

Raising the Bar



MPL REPORT - 2024



WHY RAISING THE BAR?

Raising the Bar is about lifting expectations and aspirations.

At SeeBeyondBorders, we cannot just accept the status quo and the poor educational outcomes that are common for Cambodian children, especially in rural locations in northern Cambodia.

This report presents some initial evidence that SeeBeyondBorders' interventions have the potential to **Raise the Bar** for community expectations regarding children's educational achievement.

This evidence demonstrates that, with improved educational practices which enhance teaching and learning, success at school can be a realistic aspiration for all.

SeeBeyondBorders is committed to **Raising the Bar**.



MINIMUM PROFICIENCY LEVEL

Minimum Proficiency Levels, known as MPLs, are a standard tool used in the education sector internationally. In Cambodia they are used by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, as well as by development organisations, and are recognised as regional and international best practice. They represent the ‘bare minimum’ proficiency expected of students in each subject at each grade level. There is still much room for improvement above the MPLs, but scoring below these levels suggests that a student does not have a basic grasp of the subject for their grade level.

SeeBeyondBorders facilitates assessment to determine students’ achievements against MPLs at the end of each academic year. To ensure independence of the student assessment process, this assessment is conducted by trained external exam administrators. The findings presented here are from the 2023 assessment in Ek Phnom District, Battambang Province, where SeeBeyondBorders’ programs have been implemented, and in Srei Snam and Kralanh Districts, Siem Reap Province, where implementation of SeeBeyondBorders’ new program began in January 2024.



“Now that my child has moved to Grade 2, their reading ability is incredible and nearly on par with students in Grades 5 or 6.”

Father,
Literacy Project Student

Overall Data Trends

- **Improved teacher effectiveness increases the likelihood that students achieve MPLs. Compared to students in control schools, a significantly higher percentage of students in schools participating in one or more of SeeBeyondBorders’ programs achieve MPLs.**
- **An increasing percentage of students in these schools are achieving MPLs each year, as evidenced by the improvement in assessment results from 2021 to 2023.**

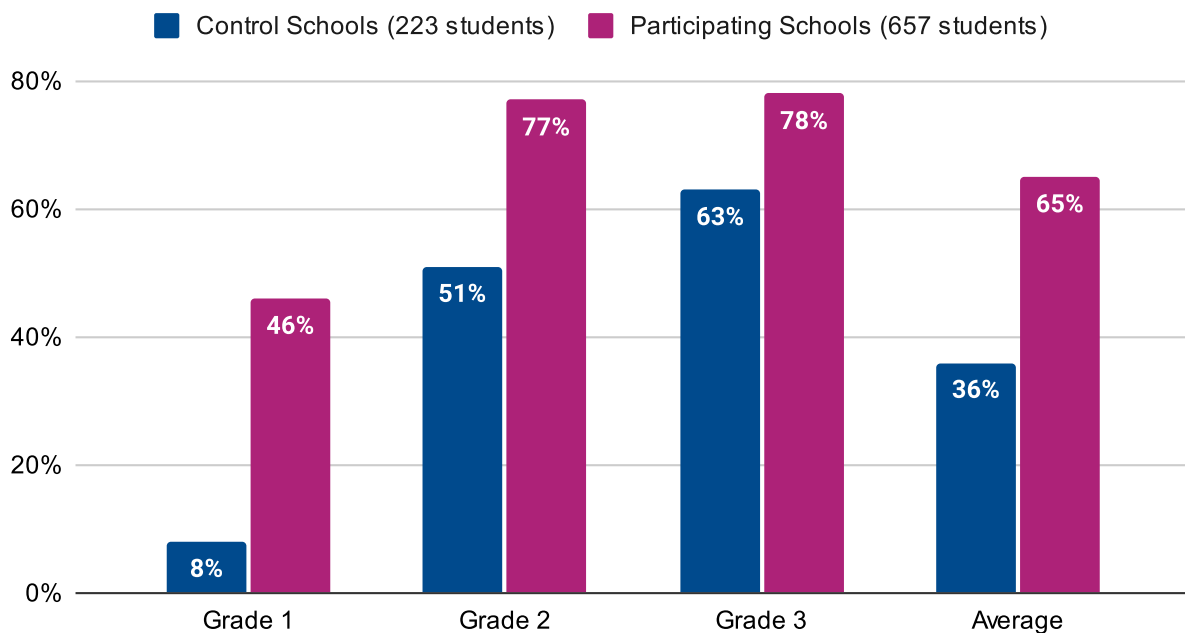
This trend indicates both that SeeBeyondBorders’ work is having a positive impact, and that the impact is increasing year on year. This report examines the 2023 MPLs data from four standpoints:

