

PROJECT FACTSHEET

Poverty reduction among youth in Cambodia – Development of youth volunteers’ skill sets for increased employability

The UNV-IBSA project in Cambodia implemented from July 2017 to March 2020 was managed by UNV and administered by the UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). With a budget of \$960,000, the project was implemented in close partnership with the General Department of Youth, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (GDY/MoEYS).

The project developed and implemented an innovative approach to youth skills development and employability through volunteering. The current context in Cambodia provided an excellent environment for this endeavor, with the possibility to bring real change to the employability and lives of Cambodian youth. The project has aspired to better define and recognize skills gained through volunteering so that employers and the general public will see their value.

The IBSA project was an integral part of the UN Joint Programme (UNJP) “United for Youth Employment in Cambodia”, implemented by UNV, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and ILO, and supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The General Department of Youth of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (GDY-MoEYS) was the leading national partner of the UNV-IBSA project. At the sub-national level, UNV worked closely with youth centers and youth offices of MoEYS in various target provinces. The projects activities also helped to strengthen the partnership with the Volunteering Cambodia (VolCam) Network.

The project succeeded in achieving its 3 outputs as below:

Output 1: Strengthen national capacity to establish enabling policy environment for volunteerism and its recognition

- Design and implementation of National youth volunteering service

Together with GDY/MoEYS, UNV led the National Youth Volunteering Services mechanisms in six provinces (Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Takeo, Kandal and Siem Reap). The mechanism consists of three pilots: 1) youth volunteering for community services 2) youth volunteering for social entrepreneurship 3) youth volunteering during national holidays. Overall, over 1,000 young volunteers were mobilized benefiting over 10,000 community members. More than half of the mobilized volunteers were women.

- Volunteerism as national priority for youth development

The project team effectively coordinated policy dialogue between the Ministry and civil society representatives on formulation of the next phase National Youth Development Plan. Through this opportunity, volunteerism was further mainstreamed in the policymaking process. Moreover, volunteerism was recognized as a strategic priority of education policies by the Prime Minister and integrated as a priority strategy in the 2019-2023 Education Strategic Plan. With volunteerism being recognized as a national priority, MoEYS was now able to integrate volunteerism in its national and subnational activities.

- Volunteering for My Communities (VMC)

Lessons learned from the pilots, especially Pilot 1, led to the creation in 2019 of the Volunteer for My Community (VMC) program spearheaded by MoEYS with substantive technical assistance from UNV. VMC was implemented in 12 provinces and expanded to 18 provinces in 2020. Currently, VMC is being

operationally and financially led by MoEYS. VMC is one of the first national policies dedicated to youth volunteerism in Cambodia.

- Accreditation framework

To ensure the transferability of the skills developed by young volunteer during volunteering programs to the labor market, UNV and MoEYS initiated the development of a formal accreditation of volunteer work, with the support of a consultant. Following consultative dialogues with stakeholders, UNV and MoEYS decided to change the term of the accreditation framework to “framework for the recognition of skills” and to link it to a set of soft skills detailed in a soft-skills manual created by UNV and MoEYS. At present, MoEYS is coordinating MoUs with a variety of stakeholders, including universities, Volunteer Involving Organizations (VIOs) and the private sector to implement a new framework to be piloted with VMC volunteers in 2020.

Output 2: Promote engagement of vulnerable youth in volunteerism

- Implication of youth from provinces to narrow rural/urban divide.

To understand the needs of young people and which services they wish to see from the government, VIOs and other stakeholders, UNV organized study tours, dialogues and events with youth from 25 provinces. Various volunteerism-sharing sessions in the forms of outreach were also conducted as part of the efforts to mainstream the concept of volunteerism among people. Many universities and high schools in both the city and provinces were used as venues for organizing the event

- South-South exchange activities conducted with China, Korea, Thailand and India.

The project fostered South-South relationships, through three South-South exchange activities with China, Korea and India. These exchanges took the form of a knowledge exchange with Beijing Volunteer Federation, the mobilization of two international volunteers with Korea International Cooperation Agency and a volunteer exchange with International Youth Exchange through Peer Learning India.

- Social entrepreneurship

To further support young entrepreneurship through volunteerism, the project delivered an incubation program in collaboration with Young Entrepreneurs Association Cambodia (YEAC) and with support from MoEYS, in 2019. The primary objectives of the program were to create an entrepreneurship program to support the ideas and innovations of young founders through training and mentorship. Participants received a series of business technical trainings, access to YEAC entrepreneur competitions and events, access to dedicated mentors with relevant business expertise. Four teams received \$5,000, \$3,000 and \$2,000 seed-funding and free access to YEAC memberships. Mentorship will continue past this project to ensure the success of these four businesses.

Output 3: Advocacy, information and monitoring – strengthened national capacity to implement volunteer management mechanisms

- National policy

Through the integration of volunteerism as a main priority for youth development, Cambodia has recognized the role of volunteerism in youth employability. Volunteerism’s role in youth employability was highlighted as a key pillar of the Education Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and the National Policy on Youth Development. Cambodia has the policy landscape and technical skills to continue to develop innovative volunteerism schemes and enhance its actual ones.

- Technical guidance

The project provided a series of capacity building activities to government officials involved with the implementation of youth volunteerism programs. The capacity of 67 officials of 5 Youth Centers and

18 Provincial Youth Offices was built through regular trainings on implementing volunteering schemes, project management and resource mobilization. Officials capacity was also reinforced by their implication in most of the project activities, especially the pilot programs and VMC.

➤ Online platform

The *Youth Volunteer for Cambodia* online platform was launched in 2019. YVC is the only platform in Cambodia that offers youths easy access to reliable information on volunteerism including volunteering opportunities, volunteer organizations, and news. The web platform was developed by the UNV project team and is being administered by the Scouts department of MoEYS. So far, more than 1,000 youths have registered. MoEYS will continue promoting the platform to increase the number of registered organizations and volunteering opportunities. If financial support is found, phase II of the platform's development will feature new options to facilitate access to soft skills training material and career counseling. Through continued strengthening and publicity, the platform will serve as a tool for mainstreaming volunteerism and will benefit thousands of youths.

Other notable achievements:

- Youth volunteerism was officially included as a part of the first Cambodia Voluntary National Review towards SDGs in 2019, as a way of expanding the scope of inclusive education.
- The project has been introduced a successful south-south solution for youth development at the Global South-South Development Expo 2018 in the UNHQ, New York, by the Under Secretary of State, MoEYS. It was also included as a good practice of youth empowerment in the speech of the Director-General, GDY/MoEYS, in the 2019 ECOSOC Youth Forum.
- IBSA-UNV-MoEYS partnership was recognized for its successful South-South partnership in the publication "South-South Volunteering as a driving force for people to people exchanges: Experiences and Perspective from Asia Pacific" launched on UN Day for South-South Cooperation. The publication focuses on the efficacy of South-South volunteerism in accelerating people to people connectivity and sharing of knowledge assets for the achievement of the 2030 agenda. A volunteer from VMC and MoEYS shared testimonials on their work during the event.