



# Introduction

I am pleased to present our Transparency Report for 2017, detailing the impact of our work and the lessons we've learned over the past year. As ever, we seem to learn more from our challenges than from our successes which are what we always strive to replicate.

SeeBeyondBorders strives to be an open, transparent organisation committed to providing detailed information to partners and stakeholders who are involved with or interested in our activities, our approach and what we achieve. Our first Transparency Report for 2016 was well received and we have stuck to the formulae although we have not been quite as detailed in our individual comments.

Officially registered in 2009, SeeBeyondBorders' aim is to empower a generation of Cambodian children by providing access to quality teaching and learning at school. It is a tribute to those who have worked with and supported us, to see how far this organisation has grown since then, how much it has achieved, and how our work has been recognised.

We are always conscious of the complexities of the environment in which we work and of the need to constantly review, reassess and revitalise our programs to suit the changing conditions. Demonstrating effectiveness and sustainability represent the key measures for our programs and the means by which we build our credibility and support with like-minded individuals and organisations.

We know there is a community of donors and civil society organisations committed to a deeper understanding of effective interventions that lead to lasting change in Cambodia. This document is for you.

We entrust our experiences and insights to you in the hope that you will help us go further and achieve more. We hope this provides a transparent insight into our organisational planning and our commitment to continual improvement.

## What this report contains

This report records our key achievements during 2017, and provides details about the challenges we've encountered, what we have learned, and the changes we will be implementing to address those challenges. We would be delighted to receive your feedback, comments or questions.



Edward Shuttleworth  
CEO and Founder



## OUR IMPACT SUMMARY, 2016-17

	2016/17 Total/Avg	2015/16 Total/Avg	2014/15 Total/Avg	Notes
Total schools	55	56	60	This number has fallen in line with attrition of schools but will increase to 89 in 2017/18 with expansion into new districts
Teachers in our programs	259	277	324	Some attrition or teachers moving schools. In 2017/18 this number jumps to 469 as we take on new districts
_ of which mentors	87	89	99	Some attrition or mentors moving schools. In 2017/18 this number increases as we take on new districts
Children directly impacted by teachers in our programs	7,141	7,958	10,322	This number has fallen in line with attrition of schools and teachers but will increase to 13,465 in 2017/18 with expansion into new districts
Average student absence	7%	8%	9%	Cambodian average 16%
Student testing: Grade 1 average pass rate	85%	82%	69%	Baseline pass rate 49% (absences scored zero)
Student testing: Grade 2 average pass rate	82%	77%	61%	Baseline pass rate 24% (absences scored zero)
Student testing: Grade 3 average pass rate	73%	67%	51%	Baseline pass rate 16% (absences scored zero)
Teachers at Level 2 or above in all skills on the teacher scale	99%	78%	22%	All commenced at zero
Teachers at Level 3 or above in all skills on the teacher scale	95%	49%	40%	All commenced at zero
Bronze award winners (Krou Laor)	9	76	160	Teachers only win silver awards once
Silver award winners (Krou Laor)	41	105	54	Teachers only win bronze awards once
Gold award winners (Krou Laor)	41	16	5	Teachers may win gold awards in successive years
Mentors at Level 2 or above on mentor scale	99%	97%	27%	
Mentors at Level 3 or above on mentor scale	98%	84%	41%	

This table presents highlights from the full Impact Scorecard, published in our 2016-17 Annual Report available at [http://www.seebeyondborders.org/uploads/pdfs/2017\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](http://www.seebeyondborders.org/uploads/pdfs/2017_Annual_Report.pdf)



## SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

### CHALLENGE

### STEP CHANGE

**1. For our programs to be sustainable, they have to become the responsibility of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (the Ministry) at every level, from school, through to the national apparatus itself. However, given that assessment processes that do exist, are completely unreliable, how do you get the Ministry to understand the nature of the problem or where to start? Without information, decision making is impossible.**

Naturally, Cambodians do not want to be told by foreigners what to do to “fix” their education system, so influencing reform appropriately is a substantial challenge. It can also be a very frustrating process when improvements are within reach.