- Literacy
- Maths
- Girls’ and Boys’ Performance
- Regional Inequalities



LITERACY

Percentage of Students Reaching Literacy MPLs: 2023



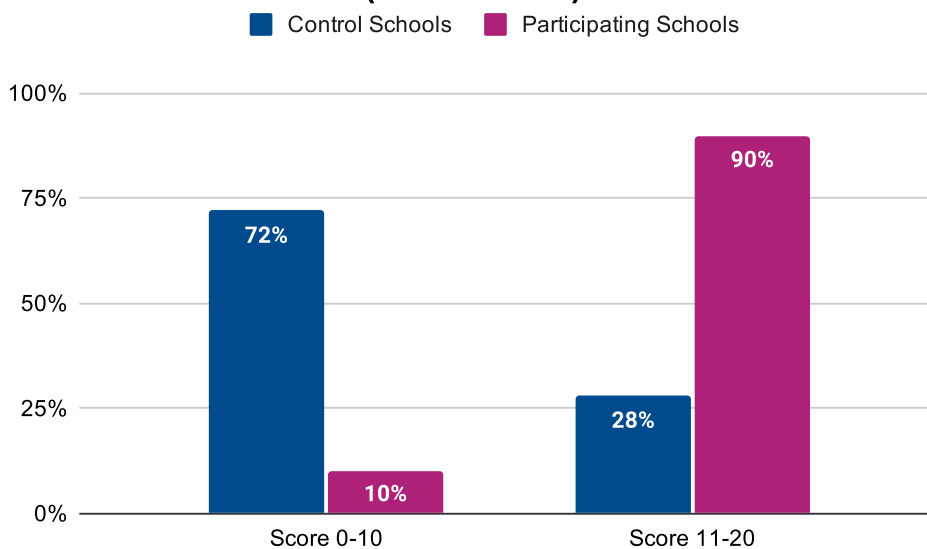
Enhanced teacher effectiveness increases the likelihood that students achieve MPLs in literacy. Teacher skill scale scores improved significantly during the *Literacy Project*, indicating increased teacher effectiveness. This very positive outcome has been mirrored in improved student assessment results.

When comparing literacy assessment results from control schools to those from schools participating in the *Literacy Project*, the disparity between the percentage of students who achieved MPLs is evidence of the impact of SeeBeyondBorders' engagement. **In Ek Phnom the percentage of students in participating schools who achieved MPLs for literacy was 1.8 times higher than in control schools.** This difference was most pronounced in Grade 1, which is a crucial period for establishing the foundational skills which equip students for long-term success.

Writing Assessment

The difference in literacy achievement between SeeBeyondBorders' participating schools and control schools is particularly significant when comparing writing capabilities. A standardised 20-point scoring system is used and the **results show that more than three times as many students in participating schools scored 11-20 points compared to control schools.**

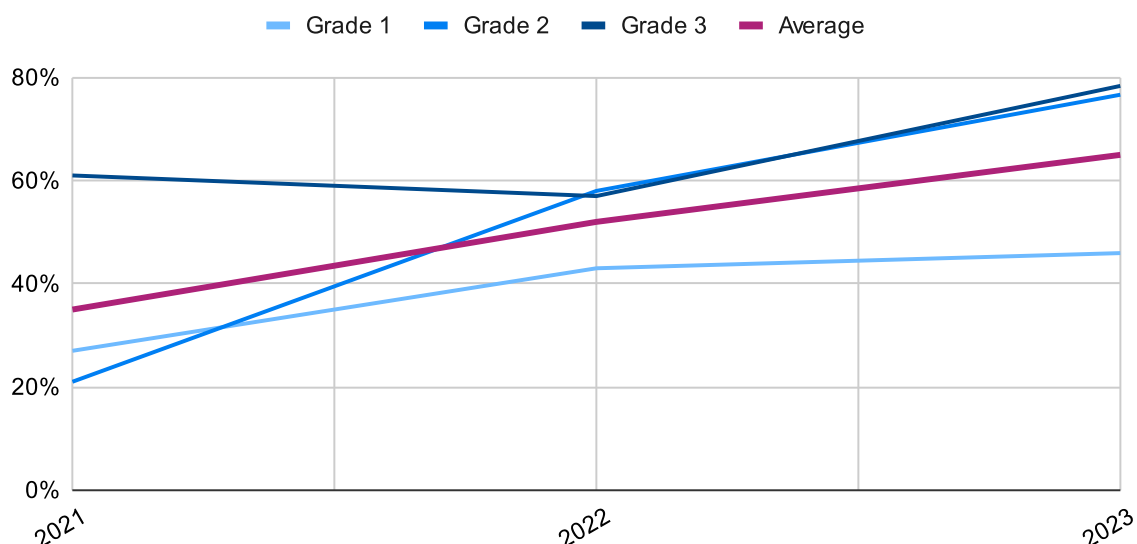
Comparison of Student Writing Assessment Scores (Grades 1-3)



