grade 6 (and so to some extent a higher probability that scholarship students reach Grade 7 as there are more in Grade 6), this does not necessarily mean that students in Grade 6 are more likely to start Grade 7 because of the scholarship, when most students will need to change schools (from primary to lower secondary). Our school level data did not provide much evidence that scholarships translated to better transition. This is problematic since as in many countries there is a high dropout rate between upper primary and lower secondary, as educational costs rise substantially.

This limited contribution to transition is for two main reasons. First, direct and opportunity costs of school are higher at Grade 7 than Grade 6, but the scholarship value is the same. Second, scholarship

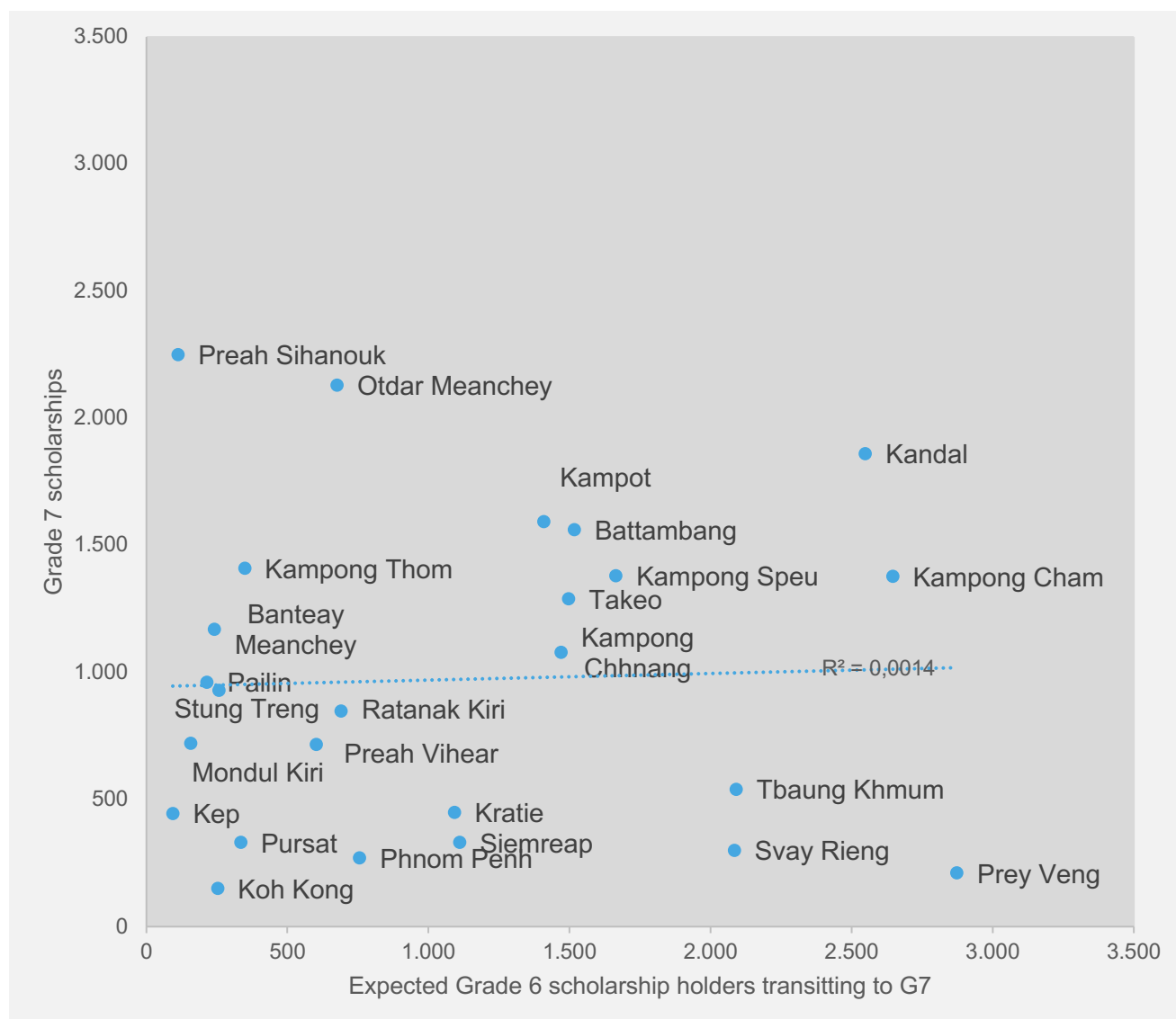
students in Grade 6 are not guaranteed to receive a scholarship in Grade 7. This is partly by design: secondary schools have a fixed number of 30 places per grade, of which 18 are for girls. This is irrespective of, and unrelated to, the number of Grade 6 scholarships awarded the previous year in their feeder primary schools⁵¹. Thus, some secondary schools may have more than 30 previous Grade 6 scholarship students (and/or more than 12 boys) who apply, while others may have more Grade 7 scholarships than there were Grade 6 scholarships among their feeder schools. There are more Grade 6 scholarship holders than Grade 7 scholarships, though this is to partly offset the dropouts that occur between primary and lower secondary school. Not all of the Grade 7 potential recipients who received a Grade 6 scholarship can get the scholarship again in most provinces: there simply aren't enough.

Figure 10: Percentage of Grade 7 scholarships covered by Grade 6 scholarships



These points are illustrated in the figures below, which draw on EMIS and scholarship data to show that there are never the same number of Grade 7 scholarships as Grade 6 scholarships in any province (Figure 10) and no association between transfers from Grade 6 and Grade 7 scholarships available in any province (Figure 11). **Annex 8** in Volume II has more details.