**2. Recruiting and training qualified teachers to work as Mentor Development Coordinators (MDCs) is an ongoing challenge for SeeBeyondBorders. We require competent, qualified, and experienced teachers to take on these roles. Existing teachers are reluctant to give up their teaching tenure or the prospect of a pension, and they are sometimes unwilling to travel to remote schools.**

NGOs have recruited teachers with the prospect of higher salaries for many years, but recent teacher pay increases have narrowed the gap. Teachers are able to take two years absence from their positions, but this means they are just reaching a high standard of competence with us when it is time for them to return to their school. We do not get enough return on our investment in just two years.

The awards we have won from UNESCO for our program interventions have given us credibility with the Ministry and an opportunity to speak and be heard. The Minister for Education has come to see our Mentoring program and its impacts himself, and as a result, mentoring is now part of the Ministry’s policy for developing teaching capacity.

But the challenge is to maintain the momentum and see policy become action at a school level. We are allocating an increasing proportion of our resources to help with building *Systemic Capability* and strengthening the Ministry’s capabilities at every level, focusing particularly on the systems that support assessment and mentoring.

At the same time, we need to maintain our connections to the grassroots, to continue demonstrating what is possible and providing a showcase for Ministry officials who want to see examples of good practice.

While we do not want to put the education system under any further pressure by taking teachers away from their schools, those with the capacity to work as MDCs can make a significant contribution to teaching and learning across many teachers and schools.

We are investigating several options to address this issue including: offering our staff the opportunity to study overseas; providing MDCs with dedicated coaching; and providing formal certification with the aim of having that accredited under the Ministry’s evolving policy on teacher career pathways. We are also considering reallocating one of our MDCs to a dedicated internal training role.

Other alternatives include investigating opportunities to recruit teachers from secondary schools who have a low teaching load. We will also discuss with DOEs the release of staff to work part-time with SeeBeyondBorders.

## SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGES

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**3. After six year working with teachers and mentors within a district, our program moves to a Maintenance phase – an Interim step designed to maintain the progress that has been made until the Ministry’s own reform process assumes responsibility for teacher development and mentoring. During this phase, school-based Senior Mentors who have been trained, take on the responsibility for training new teachers. These Senior Mentors will receive further training in the development of new mentors. We wait for the Ministry to implement the Mentoring and Teacher Career Pathways policies which will overtake our own work and embed the processes we have initiated**

**We face two challenges at this point. The first is to explain exactly what mentoring is. While the Ministry has latched on to mentoring as a strategy that is working, there is no common understanding of what the process is and models are being proposed which are actually not mentoring.**

**The second challenge is how to equip those in positions outside the school but in the broader education apparatus, to support mentoring at a school level and continue the development of teaching and learning.**

Despite the work being done on decentralisation and deconcentration, District Offices of Education (DOEs) have very limited budgets with which to instigate learning development initiatives. If we do not fund on-going mentor- based initiatives, their continuation relies on the momentum created in the first six years of our programs. It is therefore imperative for DOEs to be part of the mentor development process from the outset when we start delivering training and working with mentors so that they can prioritise this activity directly in the Maintenance phase. We need to focus more effectively on involving them in every step

Given there is now added interest in mentoring, we also need to be more proactive with other parts of the Ministry at a provincial level, including the Provincial Offices of Education (POEs) and the Provincial Teacher Training Colleges (PTTCs), involving them in our programs from their inception and have them participate in the training and mentoring processes.

Despite our concerns as to shortcomings in the project design, we also need to engage with the pilot UNICEF project called Cluster Strengthening which aims to increase resourcing for mentoring.

We will also build on our relationships with the Inspection Department and see if we can influence the scope of their work to strengthen school assessment as a National Assessment model is introduced. Our aim is to ensure there is an effective feedback loop, with information provided to both DOE and schools following inspections.



## PROGRAM CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGE

### STEP CHANGE

**4. Mentors are encouraged to take on other mentoring relationships, beyond the teachers who have graduated from the Core program, once they are into the second three-year phase of the mentoring program. The challenge is how to assess the impact of this initiative on both the mentors and the teachers they choose to mentor. We have no baseline with which to measure the impact, and these additional teachers are outside the parameters of the program.**

It is testament to the success of this intervention that mentors choose to take on additional teachers to mentor, and perhaps that is enough. However we will look at ways to quantify how often this happens and how we can encourage more mentoring of non-program participants. As part of this process we will design some simple questions to identify benefits and challenges for these non-program teachers.