Improvement Over Time

A key commitment of SeeBeyondBorders is to pursue continuous improvement year on year. In terms of the **Literacy Project**, and in spite of challenges posed by COVID-19 and consequent school closures, assessment from 2021-2023 has largely indicated that **increasing numbers of students in participating schools are achieving MPLs as time goes on.**

Percentage of Students Reaching Literacy MPLs: 2021-2023

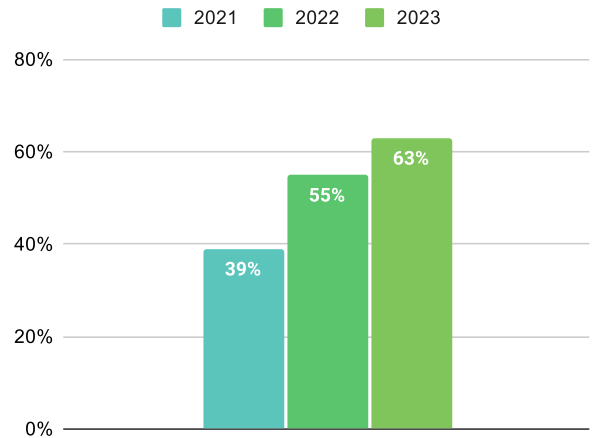


MATHS

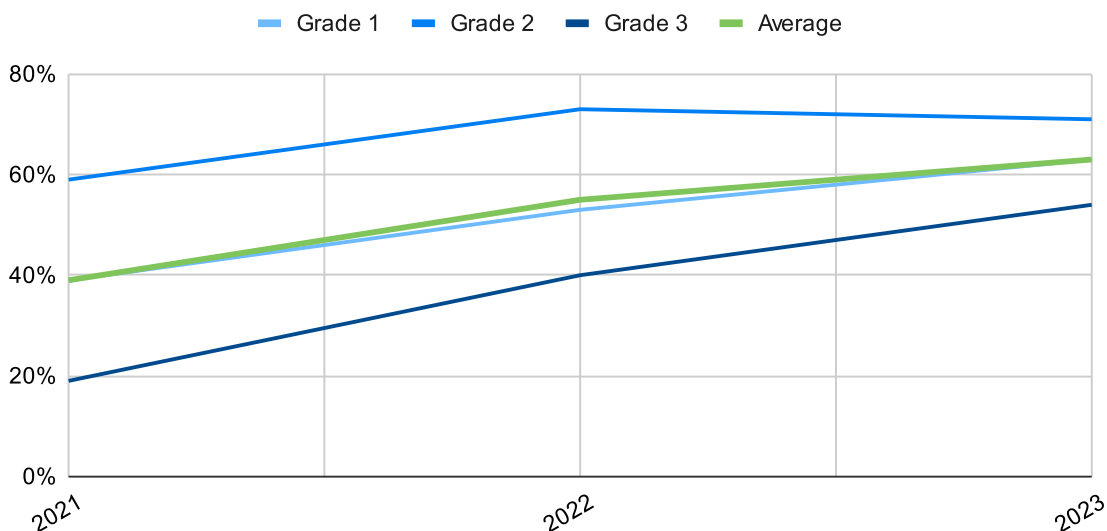
Overall, the data from 2021 to 2023 shows that in schools participating in the SeeBeyondBorders' *Embedding Mentoring Project* which supports maths teaching, the percentage of students achieving maths MPLs has increased. However, there are some significant disparities between the performances in different grades; in particular, a lower percentage of students in Grade 3 have achieved MPLs.