⁵¹ This arises from the two different approaches to scholarship allocation at primary and secondary level. Primary allocations, once decided in an annual discussion at central/province level, are then in the hands of the POE and/or the DOEs, as far as allocations to individual schools go. Secondary scholarships, again allocated centrally to provinces, are also allocated centrally to schools and with fixed numbers. Few provinces have similar numbers of primary and secondary scholarships, with some having many more primary than secondary, and others the reverse. The situation is probably more extreme at school level, but the Ministry does not have primary feeder school data in either primary or secondary scholarship data sets.

Figure 11: Grade 6 potential transfers and Grade 7 available scholarships by Province

The realities of these disparate numbers at province and school level affect how the programme is implemented at school level. Duty bearers at most secondary schools reported that they ignored whether the incoming Grade 7 students had scholarships because they couldn't trust the decisions made at primary school, and perhaps circumstances had changed. Indeed, some went so far as to say they would exclude Grade 6 scholarship holders to give someone else a chance (a view that was echoed in Phnom Penh by some officials). Duty bearers at primary schools know that a scholarship in Grade 7 was not guaranteed, so they were not able to persuade their students to transition on that basis.

Overall, if one purpose of the scholarship programme is to support students from poor households to complete at least Basic Education, and thus to support their transition between Grades 6 and 7, far better allocation processes and coordination would be required. The best way to support transition would be to guarantee Grade 6 scholarship recipients a scholarship if they enrol in Grade 7, but that could be administratively complex. In addition, the scholarships could award larger scholarships in Grades 7-9 than in Grades 4-6, in order to sharpen the incentive to progress. The main challenge is that the programmes have been run separately with separate processes and personnel since 2015, and it will be quite difficult to bring them back together. If the flexibility to allocate scholarships on the basis of local knowledge to districts and schools is desirable, then the whole centralised and fixed approach for secondary schools would need to change. Scholarship numbers for Grade 7 would

reflect the number and gender balance of Grade 6 scholarships in their feeder schools in the previous year. Secondary schools would award Grade 7 scholarships automatically to scholarship holders who made the transition and would be able to award additional scholarships to fill gaps left by students who failed to make the transition. The major problem in such a change would be the existing mindsets of central and POE staff set in the existing practices. For instance, some staff felt that primary scholarship students should not receive secondary scholarships because it would be unfair to get both while others got neither. In addition, each scholarship programme currently has its own procedures and areas of responsibility run by different people and bringing these together would not be straightforward.

5.4.3 I3: Unintended impact

School level data is clear about the perceived positive impacts of the scholarships in terms of encouraging students to come to school regularly, study hard, and get (slightly) better results, and in terms of reducing the burden on the family. This is discussed above. They are all intended in the theory of change of the scholarships and are reasonably consistent with findings from other evaluations in Cambodia and elsewhere.

There are a cluster of unintended impacts of the scholarship around non-recipients. Most duty bearers reported that parents and students who did not receive the scholarship were envious of recipients. This was supported by rights holders in some cases, as recipients noted that *'the neighbours got jealous'* (Stung Treng) or *'some villagers slandered or discriminated against my family'* (Kampot). While not universal, this is common in other programmes (see e.g., MacAuslan and Riemenschneider 2011) and not in itself surprising or necessarily problematic. However, in addition to this, several duty bearers reported that non-recipient students were demoralised and lost confidence as a result of non-selection and in some cases stopped trying, eventually dropping out. Some teachers reported that it was hard to manage a class in which this dynamic appeared. In some cases, non-recipients felt they had actively been discriminated against, which caused problems for community relations.

In at least one school, the sense of division between recipients and non-recipients was accentuated as scholarship recipients were given yellow badges to wear to identify them. This was intended to emphasise the importance of the scholarship, but probably had an effect of further demoralising non-recipients. In instances where selection is based on ethnicity, this practice could have negative consequences for student morale and social cohesion.

A further – though probably minor – reported unintended consequence of the scholarships is that one primary school secretary of a remote school in a rural poor district noted that some families now struggle to find adequate labour to help in the fields at harvest time. If correct, this would be a necessary consequence of the scholarships' success in improving attendance rates.

In some cases, students who felt they had been unfairly not selected withdrew from schools and enrolled elsewhere, but this did not appear to be widespread and was likely related also to their families moving.

Finally, there were incidents where recipients needed to make payments to school directors or teachers (in one case to build a fence) of between ten and fifteen thousand riels (compared with a total value of 240,000 riels. These payments were not always judged by rights holders to be significantly problematic but are clearly against the rules of the programme. They also could – the evaluation team speculate – over the long-term erode the confidence of rights holders in duty bearers and could be reduced or eliminated by ensuring rights holders are more clearly aware of their entitlements.

5.5 Sustainability

There are two questions covering the sustainability of the scholarship programmes.

Main findings:

Sustainability is strong, with high levels of ownership by the MoEYS and the MEF, and the use of Cambodian financial and human resources to run the programmes.

Scaling up would require additional resources and capacity, and probably the development of some new procedures to ensure coherence across primary and secondary scholarships.

5.5.1 S1: MoEYS ownership, capacity and resources to maintain

Interviews in the MoEYS strongly suggest that the individuals and departments responsible for the scholarship have a strong sense of ownership for the scholarship programmes, which have been a vital part of the MoEYS' agenda for the past several years. While an objective assessment of the capacity of the MoEYS was beyond scope (and capacity assessments were not available to the evaluation team), subjectively they feel that they have the capacity to continue to manage the scholarship programmes in future. To the extent that the scholarship programmes have been adequately managed to date, this is certainly true. However, there are some important alterations required to the organisation of the scholarship programmes that would help to improve effectiveness, particularly around monitoring and use of data. This may require some additional individual and organisational capacity at central, provincial and district.