**5. We have found bringing parents into the school and giving them a sense they are part of their children's education makes a significance difference to the contribution by both the community and the teachers. It is challenging to get parents to come and to participate, particularly if they are illiterate. Further, it is challenging to have teachers embrace the idea of involvement as they are nervous about taking on additional responsibilities.**

We have had some success when DOEs invite parents to meet teachers at opening ceremonies that mark the beginning of the school year. Teachers have been asked to prepare a brief summary of what the children in their class will learn, how parents can help their children, and how communication books can pass between teachers and parents to update both parties on important developments through the year. These sessions have been well attended and we are planning to introduce more opportunities for parents to link with teachers. Ultimately, we aim to have teachers provide specific feedback to individual parents on the learning progress of their children as part of the School Development Program.

### Spotlight: PILOT improved toilet facilities for girls

According to the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport's Education Statistics, 2016/2017, one third of schools in Cambodia do not have any toilet facilities, and half lack a reliable water supply (p. 22). Even when toilet facilities are provided, many boys do not use them, preferring to urinate in the school grounds. A UNICEF study *Supporting the Rights of Girls and Women Through Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) in the East Asia and Pacific Region: Realities, progress and opportunities* (2016), reports that "Girls whose opinions have been sought through formative research in Cambodia... reported multiple challenges in the school environment... including reduced concentration and participation in class, a range of self-reported health problems, and absenteeism, whether for lessons or for whole days. In Cambodia, 41 per cent of the girls said they miss days from class" (p. 16).

#### Pilot - new urinal and private toilet for girls

To provide improved toilet facilities for boys, and at the same time, enable existing toilets to be allocated to girls to provide them with more privacy, we helped the community in an Ek Phnom school to build a new urinal, the first such facility in the District and anecdotally in the Province.

We will monitor use of the facility to ascertain if this model should be considered for other schools in which we work.



## PROGRAM CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGE

### STEP CHANGE

**6. Our Health and Sport programs are eagerly anticipated by school principals, but keeping the community interested and involved can often be a challenge when we hand over complete responsibility to the school/community, typically after two years.**

Teachers will continue with some health programming as it links to the curriculum, and they can do this without the community. Sport is more of a challenge. Even though it is also a curriculum requirement, sport has less practical appeal, particularly for older teachers.



We believe part of the reason we encounter challenges with community involvement in Health and Sport programs is that the community is not sufficiently invested and not sufficiently involved in the setup of the program. They do not see the connection between these programs and the health and wellbeing of their own children, and don't see there are actions that can be taken to improve health and reduce the risk of future problems.

Commune Women's and Children's Committees (CWCCs) generally consist of motivated individuals. Rather than simply involving them in meetings, we need to get them actively participating in the schools and taking more responsibility for the health and wellbeing of the children.

We plan to improve our School Development Planning program by looking more specifically at needs of schools with regards to organisational capabilities. The objective will be to identify opportunities to link activities in schools to the capabilities or perhaps the needs of the community. This might include tying in existing commune-based structures such as the CWCC and the local Health Centre, who have a vested interest in programs promoting health, with school activities.

We have now included a session to discuss student wellbeing in our Core teacher training program. While more wide-reaching than just a conversation about sport and health, wellbeing will certainly link to initiatives in these areas. We will review the outcomes of these sessions and see whether these also promote better engagement with the CWCCs and identify whether any initiatives are developed to provide a positive impact on the wellbeing of children in school.

**7. Conditional Cash Payment (CCP) students inevitably carry a high risk of drop out because of their social circumstances. Project managers have recognised that if we select candidates from less challenging family and personal circumstances, we can achieve a lower dropout rate, a key metric for assessing our CCP program.**

A central tenet of this program has always been to select children from the most difficult situations and are at the greatest risk of dropping out. We do not target "clever" kids, or select "better" families. Clearly we need to re-emphasise that while we need to track the dropout rates for these children, this metric is no absolute measure of the success of the program.