Extended COVID-19 school closures in Cambodia meant that these students missed the most foundational learning in Grade 1, and this has likely contributed to their lower achievement level at Grade 3. However, as shown below, an increasing percentage of students are now achieving MPLs at Grade 3.

Percentage of Students Reaching Maths MPLs: 2021-2023 (Grades 1-3)



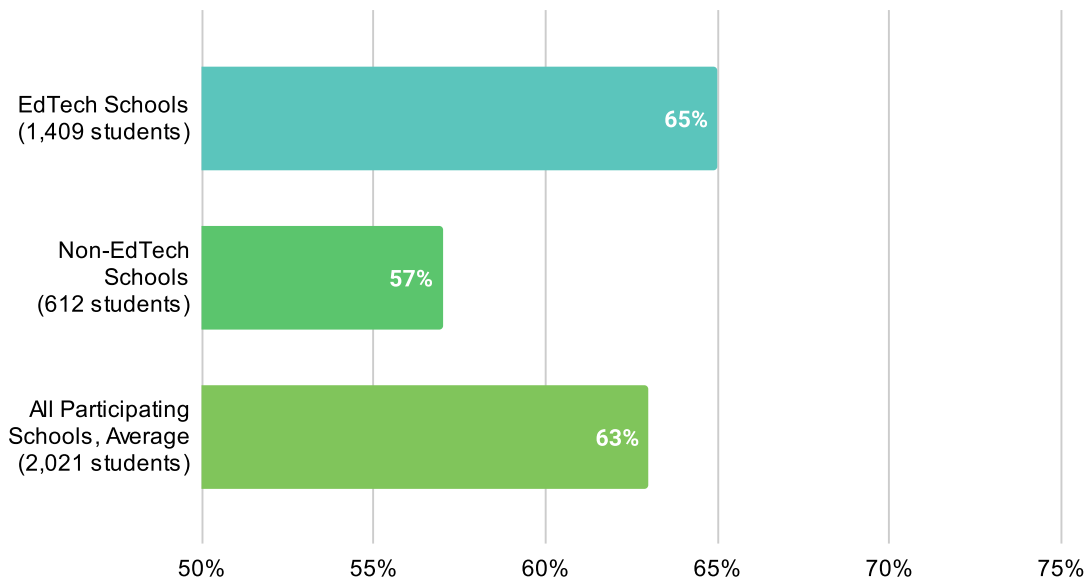
Percentage of Students Reaching Maths MPLs: 2021-2023



Educational Technology

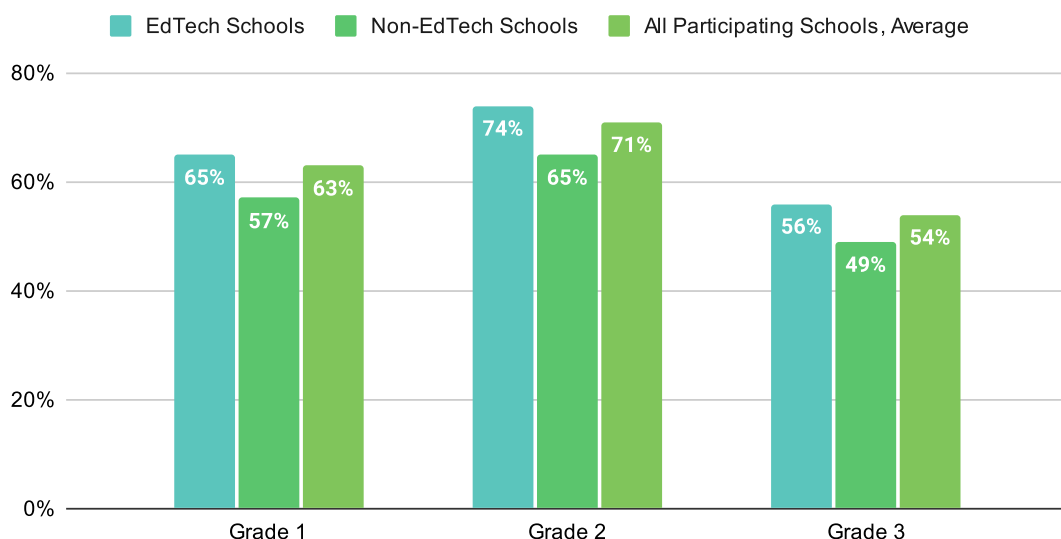
To support and enhance maths teaching, Educational Technology (EdTech) resources have been developed and their impact on student achievement in maths has been observed. While all schools assessed participated in the **Embedding Mentoring Project**, not all were able to take advantage of the EdTech resources. Thus it is possible to compare the performance of students at schools without EdTech and those that were also able to access EdTech resources.