The ability of the government to fund the expansion of the scholarship programmes is a more challenging issue. Overall resource allocation is of course a question for the government. The MEF have given indications that they may ask the MoEYS to find additional resources for the scholarships from the existing MoEYS budget. In the evaluation team's judgement – based on limited evidence – this would likely have a deleterious effect on education outcomes overall and so would probably be self-defeating. Of course, there are likely significant efficiencies to be found within the education budget, but at the same time there are areas where additional spending would be required to make improvements to the comparatively low levels of learning, including more effective teachers, particularly in rural areas. It would be difficult to recommend transferring money from elsewhere in the MoEYS budget to the scholarship programmes specifically.

The more pertinent question, therefore, may be whether the MEF can find additional money from elsewhere in the budget to fund the scholarship programmes, leading to a net increase in the budget allocated to the MoEYS. Answering this question with any degree of certainty is beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, officials in the MEF have also expressed a sense of ownership and importance of the scholarship programmes. In order to capitalise on this, however, the MoEYS would probably need better to demonstrate the value of the scholarships. This evaluation is part of this, but improved monitoring on a regular basis – including the tracking of specific students – could also be a valuable contribution to this decision, particularly as other ministries may be able to demonstrate this return more effectively.

5.5.2 S2: Expansion and scale-up

The MEF and MoEYS have agreed that this year the scholarship programme will be expanded to a pilot group of students from Grades 1 to 3. It would be well worth establishing the effectiveness and impact of this expansion to inform this question.

The question on scholarship size is covered above (see section 5.1.3). The current scholarship size is roughly appropriate, so additional funds could be used to expand into new grades or to increase the number of recipients (once monitoring costs are accounted for).

Whether to use any additional funds to expand into new grades or enrol more recipients in existing grades is challenging. The data provide limited direction on this point. School leadership at one primary school specifically requested that the scholarship be expanded to Grades 1-3. A large number

of duty bearers and rights holders emphasised the envy caused by the fact that there are more poor children than scholarships available. So, there are cases for expansion in both directions.

5.6 Equity and Other Cross-cutting Issues

Main findings:

Monitoring processes are weak, and data is rarely communicated up through levels in any detail. MoEYS has access to data on scholarships disaggregated by gender, but these data are very limited. There is no centralised place for data on primary and secondary scholarships.

5.6.1 X1: Data, monitoring and evaluation

Primary data collection and examination of studies and data made available to the team indicate very limited use of monitoring data, and scant data collection and monitoring on the scholarships. Where data are collected they are passed upwards (district to province, province to MoEYS) but not recorded systematically, used to make decisions or to communicate.

At the central MoEYS level, they hold data for primary and secondary scholarships on the number of students receiving scholarships by grade and gender, but not age or ethnicity. EMIS data and scholarship data are poorly linked, with the Primary Scholarship Unit database using different school codes than EMIS in hundreds of cases. EMIS does not contain student-specific data, so the progression of individual students following receipt of scholarships cannot be tracked and compared with non-recipients. A recent rapid evaluation⁵² suggested that the two existing systems being piloted for using individual student data (1) the PRISM⁵³ scholarship information system and (2) the Department of Planning Student Tracking System⁵⁴, are not suitable for scale up and wider adoption. Moving forward it would be helpful for the MoEYS to coordinate across departments and donors to finalise changes to one data system (which enable individual student tracking) which can then be scaled up nationwide.

As regards monitoring and evaluation, the Department of Policy has conducted a study in 2017⁵⁵ and another in 2018, but there are no plans for a rigorous evaluation of the pilot roll-out of scholarships to Grades 1-3, which is a major missed opportunity.

Provincial and district officials indicated that they did some monitoring of selection, payments, conditionalities (i.e., attendance) and replacements, typically focused on process compliance but in some cases asking about outcomes. Officials typically visited some (but not all) schools two to three times a year (or for some district officials monthly), and (often as part as regular school visits) asked some questions about the scholarships. Some officials timed their visit to coincide with scholarship processes such as selection or payment. For instance, one DOE official noted:

“We conducted school monitoring activity at least 5 times per year especially during giving money to students. During our visit, we met local scholarship management committee, students, teachers and parents... and we discussed on scholarship programme implementation.”

- DOE official, Kampot

⁵² James Shoobridge, ‘Rapid Formative Evaluation of Individual Student Tracking Pilot in Cambodia’, Unpublished (Phnom Penh, Cambodia: Department of Planning, RGC, 2019).

⁵³ The World Food Program and the MoEYS, Department of Scholarships, is piloting scholarship information system to support the scholarships programme called PRISM. The information system is designed to support the policy framework for scholarship implementation in schools, districts and nationally.

⁵⁴ This system is developed and piloted by MoEYS under a GPE grant to fund the Second Education Sector Support Project (SESSP).

⁵⁵ Angkearoat and Sophanna, ‘The Effectiveness and Efficiency of Scholarship Program at Primary School and Secondary School’.

Provincial officials send a report to the MoEYS (but none was able to provide an example), but never received any feedback from the MoEYS on the report. In some provinces, they give an oral report to the POE and/or store the reports in the POE as well as sending to the MoEYS (although they were still unable to provide an example).

