



Basic Education Equivalency Programme (BEEP)

Providing flexible online education to improve access to basic education and vocational training for out-of-school youth

Promising Practice

Implemented by: The Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MLVT), with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and SMART Axiata (a Cambodian telecommunications service provider).

Where: Cambodia

Status: Started in February 2019

Summary: The Basic Education Equivalency Programme (BEEP), a joint initiative of UNESCO, the MoEYS and the MLVT, enables young people who dropped out of lower secondary level education to resume or continue their basic education online in a flexible way. Course delivery is designed to allow young people to work whilst studying. The programme is implemented by government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) together with SMART Axiata, a private sector telecommunications company, with funding support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Overview

The Basic Education Equivalency Programme (BEEP) is part of a larger programme to support Decent Employment for Youth in Cambodia (DEY), co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the government of Cambodia and the telecommunications operator SMART Axiata. The Ministries of Education, Youth and Sport and Labour and Vocational Training (MoEYS and MLVT) are cooperating with UNESCO to develop initiatives to reduce, and remediate for, the high drop-out rates of young people from lower secondary level education. Both Ministries award people who complete BEEP with a certificate equivalent to Grade 9 graduation. This enables graduates to continue their education at a technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institution or a technical high school. The programme is currently being rolled out nationwide and to reach new target groups such as those working in small enterprises, those in rehabilitation or correctional centres and returned migrants.

Description

BEEP is designed to support young people (aged 14+) who have dropped out of lower secondary level education and/or have not achieved their Grade 9 certificate. Despite the rapid economic growth experienced in Cambodia, many young people leave school early to go to work and to support their families. BEEP creates a new pathway for young people who have completed at least sixth grade but have not achieved their Grade 9 level certificate to progress into vocational training.

BEEP is available online allowing people to study at their own pace and for free. Learners are given internet data to access the courses (and some are available offline). All participants are guided on how to learn online and receive career counselling support. Young people register for BEEP through 43 designated learning centres in 21 provinces where they can gain additional help to complete the programme, including access to smart devices and free internet. Two volunteers are available for support at each learning centre. The provision of digital equipment and internet services is delivered through a partnership with Smart Axiata.

Learners study a broad range of topics to achieve their Grade 9 certification combining:

- **Core subjects:** Khmer Literature, Physics, Chemistry, Maths I
- **General subjects:** English, Entrepreneurship, Tourism, Information and Communication Technology
- **Technical subjects:** Maths II, Gender Studies, Employability Skills

The programme is self-paced with 624 hours of learning. Learners take **core** and **general** subjects to continue to Technical High Schools (under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport) or **core** and **technical** subjects to continue to TVET Institutes (under the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training). Each course is designed to be delivered in a blended way where learners are assisted by facilitators and volunteers. Students take a final exam upon completion of the subjects at a learning centre. Those who pass are awarded their Grade 9 basic education certificate which is recognized at Cambodian Qualification Level Two.



Fig 1.1. BEEP learners received orientation at the learning centre © CCF1

¹ Photo captured from a video: <https://www.cambodianchildrensfund.org/stories-news/second-chances>



Fig 1.2 Graduates of the BEEP programme²

Objectives

BEEP supports young people who have dropped out of lower secondary education and creates new pathways for them into employment and further education which fits with their current family and employment obligations. It is specifically targeted at individuals who cannot afford to take the time to continue their education and overcome the opportunity costs to achieve a higher-level credential needed to improve their labour market prospects. The provided courses aim to furnish learners with the skills needed in the labour market (e.g. digital skills). The support provided by facilitators educates learners about vocational training courses which may be available to them and which can further build their future job prospects.

The high levels of drop-out at lower secondary level (15.5%)³ have made vulnerable young people a primary target group to improve their future life chances. BEEP, as the only national education equivalency programme, has been specifically designed to enable young people outside of the education system to reintegrate and achieve a qualification which can allow further study opportunities in a free, flexible and self-paced way.

Outcomes and impact

By targeting disadvantaged, vulnerable, out-of-school young people, BEEP is contributing to the Royal Government of Cambodia's aims to promote education and training for all. The programme is a top priority for both the Ministries of Education and Labour and is

integrated into multiple national plans and policies including the National Action Plan on Cambodia Youth Development (2022-2026) and the National TVET Strategic Action Plan (2024-2028).

The numbers of BEEP learning centres have increased significantly since 2019, from 26 to 43. They are now in 21 (out of 25) provinces. As of 2025, 4,300 learners have enrolled in the programme.

"I think BEEP is very helpful for me. It was like going back to school with a better feeling and understanding of the lessons," says Visal. BEEP enabled him to see an alternative way toward a brighter future. Visiting vocational training centres in Cambodia opened his eyes to new possibilities and fuelled his determination to succeed. Visal is currently enrolled in a cooking class at one of CCF's vocational training partners⁴.

Insights and challenges faced

Creating the BEEP pathway has not been without its challenges. Out-of-school young people face the dual difficulty of not being able to attend in-person classes due to work and/or family responsibilities whilst also lacking digital access. Access has been supported through providing equipment and internet services at learning centres and offering in-person guidance in how to use equipment and follow the courses while continuing with

² Photo provided by the author.

³ Academic year 2023-2024; Source: Public Education Statistics and Indicators 2023-2024

⁴ See, <https://www.cambodianchildrensfund.org/stories-news/second-chances>

work. Offline content servers have been used in areas where internet and/or data access is low or patchy including for young people in correctional or rehabilitation centres.

UNESCO has provided technical assistance to staff at the Ministries of Education and Labour to help them co-develop the learning pathway and curricula. BEEP is the first programme to have both Ministries working together which has also supported cooperation between Technical High Schools (under the Ministry of Education) and TVET institutes (under the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training). This has helped them work together to provide unified information to the learning centres and to young people in BEEP.

UNESCO has supported learning centres and continuous training for their staff. For example, workshops are regularly provided to facilitators on how to use the learning management platform with additional monitoring of online statistics and reporting. Regular exchange takes place between the learning facilitators and technical staff to ensure the technology is best supporting the learning process. Other support is offered to help coordinate outreach to young people who could benefit from BEEP.

As BEEP has become a respected equivalency educational pathway, partnerships have been strengthened and expanded with local NGOs and business associations. For example, mobile phone operators have offered free data and internet services. Others have sponsored in-kind equipment. This has created more opportunities for young people to have access to BEEP and to further their education and training beyond the lower secondary level.

Conclusions and next steps

Moving forward, there is a wish to continue to expand and strengthen partnerships with line ministries, the private sector and development partners to promote BEEP. There are also aims to support BEEP graduates to continue their educational pathway and to help them find scholarships and TVET programmes to improve their livelihoods and job prospects such as through internships, job placement and apprenticeship opportunities. Maintaining cooperation between government and non-government partners is key to the continued success of BEEP whilst also expanding opportunities for participants to support further programme participation and sustainability.

Learn more

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To learn more about BEEP Programme, see:
<https://unevoc.unesco.org/i/989>
<https://www.cambodianchildrensfund.org/stories-news/second-chances>
<https://beep.moeys.gov.kh/>

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