Percentage of Students Reaching Maths MPLs



The difference between the EdTech and non-EdTech schools is relatively small. Previous assessment indicates that SeeBeyondBorders' interventions without Ed Tech lead to improved learning outcomes for students. However, the 2023 data does indicate that access to Ed Tech leads to additional improvement in students' performance in maths. With regard to the percentage of students achieving MPLs in maths, **there is an average difference of 8% between EdTech schools and non-EdTech schools when both are supported by SeeBeyondBorders.** Below is a closer look at the differential impact of EdTech in each grade.

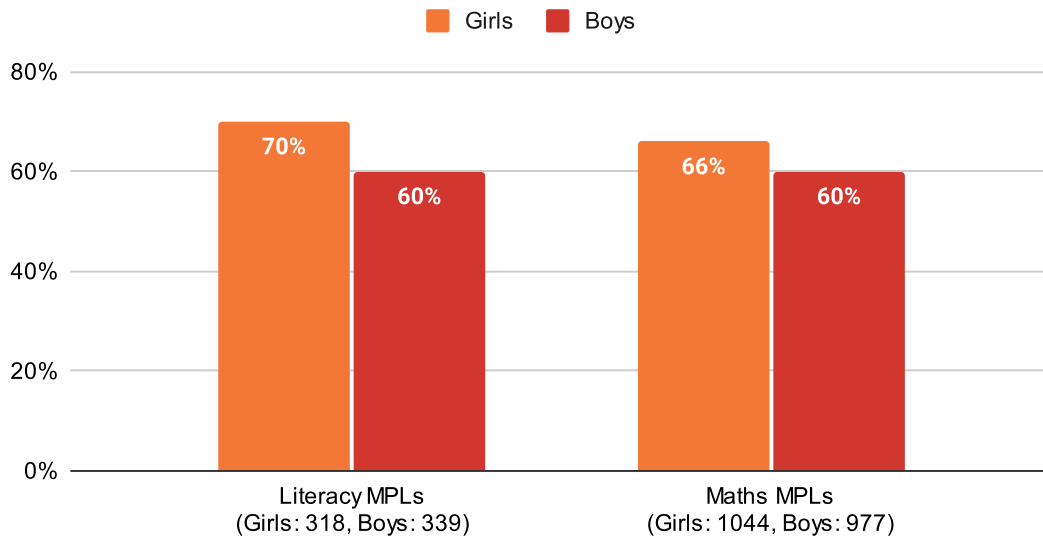
Percentage of Students Reaching Maths MPLs by Grade



ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Girls' and Boys' Performance

Percentage of Students in Participating Schools Reaching MPLs by Gender



The data shows that in all instances investigated, a larger percentage of girls achieve the MPLs compared to boys. While this is true of students in control schools, the difference between girls' and boys' achievement is even greater among students in schools participating in SeeBeyondBorders' programs. This will need to be considered as part of planning for future interventions and informing policy and practice by MoEYS.