District officials sent their reports to the POE but also received no feedback. However, in some (but by no means all) cases districts officials used what they learned through monitoring to advise the LSMC or enter information into the EMIS. Even in these cases, there was no following up on what happened as a result, and these officials were unable to show the research team the information they had entered.

Not a single provincial or district official reported that information they collected on scholarship recipients was disaggregated, except in some cases by gender. It is not clear whether there are templates for any reports that are sent from the DOE to POE and MoEYS, but these do not include disaggregation. In any case, no officials were able to give instances of when these reports were used.

Almost every provincial and district official reported that they would like to do more monitoring, if they had the budget, time and people to do so. They wanted to be able to look at outcomes and, in some cases, to monitor fraud, and to support the LSMCs more effectively. They were not clear, however, what the outcome of this monitoring would be: who would use the information to do what?

At school level, Sam Or Angkearot & Kang Sophanna (2017)⁵⁶ indicates that schools monitor attendance directly, but it is not clear what happens to these data or how disaggregated they are.

Most schools monitor conditionalities (i.e., whether students are attending regularly and receiving adequate marks), but typically this information is either not used at all or – in cases where students are not attending regularly enough – the data are falsified to indicate that students are attending regularly, as discussed above. Other monitoring appears quite limited, and while information is passed up to district level, it is never passed back down in the form of feedback or use.

On the basis of this evidence, it appears that major improvements could be made to the EMIS, and to monitoring and evaluation. This would help to establish the case for continuing financing the scholarships and help to make continuous improvements to their design and delivery.

In the validation workshop, several stakeholders indicated that there were doing monitoring. The challenge, however, is to ensure that the data collected as part of this monitoring are a) pertinent to needs and b) actually used. This means ensuring they are transmitted from schools to districts to provinces and to the central Ministry, consolidated and then used to drive improvements or communicate success.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

6 Conclusions

Conclusions are presented first structured around the evaluation objectives and then by evaluation criteria. The evaluation set out to achieve the following objectives:

- Reconstruct a theory of change of the scholarship programmes and review to what extent the programmes have been implemented as part of the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2014-2018

The reconstructed theory of change of the scholarship programmes was detailed in section 2.2. As set out in section 5.1, the scholarship programmes were fully implemented as part of the ESP 2014-2018. In addition, the scholarships will be continued as a core part of the next Education Strategic Plan (2019-2023).

- Analyse the extent to which the primary and secondary scholarship programmes have met their objectives, including the identification of enabling factors, barriers and bottlenecks

Section 5.2.1 indicated that the primary and secondary scholarships have achieved their objectives around keeping children in school, enabled by broadly effective implementation and a culture that is very supportive of education. However, they have been less effective in supporting transition from primary to secondary school, and there are still children who are unable to attend school regularly despite the existence of the scholarships.

Barriers to the scholarships' effectiveness include: very limited coordination between primary and secondary scholarships, late payments, high opportunity costs of education, particularly at secondary level, and the inability to easily add students who drop out of school following an income shock to their household. Key bottlenecks around achieving the scholarships' objectives include the duration of the process of selection and then payment and the collection and management of information about the scholarships, in particular the lack of student-specific information.

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the scholarship programmes (primary and secondary)

The strengths of the scholarship programmes include the widespread support they receive from most duty bearers and rights holders across Cambodia. With the exception of some school directors of small schools who felt that implementing the scholarships was a major administrative burden, respondents were enthusiastic about and felt a strong sense of ownership of the scholarships. This augurs well for their continued implementation and effectiveness. In addition, the core processes articulated in the scholarships' theory of change work: students from poor households are identified and paid US\$ 60/year, and this helps them remain in school and encourages them to study hard.

The weaknesses of the scholarships are not fundamental, but there are weaknesses that reduce the scholarships' positive impact and efficiency. These include late payments, poor coordination between primary and secondary scholarships, imperfections in targeting, and weak monitoring, feedback and communication processes.

A feature of the scholarships that is both a potential strength and weakness is the flexibility of implementation that is afforded to school level duty bearers, especially directors. Where these individuals are committed, altruistic and well informed, this flexibility is a strength. Where they are not, it is a weakness.

- Understand the scholarship recipients' use and perception of the scholarship programmes

As set out in section 5.4.1, recipients typically use the scholarships for educational materials and expenses, and basic household needs. Their perception of the scholarship programmes is overwhelmingly positive, as detailed in section 5.2.5.

- Document lessons learned, good practices and innovations as well as provide recommendations on how the scholarship programmes can be strengthened

Lessons learned are set out in section 7 and recommendations in section 8. The variability of implementation means that there are good practices and innovations that could be spread across the programme, though this is not straightforward. For instance, in most schools, teachers and directors take a very lenient view of the condition on academic performance and in some cases attendance, preferring to talk to students about how to improve rather than remove them from the programme. Another example of a good practice is when primary school directors travel to secondary schools to ensure that primary scholarship students leaving Grade 6 are enrolled in the scholarship programme when they start Grade 7. Finally, directors and teachers visit recipients at home during targeting and payment – usually at their own expense.

6.1 Relevance

Overall, the evaluation concludes that the scholarship programmes are highly relevant: well-aligned with existing national plans, documents and priorities, complementary to other programmes, with approximately appropriate transfer sizes and modalities and clear equity objectives. Monitoring and feedback processes, however, leave substantial room for improvement.

The scholarships are clearly relevant to Cambodia's development and education objectives as stated in key policy documents (section 5.1.1).

The amount and frequency of payments (i.e., three evenly spaced tranches of Riel 80,000 starting in November) seem approximately appropriate, on the basis of school data and comparisons with other programmes (see section 5.1.3).

