

Cambodian Ministry of Education,
Youth and Sport visit to
ireland 2020



STUDY AND COLLABORATION VISIT TO IRELAND

OVERVIEW

Three representatives from the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport partook in a study and collaboration visit to Ireland in March. The Ministry representatives spent eight days in Ireland. Those who travelled were Dr. Dy Samsideth (Deputy Director-General for Education), Dr. Chankoulika Bo (Director of Policy Department), and Kann Puthy (Deputy Director of Primary Education Department). **The Ministry were accompanied by members of SeeBeyondBorders leadership team** including founders Edward Shuttleworth and Catherine Shuttleworth, Pheung Pov (Country Manager) and Colm Byrne (Director of Development). Ministry costs associated with the visit were supported by Dublin City University board member Liavan Mallin.



The Kingdom of Wonder meets The Island of Saints and Scholars

WHAT TOOK PLACE



Sideth offers his insights on improving education

The visit provided an opportunity for the Cambodian delegation to share, learn, advocate and engage with key stakeholders in Irish education and international development. The visit supported the strengthening of bilateral relations between Cambodian and Irish education departments, educational institutions and government agencies.

While in Ireland the group saw best practice teaching and education in action in schools and teaching colleges. They met several key stakeholders and influencers in Ireland including the Director General of Irish Aid Ruairi De Burca, the Chief Inspector at the Department of Education Harold Hislop, Irish Government Minister Finian McGrath and the Principal of the Donabate Changemaker School Maeve Corish.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE VISIT

(7TH OF MARCH UNTIL THE 15TH OF MARCH)

RECEPTION LUNCH

SATURDAY - DAY ONE

After arriving in Ireland the group travelled to Portmarnock for an informal reception lunch which was attended by Irish educators who have been to Cambodia. The week in Ireland provided a multitude of platforms to advocate for increased support for education and development issues in Cambodia.



A gathering in Dublin after a long journey from Cambodia

ORIENTATION

SUNDAY – DAY TWO

An orientation session was held in Donabate Educate Together School. Principal, Maeve Cornish, provided a tour of the school. The school has Cambodia and active global citizenship at its core.



Maeve Cornish has been to Cambodia five times and believes in teaching children about the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

LESSON OBSERVATION

MONDAY – DAY THREE

The group began the school week by experiencing some teaching in a real Irish setting. They observed lessons in grades one and two in Francis Street. Francis Street is a school in the centre of Dublin.



Francis Street and Donabate were two of the first Ashoka Changemaker Schools on the island of Ireland

THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND

MONDAY – DAY THREE

John Walshe, Ireland's foremost education journalist, spent time in Cambodia during the 1980s reporting on the refugee crisis. John provided the delegation team with an overview of the Irish education system and was able to draw on this experience to explore parallels between how the systems in both countries have evolved. Following John's presentation Sideth responded with an introduction to the Cambodian education system. Puthy gave a presentation on school leadership in Cambodia for the Centre of School Leadership in Ireland. Leo Casey, Director of Teaching and Learning at the National College of Ireland, and Koulika completed a busy day by examining how they could collaborate to conduct research to enhance pedagogy.



The day in the National College of Ireland was busy

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY (DCU)

TUESDAY – DAY FOUR

There were several collaborative question and answer sessions held in DCU Institute of Education. Topics included measuring teacher performance, reviving minority languages, the educational research landscape in DCU and teaching about social justice.



Catherine Byrne was the chairperson for the day in DCU. Koulika presents her with a gift from Cambodia

CAMBODIA IRELAND CHANGEMAKER NETWORK EVENT

TUESDAY – DAY FOUR (PM)

The Cambodia Ireland Changemaker Network hosted an evening of debate, information and culture. A panel discussion took place with representatives from the Ministry, SeeBeyondBorders and Irish education stakeholders. [Click here to view a glimpse of the evening on video.](#)



The panel discuss collaboration between Cambodia and Ireland

MET WITH CHIEF INSPECTORATE TEAM AT THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TUESDAY – DAY FOUR

The group met with the Chief Inspectorate Team at the Headquarters of the Department of Education in Dublin. The Department of Education has an international unit and has a partnership agreement with other national education departments in South East Asia.

MEETING WITH IRISH AID

TUESDAY – DAY FOUR (PM)

The Group met the Director General of Irish Aid, Ruairi de Burca in Iveagh House. Topics discussed included systemic support for Cambodia, similarities and differences between the two nations, making aid work more effectively and partnership for achieving sustainable development.



Ruairi de Burca listens as Sideth presents the case for doing things a little bit differently in development

MEETING WITH IRISH GOVERNMENT MINISTER FINIAN MCGRATH

THURSDAY – DAY SIX

A visit to the Irish Parliament encompassed a meeting with Irish Minister Finian McGrath. Minister McGrath has special responsibility for people with disabilities and is a former school principal. The hour long meeting included discussions on Irish Aid, the importance of a teacher in society and the provision of education for those with disabilities.



Koulika informed the Minister as to why investing in Cambodia is value for time and money

Before returning to Cambodia a reflection session took place in Malahide, Dublin. This meeting provided an opportunity for some 'blue sky thinking' and an examination as to what had been learned.



Tom Costello and Brid Hennessy are heavily involved in SeeBeyondBorders Ireland

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THE VISIT

COVID-19 has had a profound impact on Cambodia, Ireland and their respective education systems. Schools in both countries remain closed and the economic impacts are hard to quantify at this stage. While much has changed in the four months since the visit, there remains a shared commitment from all stakeholders to work together to improve Cambodian education. Notable steps since the visit include:



- **SeeBeyondBorders and the Ministry's Department of Policy have agreed a draft partnership agreement which form the basis of future collaborative initiatives.** This agreement seeks to engage researchers and policy analysts in Ireland and internationally to support the work of the Department of Policy and further the cause of Cambodian education.
- Since the visit SeeBeyondBorders has engaged in **follow up dialogue** with representatives from the **Irish Department of Education, the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, DCU and the National College of Ireland.**
- **SeeBeyondBorders is now a formally recognised organisation in Ireland** and has appointed a board of directors in Ireland. Directors include Maeve Corish and Tom Costello. SeeBeyondBorders is the only Irish charity dedicated exclusively to improving education in Cambodia.
- **A Research Coordinator for SeeBeyondBorders, Aisling Costello, has been appointed in Ireland to build on the success of the visit. Aisling was living in Cambodia prior to the outbreak of COVID and has a PhD from DCU.** She will play a central role in scoping research funding and developing links between Cambodian and Irish institutions and departments.



Holding the flag high in County Dublin

BUILDING ON THE VISIT – WHAT LIES AHEAD



Country Manager, Pov, will be studying for his master's degree in Ireland in 2021

DEPARTMENT OF POLICY

By expanding and enhancing its research and policy network, SeeBeyondBorders is ensuring it is in the best possible position to deliver quality support for the Department of Policy. A working group will now be established with representatives from the Department and SeeBeyondBorders as the next step to operationalise the partnership agreement.

MIGHTY OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

SeeBeyondBorders will further the scope and depth of its connections in Ireland. Future partnership and collaborative initiatives await. SeeBeyondBorders would like to discuss with the Ministry how to build further on the success of the visit. Key considerations include not just what programs are attractive to donors but crucially what will actually work in the Cambodian context and deliver sustainable improvements. All activities must be Global South led and in keeping with the contextual needs in Cambodia. Other models of systemic educational development have been used in Vietnam and these must be explored to see if lessons can be learned from that experience.



The focus remains on partnership for development

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