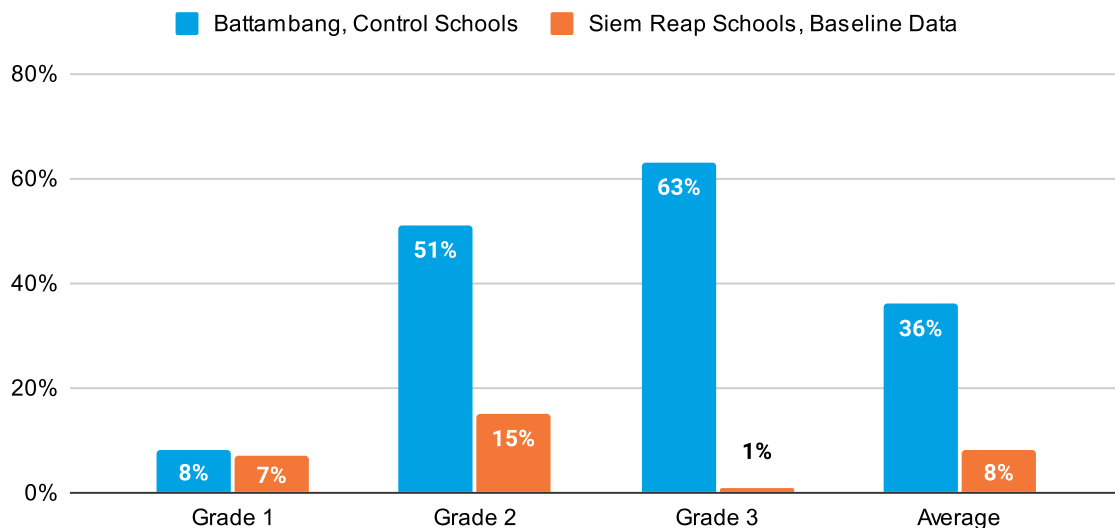




Regional Inequalities

Without any SeeBeyondBorders intervention, there is a highly significant difference between the percentage of students in Battambang (Ek Phnom), and those in Northern Siem Reap (Kralanh and Srei Snam), who achieve MPLs. **In Battambang 36% of students in non-SeeBeyondBorders schools achieved MPLs for literacy compared to just 8% in the new schools which SeeBeyondBorders is working with in Siem Reap from January 2024. This makes a strong case for SeeBeyondBorders to work in Siem Reap to implement the *Transform Education Program* in schools there.**

Percentage of Students Reaching Literacy MPLs: Battambang vs Siem Reap



The two new districts in Siem Reap will certainly pose challenges, especially with regard to literacy. However, they also offer tremendous opportunities to transform education, empowering more students to succeed in primary school, and establishing a solid foundation for better performance in higher grades. SeeBeyondBorders is focused on closing the equity gap by ensuring students in Northern Siem Reap have access to quality education. Interventions are directed to locations where educational inequality is greatest.



CHANGE FOR THE FUTURE

In preparing this report, SeeBeyondBorders recognises that some of the data is imperfect and/or incomplete. However, **it is very clear that the programs being implemented are making a difference to students' learning outcomes, and that their impact is increasing over time. More effective teaching means that more students are able to achieve MPLs.** Some important lessons have been learned which will inform the design and implementation of new programs into the future.

They have also highlighted areas of concern, such as the significant regional learning inequalities, where further research is needed. Longitudinal studies on the effects of improved early learning on success in higher grades and on drop-out rates would be very valuable.

To further strengthen SeeBeyondBorders' work and to have greater influence at policy level to create lasting system change, adequate resources to undertake additional research are needed. **We must be able to clearly demonstrate causation in order to Raise the Bar and deliver real outcomes for the most disadvantaged children and communities in Cambodia.**

However, such research will require significant additional resources which are not currently available to SeeBeyondBorders.

Can you help us to create lasting change?

Should you wish to find out more about our work or this report, please contact SeeBeyondBorders at research@seebeyondborders.org or **(+855)76 66 66 011**.



Our Core Principles

Our Vision	Cambodian children empowered by education.
Our Mission	To enable quality teaching and learning at school.
Our Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect: We listen to, and hear you. • Integrity: We are trustworthy. • Competency: We are skilled and experienced. • Courage: We are committed and resolute. • Changemaker: We support you to create a better future.
Our Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👂 Centrality of local voice and respect for local culture. 🌐 Communities of Practice and Learning. ➡ Teachers and leaders as agents of their own change. 🔍 Action research for enhancement of classroom practice.

"The program is truly impressive and beneficial. Children in this generation have the ability to write descriptively and creatively. The teaching method is very effective, which is why we get to see these great achievements."

Soeurn Searn, Student's Grandmother

"I'm delighted to have the Educational Technology Project in our schools. It is extremely useful that teachers can deliver lessons using technology. I am very proud that teachers can use technology effectively. I find it very beneficial."

Yut Samban, Director of District Office of Education in Ek Phnom

"It is great that SeeBeyondBorders is highlighting the importance of technical teaching again, giving teachers the opportunity to review techniques and fully understand different methodologies used in teaching maths and literacy. Over the next two years, I envision that there will be more student engagement in class as teachers begin to not depend solely on textbooks."

Hun Dara, Officer at District Office of Education in Ek Phnom



SeeBeyondBorders
Change begins with education

SeeBeyondBorders Cambodia

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