## PROGRAM CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGE

### STEP CHANGE

**8. As discussed above in relation to Health and Sport, CCP committee members sometimes display low levels of commitment when it comes to following up with families who are receiving conditional cash payments.**

**If the CCP committee is not functioning properly, the challenge is for our staff to withhold payment and to follow up themselves. It is potentially dangerous, for a number of reasons, for staff members to get involved.**

We need to make continuation of any CCP program within a school dependent on the commitment of the associated CCP committee. If members are not able to meet their commitments, they must identify replacements who are acceptable to the rest of the committee, otherwise, the program must be discontinued.

Project managers will need to monitor the involvement of committee members, and metrics need to be developed so if we need to make the decision to close a program, however reluctantly, it can be made objectively.

### Spotlight: Gender

This is the first time SeeBeyondBorders has specifically addressed gender, even though we have always collected data on gender in the schools where we work. In the coming year, we will introduce several initiatives to make a contribution towards realizing the right to education for all.

We recognise inequality will not be addressed simply by achieving parity in enrolment. Other areas of education impacted by gender inequality include cultural norms about the status of women, under-representation of women in leadership, inappropriate infrastructure, and gender stereotyping in textbooks.

This is a complex area, and with limited resources, SeeBeyondBorders must focus its efforts on specific actions that will achieve the most impact. However, we must also aim to have a broader impact, ensuring issues around gender are considered in all aspects of our programs. We must also lead by example.

SeeBeyondBorders can influence the treatment of women and girls in schools, particularly on issues around gender norms, values and attitudes, and teaching and learning practices. Starting next year, we have identified two specific initiatives to increase our focus on practical gender equality issues.

The first involves supporting Girl Councils in selected schools, to help children learn about menstruation and to provide specific support to girls reaching puberty and having their first periods. Inadequate facilities, cultural stigma around menstruation, and the lack of support for young girls experiencing their period for the first time is a significant cause of absenteeism and diminished self-esteem. We will work with Day For Girls to provide appropriate training to teachers who will be responsible for this kind of teaching to girls. We will also provide Day for Girls kits and work with the Girl Councils to support any girls who have questions or difficulties with menstruation.

The second initiative addresses toilet infrastructure. We have built a boys' urinal in an Ek Phnom school, and will pilot designation of an existing toilet for girls. This will alleviate some of the pressure on very limited toilet facilities typical of most Cambodian schools, and provide more privacy, particularly for older girls.



## INTERNAL CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGE

### STEP CHANGE

**9. Our programs are designed to be implemented in a consistent manner in different districts, with feedback from each district fed into program improvements across all locations.**

**However, in relation to subjective evaluations, it is very difficult to standardize the approach across staff and across districts. It is also difficult to standardize teaching skill evaluations by Mentors, and inconsistencies remain.**

We've identified the need to ensure we get staff from different locations together more frequently to discuss and agree on standards.

In all locations, we are developing senior mentors whose role it is to train teachers and work with mentors. We need to build-in opportunities for both our staff and the senior mentors to work across districts. In this way, they will see the standards being achieved and the grades being allocated in other districts. These issues can then be discussed and a common understanding of standards agreed.

Additional training needs will be identified as a result of cross pollination initiatives between districts, but this should also help bring consistency, which is vital for the credibility of the programs.

**10. Based on feedback from stakeholders, our suite of programs evolves and develops each year. Keeping staff current across the suite of programs they need to implement can be a challenge, especially where technical backgrounds differ, such as is the case with Project Managers and our mentor and teacher trainers.**

Given the difficulty of obtaining funds for capability development, we often do not focus sufficiently on staff training. However, in a year when we seem to be busier than ever, we must not neglect essential staff training.

We have appointed a member of staff to take responsibility for HR, and have a new person joining us with responsibility for Monitoring and Compliance. Together, these people will be responsible for internal staff training.



## OTHER CONTINUING CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGE

### STEP CHANGE

**11. As the number of staff in the organisation increases, and the variety of projects they undertake broadens, the need for more sophisticated software to track operational outputs and associated time allocation against operating plans, becomes more important.**

Our challenge is not only the development of our tools. Staff training will also be necessary to ensure the implementation is successful and data is collected on the time taken to complete tasks.