The potential for learning within the scholarship programme is limited by inadequacies in monitoring and feedback mechanisms (see sections 5.1.5 and 5.1.4). Duty bearers above school level have limited direct access to rights holders and there are limits to the reports that pass from school to district, province and central level.

6.2 Effectiveness

Overall, the findings above indicate that the primary and secondary scholarship programmes are achieving their objectives in terms of improved attendance and effort for upper primary and lower secondary students from poor households (section 5.2.1). This is consistent across boys and girls. The scholarships are highly valued by rights holders (section 5.2.5) and provide significant encouragement to them in their studies (section 5.2.1). Conditionalities, the idea that the scholarships are for clever students and the public process of payment tend to reinforce the sense from rights holders that they should study hard (section 5.2.1). The conditionality around scholarship receipt (i.e., needing to attend regularly and have good results) seems to be implemented reasonably appropriately (section 5.2.2), although conditionality on results is more problematic. In practice, while the conditions are usually monitored at school level, they are used as threats that are typically only enforced if children drop out entirely. Given that households' livelihoods are vulnerable this discretion – when sensitively applied by the Local Scholarship Management Committee (LSMC) – is appropriate.

However, the evaluation also indicates that there are limits to the scholarships' achievements. In particular:

- Impact on learning and subsequent employment is likely limited (section 5.2.1), as would be expected by the theory of change; and
- Impact on transition from Grade 6 to Grade 7 is limited, because although the schooling costs rise, the scholarship value does not, and there is no guarantee that Grade 6 recipients will receive

a scholarship for Grade 7 (section 5.4.2). There are recommendations on how to address this below.

The practical processes of the allocation of scholarships to provinces, districts, and schools and the selection of students in schools lead to some undesirable outcomes. The school and Education Management Information System (EMIS) data discussed in sections 5.1.2 and 5.2.2 indicate some exclusion errors (poor students who don't receive the scholarship) and inclusion errors (recipients who are not (ID) poor). Not having an IDPoor card is not in itself necessarily a problem as IDPoor surveys are conducted only every three years, and poverty in Cambodia is very dynamic. Participants at the validation workshop emphasised the importance of school level duty bearers using their discretion to include households who are poor but do not have an IDPoor card. However, rights holders noted that selection was not perfect. Part of this was caused by substantial variation in the practices of selecting students at school level, unclear guidance or training on what school-level duty bearers should do, and no budget for household visits by school or district-level duty bearers. Some schools felt they had too few scholarships to be worth the effort involved.

6.3 Efficiency

Overall, there are some inefficiencies in the scholarships because transfers are not made at the start of the school year and the absence of a budget allocation for travel for monitoring and selection both mean that impact is lower than it would be otherwise. It would be more cost efficient to pay on time and allocate funding for monitoring.

Scholarships have rarely been paid on time, for a mix of reasons. This causes some difficulties for rights holders, but these do not appear, from the school level data, to be very substantial in all cases. The mode of payment – handed over to parents in a ceremony at school – was typically felt to be appropriate, and rights holders were concerned about costs of travel to banks to collect money. Where mobile money alternatives existed – such as WING – rights holders were favourable to being paid in this way.

The feedback, monitoring and parts of the selection function are under-resourced, which has negative consequences for these processes and probably outcomes.

6.4 Impact

Overall, there is clear evidence that scholarships were spent – typically by mothers or grandmothers – on educational material or expenses, or food. The scholarships did not, however, make any detectable contribution to transition from upper primary to lower secondary, because primary and secondary scholarships are poorly coordinated. There were some negative impacts on non-recipients who were envious and, in some cases, demoralised by not being selected. These negative impacts were exacerbated when schools emphasised the difference between recipients and non-recipients.

The coordination between primary and secondary scholarships was poor, in some cases deliberately (see section 5.4.2). This was because some duty bearers at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) felt that the two programmes should be kept separate, and some rights holders at school level felt that primary recipients should not be selected for secondary scholarships. More fundamentally, there is a mismatch in the process of allocating scholarships to schools, and the absence of individual student tracking makes it very hard to guarantee a Grade 6 student receives a scholarship in Grade 7. This contributed to a very limited impact on transition from primary to secondary school.

There are some unintended negative impacts, particularly in terms of envy and demoralisation amongst non-recipients, which is sometimes reinforced by literally badging scholarship students in classrooms (section 5.4.3). There are recommendations on how to address this below.

6.5 Sustainability

Overall, sustainability is strong, with high levels of ownership by the MoEYS and the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), and the use of Cambodian financial and human resources to run the programmes. Scaling up would require additional resources and capacity, and probably the development of some new procedures to ensure coherence across primary and secondary scholarships.

Duty bearers are typically also supportive of the programme and feel a strong sense of ownership (section 5.5.1). The MoEYS has strong ownership of the programmes, and a reasonable level of resources to manage them (section 5.5.1).

6.6 Equity and Cross-cutting Issues

The scholarships in design and implementation take good account of equity (section 5.6.1). However, the programme MIS does not allow for consolidated and disaggregated (see section 2.6.1) data about recipients, which makes it difficult to produce programme improvements or argue for additional financing on the basis of impact or effectiveness. There is no individual student tracking, which makes it difficult to consolidate the impact of scholarships on recipients.

These conclusions underpin a basic recommendation that the scholarships be continued.

Before turning to lessons learned, some reflections on these conclusions.

