

FEBRUARY 2022

CAMBODIA

Impacting Policy through Evidence Gathered from REACH KLI Grants

Introduction

Cambodia's schools have long struggled to get enough of the right textbooks to students for each new school year. Some issues trace back to the book supply chain, which has traditionally used a cumbersome, error- and delay-ridden paper-based process for ordering and distribution. Central authorities often did not receive timely information about problems and did not know if students used the books. Under a REACH-funded pilot, World Education and JSI Research & Training Institute tested a technology-based system for tracking book requests, distribution, and receipt in Cambodia. The pilot offered nonmonetary rewards to School Support Committees (SSC) for reporting whether schools received their books and made them available to students.

The pilot centered around Track and Trace, a digital tracking platform operable on smart phones that allows users to easily input and obtain information about book orders and distribution. School directors from 416 public primary schools used the platform to submit orders for the next school year directly to the central government. Track and Trace allowed users to follow the transit of books to schools, and directors to acknowledge book receipt and note any delivery errors. Under the results-based component of the pilot, School Support Committees received certificates for verifying their school's book receipt and conducting classroom checks to ensure book use.

Intervention

Some 624 school officials and 832 SSC members received training on how to use the system, and all 416 schools registered with Track and Trace and used it to request books. The system collected these requests in two weeks, compared to six months previously. More than 99 percent of school directors reported getting shipments and 94 percent said the books matched their orders. Sixty percent of SSC fulfilled their tasks and received certificates.



The Results in Education for All Children (REACH) Trust Fund under the World Bank Group seeks to help countries strengthen their education services by focusing initiatives on results. The IMPACT series describes how results-based projects funded by REACH influence learning, education systems, and policy making.

Cover photo: A school director uses the TinT platform to confirm that he received the correct number of textbooks.

Following the pilot's success, the education ministry rolled out the system nationwide, covering the annual US\$7,000 operations cost. REACH extended its grant through December 2021 to support the expansion, including simplifying the platform, providing capacity building for officials, and disseminating new training tools to school directors. After the new system was launched in August 2020 under the state-owned Publishing and Distribution House (PDH), over 95 percent of school directors registered on the system and 17 percent used it to confirm books they received. For the 2021 book cycle, 97 percent of school directors requested textbooks through the system, and 75 percent so far have used it to confirm book receipt. PDH used the book-request data to construct the national book allocation list used for printing and distribution contracts and to draw up shipping documentation.

Pandemic-related school closures resulted in a delay in book deliveries to schools in many provinces, though follow-ups with schools that received books suggested that deliveries were faster and more accurate than the previous year. The pandemic and holidays prevented School Support Committees from conducting classroom checks, but committee members helped schools collect or count books. During a trial run requesting committees at eight schools to register with the platform, some members struggled to do so, pointing to potential difficulties in scaling this initiative.

Impact

Track and Trace has increased visibility into Cambodia's book supply chain performance, with the system capturing "first and last mile," including requests and deliveries. Nearly 10,200 school directors and other officials received the new training tools for using Track and Trace, including messages, digital tools and links, with most appearing to master the system. This success could influence teacher training in Cambodia, which is exploring remote options for teacher professional development.

Donors and implementing partners have invited World Education and JSI to present on the Cambodia project. Working under the World Bank's Read@Home initiative, the organizations compiled a "master blueprint" manual for education ministries globally on designing their own Track and Trace program. Cambodia influenced the manual in many ways and provided real-life examples on implementation. The manual has been translated into French and Spanish and provided to El Salvador, Senegal, Niger, Cameroon, and Sudan, which have expressed interest in designing their own Track and Trace systems.

Track and Trace System



Forecasting

Helps in projecting book requirements for the following school year



Tracking

Tracks books through each stage of delivery to schools



Verification

SSC members reported any discrepancies or shortfalls

RESULTS IN EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN (REACH) RESOURCES

For more information on the REACH Cameroon intervention please refer to the RBF Education EVIDENCE note, "Can School Grants and Teacher Incentives be Used to Increase School Access and Improve Quality?" on the REACH web page.

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