We have undertaken a limited review of project management software tools that could assist our planning. We have determined we cannot integrate the tracking of staff time, with what has been achieved against operating plans, in a single piece of software.

We have decided to introduce Harvest time tracking in the current year, and to continue searching for a project management tool that will utilise data from Harvest and help us better keep abreast of the operating plan in terms of outputs achieved. These initiatives will require appropriate training.

**12. A constant issue is the collection of an appropriate quantity of data that can be analysed and utilised to provide actionable information. In some areas we collect too much data, in others not enough.**

Ensuring staff understand why they are undertaking a certain procedure, why it is important, and how it leads to the overall objective of a program, continues to be an area where training is required. With better training, we can benefit from valuable input from those closely involved in data gathering.

**13. We intentionally lend resources rather than allocating resources to schools. However, we continue to lose resources and equipment when it is on loan.**

We recognise that if we are too strict with resource losses, the resources we supply will not be used. However, if we don't seem to care if resources are lost, then nor will the teachers. Relationships built on trust are vital, and our staff need this constantly reinforced in order to maintain balance on this issue.

**14. Accurate and reliable data on student absenteeism has always been very difficult to collect. We have tried a number of different approaches, all of which have involved considerable time and have not been completely effective. We need to identify how to have teachers take this responsibility more seriously.**

There is no consequence for teachers, schools or families from the record of student absenteeism, and teachers do not understand why this is important. We need to consider including a session in our training, as part of the student wellbeing initiative, explaining to teachers the importance of maintaining these records.

We need to determine how schools can link the absenteeism records with the duties of the CWCC or other commune-based groups who have responsibility for child safety.

## OTHER CONTINUING CHALLENGES

### CHALLENGE

### STEP CHANGE

**15. Our staff are regularly asked to attend school ceremonies and as a matter of custom are expected to take a gift or pay money. These ceremonies are organised for a range of reasons, some of which are commendable, but others are for less legitimate reasons. For example, ceremonies are organised to celebrate children who are awarded 1st, 2nd or 3rd in their class, but these rankings are completely arbitrary are not based on any reliable assessments.**

We need to encourage staff to attend school ceremonies and build trusting relationships with the local education authorities. However, they need to be aware of which ceremonies we support and which we do not.

Staff should not be out of pocket when they are invited to attend school ceremonies, so we will develop a standard SeeBeyondBorders contribution for such ceremonies.

In addition, we will try to influence practices such as class rankings so they are based on objective assessments and can be of greater value to the community!

## Spotlight: Assessment of Early Grade Learning

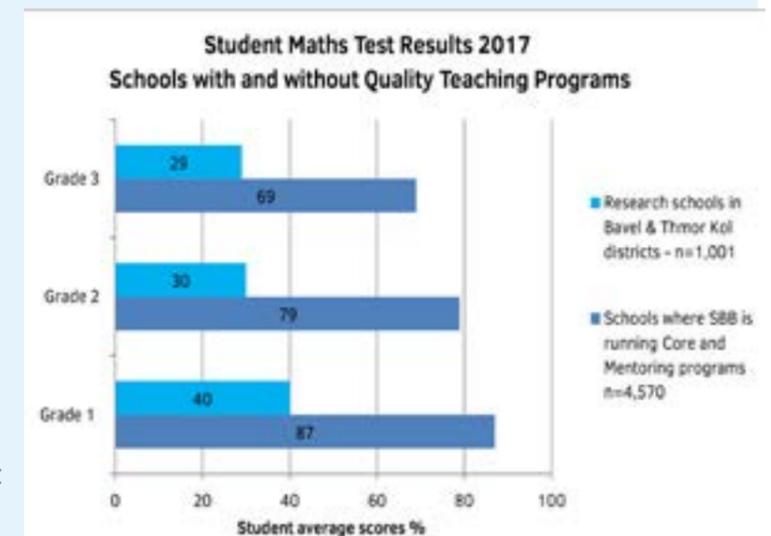
In June 2017, SeeBeyondBorders conducted research to assess, within a sample of rural primary schools, the level of student proficiency, the level of teachers' subject knowledge and the level of teachers' pedagogical skills, in relation to the mathematics curriculum. The research focused on grades 1-3, in 20 schools in Battambang Province, and involved 1001 students and 58 teachers.