- Successfully addressing these challenges is not straightforward. Many have been identified before, and it has not been easy to solve them. This may partly be because there are some quite large structural issues that cannot easily be overcome by the MoEYS alone or because duty bearers consider them solved e.g., in the case of timely payments, the fiscal year starting after the school year is a systemic issue that neither the MoEYS nor the MEF is able to solve easily if at all, and neither can solve this alone.
- There appears to be a strong case emerging from the data for considering the scholarship programme as a single coherent programme running from Grade 1 to 12 and streamlining implementation procedures from central to school levels.
- Individualised student tracking would help to solve several challenges, including around transition and monitoring. This is part of a wider agenda within the ministry, but the evaluation underlines the importance of this agenda.
- This would involve a fairly substantial amount of re-specifying procedures in detail and training staff at all levels on new procedures. This may not be possible without additional financial and technical support.
- There are naturally some large risks to an 'overhaul', and so there is also a case for making incremental improvements to specific areas where movement is possible, especially given the scholarships appear to be working more or less. These improvements would generate some momentum to other improvements.
- Areas for incremental improvement include making payments on time, monitoring more effectively and then communicating (e.g., to MEF) what happens to scholarship students in comparison with non-scholarship students (currently this is not possible at any level of scale), and trying to reduce the school-level emphasis of difference (such as giving scholarship students special badges). More substantive improvements would be improving the poverty and education basis of allocating scholarships and selecting students (rather than the historical approach now taken) and improving the coordination between primary and secondary scholarships (which is not straightforward given that primary and secondary schools are not always in neat overlapping catchments).
- There are some large decisions to be made around whether to increase the transfer size, increase the number of scholarships available in Grades 4-9, and/or expand into Grades 1-3. These are not decisions that can be made by an evaluation, but while the transfer size seems approximately

right, any expansion is likely to have a positive effect on education outcomes for vulnerable households, given exclusion errors.

- There are other areas where the scholarship programme could potentially be improved, but changes are not obviously urgent. These include: making payments electronically (which would have efficiency and fiduciary risk benefits but would reduce the 'prestige' of the open payment process in front of a formal school assembly); changing the conditionalities (which could risk excluding poorer students, but which are not really enforced); and labelling the scholarships differently, for instance as for 'high potential students'.
- There are areas where it would not seem appropriate to make changes. For instance, while there is some political imperative to ensure that scholarships go to students who are 'clever' it is not sensible, at least from a technical perspective, to attempt to identify 'clever' students at a young age. Tests of ability and potential are very difficult to get right and are indeed likely counterproductive because they are stressful. The scholarships can then certainly be badged as for students of high potential, but student selection should continue to be, certainly for primary and arguably for lower secondary on the basis of poverty rather than 'merit'.

7 Lessons Learned

This evaluation of scholarship programmes has generated some lessons of wider relevance to education and social protection in Cambodia and beyond. These lessons are important, but they are based on a relatively limited set of data and so should be treated with some caution.

First, scholarships do appear an effective way to reinforce perceptions of the importance of education in parents and students. It may be that in Cambodia this builds on strong cultural beliefs in the value of education and hard work, but it is striking that the combination of a relatively small payment, a public ceremony and a clearly expressed conditionality on its receipt can so effectively ‘nudge’ people towards education and hard work. If this is generalisable, it may be of relevance for other countries in South East Asia seeking to improve regular attendance and attention.

Second, scholarships are very unlikely to entirely address problems of dropout, even if they made very large payments. Students will continue to drop out as parents move, or go through health or livelihood crises, or because they struggle to keep up with the class and feel embarrassed. This is still likely to occur disproportionately to poor households. Addressing this will require a comprehensive strategy that blends better school outreach, insurance, and changing norms around mandatory age-appropriate schooling.

Third, Cambodian parents and students have high aspirations, which will be challenging to meet. Many parents and grandparents persuaded their children to attend school so that ‘they would not be ignorant like us’. If this better attendance does not translate into better job prospects, there is a risk that it will not be passed onto the next generation. The articulation between the education and economic systems is likely a high priority – not just in Cambodia. This is both a great opportunity and a challenge for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) and the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Fourth, as with many education programmes that rely on front line workers exercising choice, the scholarship programme has many forms in different schools. On the one hand, this is a tremendous (potential) strength, as well informed and well-meaning frontline workers are far better placed to make decisions about selection, conditionality enforcement, and wider support than district, provincial or central officials. On the other hand, this represents a significant risk (section 5.2.4), because if these frontline workers lack information or are not altruistic their choices may cause poor outcomes, or may be seen to be biased, which undermines credibility. This is a very difficult line to navigate, but in Cambodia – as in many programmes – it is likely that frontline worker discretion needs to be balanced by strong central guidance and effective monitoring.

Fifth, as is common in many rural communities where cash transfer programmes run, rights holders and duty bearers emphasised the importance of equity and indeed equality. This appeared in concerns about the negative consequences of non-selection for non-recipients’ envy and tension, in noting that many poor households were excluded, and in the often-made suggestion that different grades be paid the same amount (‘for fairness’). It may also be related to the fact that in Cambodia – as elsewhere – the livelihoods of households below or near the poverty line are very fragile. Any household therefore has a reasonable probability of becoming poor at any time, which makes large-scale irregular targeting exercises likely to exclude recently poor households. This emphasis militates against technically efficient suggestions to allocate larger payments to higher grades or to focus on poverty.

8 Recommendations

These recommendations derive from the findings and conclusions presented above. These recommendations have been validated in a multi-stakeholder workshop on 7 February 2019. The following list is prioritised in line with the conclusions presented above which indicate the possibility of incremental change in some areas allowing momentum to be built and are made specific to different actors.

