

AUGUST 2020

CAMBODIA

Scaling-up a Successful Digital Book Tracking System for Schools and Homes

Introduction

Textbooks are one of the most important tools to help students to learn, but Cambodia's textbook supply chain has several weak points. New textbooks typically do not arrive in time for the start of the school year, and schools often receive the wrong quantity of books. The process through which schools report their book needs to the government is complicated and prone to errors. Even if the right books are printed and distributed to the districts, further errors can be created when the books are repacked at the district level to be distributed to schools, which can mean that schools do not end up with the right books. Also, there is little systematic and timely checking of whether the books are actually being used by children in the teaching and learning process. This means that officials lack real-time data about whether books have been lost during the delivery process and/or if schools receive the wrong books or in the wrong amounts.

The REACH Trust Fund provided a grant to World Education to test a results-based approach to incentivizing the textbook supply chain in Cambodia.

Intervention

The intervention piloted a new system called Track and Trace for the distribution of books to 416 public primary schools using a digital platform that could be used on low-cost smartphones. Instead of school directors having to project their book needs two years in advance on paper forms, they reported their current book stocks and enrollment rates, and the system automatically projected their requirements for the following year. Instead of district and central government officials collating these requests in a paper file, this information could be accessed directly by using the digital platform, removing one of the major sources of delay. After the books were ordered, the system tracked their progress from the warehouse to the districts and then to schools.



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 TnT platform to confirm that he received the correct number of textbooks.

School Support Committees (SSCs), which are composed of community members who assist school directors, used the system to confirm the receipt of books by the schools and the use of books in classrooms. As part of the results-based approach, incentives in the form of recognition certificates were given to SSCs that used the system to ensure books were being used in classrooms.

The intervention increased the efficiency of the book ordering process. All 416 schools entered their book requests during the two-week reporting period, a process which previously took several months. Ninety-four percent of schools received the correct orders, and 60 percent of SSCs conducted all the required checks and received a certificate. Also, 92 percent of SSCs checked that books were being used by children in the classroom.

Impact

The government was enthusiastic about the impact of the pilot Track and Trace system and has approved a nationwide scale-up. To enable it to work smoothly at scale, the project team is further simplifying the design and processes of the system. The team is also developing digital training and learning materials on how to use the system. These training materials and the modified Track and Trace system will enable the government to continue to manage the system even after the project team leaves.

The Publishing and Distribution House (PDH), the government agency charged with preparing and procuring books, has agreed to finance the annual running costs for the scale-up of the system from their own budget. The government has now given the PDH the additional responsibility for monitoring the effective distribution of books to schools nationwide, and the Track and Trace system will be instrumental in supporting this process.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the REACH Trust Fund is also supporting the World Bank's new READ@home initiative. This initiative will be developed based on the example of the Cambodia pilot and similar pilots in other countries to track the delivery of books to homes rather than schools. This will enable students to continue the reading and learning process at home while schools are temporarily closed.

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 Cambodia intervention please refer to the RBF Education EVIDENCE note, "Can Transparency and Incentives for Community Participation Increase the Supply of Textbooks to Schools?" on the REACH web page.

worldbank.org/reach
reach@worldbank.org

Co-funders: the Governments of Germany, Norway, and the United States