### Findings of the research

- \* Student testing revealed very poor understanding of the basic mathematical concepts included in the grades 1-3 curriculum. Pass rates in grade 1 were 36%, falling to 7% by grade 3.
- \* In a test of teacher mathematics knowledge (questions grades 1-3 students should be able to answer), 29% of teachers failed to achieve a mark above 50% and the average score was 65%.
- \* Classroom observations of teacher practice showed that only one of the 58 teachers demonstrated competence in all six basic teaching skills assessed, and most teachers were unable to demonstrate any of the skills to any level of proficiency.

As can be seen from the chart, the test results for students in this study are in stark contrast with the results for students in schools in SeeBeyondBorders' Quality Teaching program.

The full report is available on our website at <http://bit.ly/EarlyGradeLearning>



## LOOKING AHEAD

**Systemic capability** This will be a key focus for us in the next 12 months, as we strive to support the Cambodian Government with promoting effective reform policies and having them implemented at a grassroots level. We aim to leverage our relationships with Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MOEYS) at district, provincial and national levels to help identify effective approaches to implementing reforms so they reach individual schools while developing relevant skills at every level.

Amongst the systemic initiatives we'll be pursuing in 2018 will be:

- Working in conjunction with UNICEF on their cluster-based mentoring to strengthen its effectiveness
- Working with the schools inspection division of MOEYS to provide enhanced information for schools
- Assisting with implementing the National Assessment framework in showcase schools
- Developing a training package in conjunction with UNESCO and the Ministry that will be rolled out by the Ministry to five provinces using funding from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE - 3).

**Literacy program pilot** In November 2017, we launched a pilot Khmer literacy program in two classes in one rural primary school, in partnership with local teachers and District Office of Education officials. The objective is to see if a variation on the current teaching methodology can teach Cambodian children how to read more fluently in a shorter time. It is an intensive process involving our international and local staff as well as local teachers on almost a daily basis, as techniques are discussed and trialled and cost effective resources are developed. We will be rigorously monitoring and evaluating this 9 month program, and based on the results, plan to broaden the program to additional schools in the 2018/19 school year where the focus will be on how to scale a program that we know works from a technical standpoint.

**New district expansion** Having moved into the Maintenance phase of our Quality Teaching program in two of our districts in 2016/17, we are expanding our program into 19 schools in the Banteay Srey district of Siem Reap province in 2017/18. We will work with 82 new teachers and 30 new mentors, and 3,739 additional students will benefit from involvement in our program.

**Relationship with Ireland** Since October 2017, we have been developing relationships with a range of education, teacher training and teaching organisations in Ireland. A delegation from SeeBeyondBorders will visit Ireland in March 2018 to learn about the Irish education system and teacher professional development there, and to showcase our work in Cambodia. We look forward to further developing our links with Ireland, and to investigating opportunities for exchange and professional development, as well as funding and cultural exchange.

**Training and staff development** Development of staff capabilities will be a high priority again in 2018. We will be investigating opportunities for staff professional development in conjunction with organisations in Ireland, focusing on providing additional training for Mentor Development Co-ordinators, and staff involved with the literacy program, as well as more general behavioural and project management training.

**Team building** Building on a number of successful corporate visit programs in previous years, in 2018 we will commence promotion of our new team building program that combines a transformative team coaching program with an immersive trip to work with SeeBeyondBorders in Cambodia. We expect this program will challenge and engage corporate teams and deliver real business results.

Along with these new initiatives, we will be continuing to act on the lessons learned, as detailed in this report, to deliver the best quality support to Cambodian teachers, students and communities wherever we can.

Thank you for your support in 2017. We look forward to continuing the journey with you in future.

## GET IN TOUCH

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The logo for SeeBeyondBorders features the words "SeeBeyond" in a dark blue, sans-serif font, followed by "Borders" in a lighter blue, sans-serif font. A vertical line of the same lighter blue color runs through the letter 'd' in "Beyond", extending above and below the text.

*Change begins with education.*