Accordingly, recommendations that are both urgent and feasible come first, such as making payments on time, monitoring more effectively, and trying to reduce the school-level emphasis of difference (such as giving scholarship students special badges). Given the scholarship framework development process, this can also involve providing a framework for flexibility in setting the transfer value and modality, for expansion of coverage and for integration across Grades 1-12.

More substantive – but probably more difficult – improvements would be improving the poverty and education basis of allocating scholarships and selecting students and improving the coordination between primary and secondary scholarships. These improvements should be considered following the implementation of an initial round of improvements. These recommendations are divided into sub-sections on the basis of the issue that they address.

Timely payments

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) are already taking steps to improve the timeliness of payments, especially the first payment. This may also need to include finalising selection for Grades 4-6 and 8 and 9 in July of the previous school year. Once this requisition is made, the transfers can be made quickly, and the money should (now) be available in provincial treasuries in the last quarter of the fiscal year. The problem is not entirely based in the financial/school year mismatch, as it includes the time required to generate and submit the lists of names to trigger payment, and MoEYS/MEF should consider tying the fund transfers to the transfers for the school improvement budgets. It is recommended that:

1. The process by which schools select students and communicate this list to districts and provinces, and by which Provincial Offices of Education (POE) requisition transfers from the provincial treasuries be reviewed by MoEYS with a view to shortening the time frame for each step so that payments can be made to recipients much earlier in the school year, if possible, within the first half of January each year.

Timing: Review process as soon as possible to implement by November 2019

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units and POE representatives, plus Finance Department and MEF

School consistency

There is a careful balance to be struck between autonomy and control over school-level activities. The MoEYS should take steps urgently to improve consistency of school-level activities in some areas, particularly:

2. Take steps to develop a detailed manual for school-level duty bearers covering all areas of activity and provide training to key duty bearers such as the school director, secretary and local chief. This may take some time given changes to different operational processes.

Timing: Draft as soon as possible to implement by November 2019

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units and POE representatives

3. Communicate through provincial and District Offices of Education that schools should not label scholarship students in class and should downplay within classrooms the fact that some students

receive a scholarship. Schools can continue to emphasise the importance of receiving a scholarship and the attachment of conditions to receipt to recipient students and parents. Selection processes in class should not expect students to make judgements about their peers' poverty status.

Timing: Draft as soon as possible to implement by November 2019

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units and POE and District Office of Education (DOE) representatives

Selection and allocation

There are a set of more challenging recommendations that will likely take more time to implement and design. Several pertain to improving the processes of selection and allocation. However, these are quite urgent. At a high level:

4. The MoEYS should develop and implement a more consistent basis for the allocation of scholarships to provinces, districts and schools across primary and secondary scholarships. This should include allocating both primary and secondary scholarships to districts on the (same) basis of poverty or education indicators (for example, allocate scholarships in proportion to the number of poor households with school-age children in that district). Districts could then allocate scholarships to schools on the basis of poverty, education indicators (such as drop-out) and the relationship between primary and secondary schools, to ensure transition. In practice, the programmes will need to honour existing scholarships and change allocations over a three-year period (as current Grade 4 students maintain their scholarships and move through Grades 5 and 6 and into secondary school). They may also need to respect a minimum number of students per school that is administratively feasible.

Timing: Draft as soon as possible to implement for selection from 2020, and pilot transition in one district

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units

5. At school level, there should be clear guidelines for selecting students on the basis of poverty and regular attendance. Additional criteria must be provided to enable school committees to further 'ration' students beyond the IDPoor group – but this should be a limited number of measurable and verifiable indicators.⁵⁷ Duty bearers should then be trained on how to implement these, in particular how to address households that a) have an IDPoor card but are not poor, or b) have no IDPoor card but which are poor. This latter category should ideally not be considered as eligible for the scholarship programme, but in practice duty bearers and rights holders are aware of errors in IDPoor (including to do with dynamic poverty) and duty bearers at school sensibly adapt. This should ideally include visiting a sample of households to confirm poverty status. Long-term, only IDPoor card holders should be considered eligible, but this requires improving IDPoor. Although selection should not be made on the basis of academic performance, it should be emphasised that students are selected for their potential to do well.

Timing: Draft guidelines as soon as possible to implement for selection in 2020

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units

6. Gender based quotas should be removed – LSMCs should be allowed to assess gender disparities in their communities and the composition of scholarship students should reflect this. For instance, in communities with higher dropout rates for boys, eligible (poor) male students should be given preference over females (and vice versa). This would allow for a more nuanced targeting approach which tackles increasing male disadvantage in school completion.

Timing: Draft guidelines as soon as possible to implement for selection in 2020

⁵⁷ It would be unfair to expect school committees to implement a large number of criteria – an additional 2-3 indicators which correlate with dropping out should be sufficient. Examples include single parent households, overage students, persons with disability, and recent migration.

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units

Learning programme

The scholarship programmes underinvest in regular monitoring and feedback, and this leads to missed opportunities for the programme to learn, improve and communicate success. As a result:

7. The MoEYS should develop a costed monitoring and learning strategy for the scholarship programmes that articulates what data they want to collect on the programme, how and when they want to collect, and what they want to do to communicate it. This strategy should pertain to both primary and secondary scholarships. The MoEYS could explore development partner support for this strategy through the Capacity Development Partnership Fund (CDPF). It would be reasonable to expect the strategy to be rolled out by the next school year (starting November 2019), with MEF allocating recurrent funding to this strategy from January 2020. This strategy should include a process by which data (disaggregated by gender, age, IDPoor level, grade and ethnicity) on each scholarship student is consolidated into a programme monitoring information system that enables stakeholders to track students' attendance, results, completion and transition through grades. Ideally, this would link to the Education Management Information system (EMIS) as it develops student level tracking, but this is a long-term goal so for the present provisions should be made for this to happen in future. Like EMIS, collecting reliable data on the scholarships is likely a challenge, but should in principle be possible through a mixture of the regular reporting forms the scholarship programme provides for spot checks by district officials to confirm the data, and data entry at provincial level. The management information system (MIS) data should be used to indicate the rates of attendance, completion and progression of scholarship students as a means of underpinning a narrative of its success.

Timing: Draft plan as soon as possible for approval in budget year 2020-2021

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units, MEF

8. The MoEYS at the same time should invest in communications around rights and entitlements, feedback systems, and the use of these data. These data should be complemented with public advertising about the scholarship programme and clear opportunities for rights holders to make complaints and submit feedback that will be passed anonymously to district and province level duty bearers. Parents and students should be empowered to 'own' this programme and not see it as handout. The MoEYS should create an independent grievance mechanism for parents such as a telegram hotline or central office of complaints which can be reached via phone or mail. This will improve voice and accountability and ensure that instances of unfair selection or informal payments are reported without repercussions for parents. This is also a more cost-effective way of monitoring the performance of school staff and local committees as the alternative is a significant increase in operational budgets at all administrative levels and significant investment in student-level data collection and analysis.

Timing: Draft plan as soon as possible for implementation from 2020

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units

9. The MEF should allocate funding for monitoring, including household visits, by duty bearers at school and district level, and for training on how to do this.

Timing: Submit budget request for budget year 2020-2021

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units, MEF

Frameworks for further improvement

The results above indicate various areas where changes may not be needed now but should be possible in future, including transfer size, transfer modality and expansion into new grades. As a result:

10. When the MoEYS and MEF next revise the Anukret, they should remove some detail (such as transfer size) so that the MoEYS and MEF can agree changes in future more flexibly, for instance through a Prakas or change to the manual, rather than requiring a change to legislation.

Timing: Whenever the Anukret is revised

Responsible: MoEYS, MEF Director Generals

Coordination

In order to achieve objectives around improving transition between Grades 6 and 7, the MoEYS should take steps to improve the coordination between the primary and secondary scholarships. This is not straightforward, however, because as indicated above it requires overcoming some potentially quite substantial institutional barriers. It may be most sensible to achieve this coordination by decentralising responsibility for allocation to provincial and district levels. On the other hand, this may lead to too much discretion exercise including by duty bearers who put limited weight on this objective. At this point, therefore:

11. The MoEYS should include in the framework a commitment to develop a strategy for how the scholarship programmes can support improved student transition between Grades 6 and 7. This should consider: whether scholarship students in Grade 6 can be guaranteed a scholarship in Grade 7 if they enrol and attend regularly, irrespective of their gender; and whether the lower secondary scholarship value could be more than the upper primary value (which would address the higher education costs but avoid creating envy within the same school). A long-term strategy to ensure Grade 6 recipients receive scholarships in Grade 7 will probably require some form of unique student identification, whether through IDPoor or a MoEYS unique student identifier. Short-term, the MoEYS should pilot and evaluate an approach to improving transition within a district or province.

Timing: Add commitment to the framework in April 2019 and draft strategy before 2023

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units

Conditions

The current enforcement of conditions does not appear to be a major area of concern for the scholarships. There are worthwhile aspects of the conditions that could be maintained – such as the emphasis on hard work and attendance – without enforcing them in a way that penalises students who are struggling or students from poor households.

12. The MoEYS should remove the condition on results or performance. Scholarships should be received conditional on regular attendance (though school-level duty bearers should continue to implement this sympathetically), but not on results. School level duty bearers should continue to collect data on attendance, results, completion and progression, and tell parents and students that they do this.

Timing: Remove condition on performance in the framework in April 2019

Responsible: Working Group of Scholarship units

Transfer size, frequency and modality

In the medium to long term there will be needs to review transfer size and modality due to inflation and changes in technology (e.g., increasing availability of direct electronic transfers to households, such as Wing). Views were expressed, particularly at provincial level, on the desirability of reducing the number of transfers per year due to transaction costs. Changes in all of these are limited by their incorporation in Anukret. It is recommended that:

13. Changes be made in the processes for setting transfer size, modality and frequency of the Primary and Lower Secondary scholarships when the relevant Anukrets are revised. These changes should move the authority for setting transfer size, modality and frequency for scholarships to Regulations controlled by joint MoEYS/MEF Prakas to enable more flexibility and a shorter time frame if changes are deemed necessary to these parameters.

Timing: Review all three aspects when Anukret for scholarships is next revised

Responsible: Working Group of PED, GSED, Finance Dept and MEF

Long-term design

There are some more radical changes to the scholarship programmes that would be worthwhile exploring, including considering scholarships from Grades 1 to 12 as a single coherent programme with the same targeting approach and potential gradations in the scholarship value at Grades 1, 4, 7 and 10. This would have substantial benefits in terms of efficiency, as the programmes would use the same mechanism for allocation, selection, monitoring, complaints and feedback, and data management. Long-term, this would also be easier to coordinate with the National Social Protection Council. This would take some administrative reworking within the MoEYS but that is feasible. This is not a recommendation which at present is practicable to set a timeframe or clear responsibilities around, because this is contingent on establishing the revised framework and leadership from the MoEYS taking this forward. Nevertheless, this is a recommendation that the team feels is important to retain, given that this will be key to solving the major transition issues and improving efficiency.