One of the most important methods to help the public understand the difference between rumors and facts, propaganda and hard data is to give them the ability to conduct valid research and to disseminate these scientific findings within the society.

Summary Report

Cambodia remains a developing country with a poor research environment. This is partly due to the destruction of scholars and academic infrastructure in the 1970's by the Khmer Rouge regime and the many subsequent years of rebuilding riddled with political and social instability. It is further exacerbated by the contemporary political environment of fear and mistrust that discourages open public participation in political processes and hampers productive research. The majority of the research conducted in Cambodia is sponsored or carried out by national and international NGOs, foreign academics, or consultants working for donor organizations, who all note the difficulties associated with gathering reliable and high quality data in this environment. There are other structural challenges that inhibit high quality data and a vibrant research environment, related to international donor research initiatives, which we discuss in our report. The most pressing deficit in Cambodia's research environment, however, remains the lack of well-trained local researchers and the limited academic infrastructure.

Our research project 'Doing Research in Cambodia: Making Models that Build Capacity' explores research activities conducted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIS), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Think Tanks, and investigates the individual and institutional factors that impact the culture of doing social science research in Cambodia today. This in-depth study pioneers novel approaches to research. Through interviews, focus groups and surveys, our research project has been able to map the challenges and opportunities in Cambodia's unique research environment. In addition, the project includes a training program for young Cambodian students where they learn about research design and data collection. And finally, our team has constructed a unique online platform that aims to connect national and international scholars in order to collaborate, exchange publications and share research opportunities. Our results show that the research environment in Cambodia is in transition.

We proudly present our report with the hope that it will serve as a stepping-stone and as a foundation for future generations of researchers in Cambodia. The report includes in-depth

respondent quotes which provide a concrete understanding of the current research environment, as well as recommendations for further research and policy initiatives. It is our hope that this research project will contribute to the Cambodian research environment in transition, including encouraging training, funding and networking opportunities among researchers, so that young people will not only think of research as a set of academic requirements, but rather as an opportunity for creative and independent thinking.

Recommendations

Donor states and organizations

- General sectoral support is needed, but to do so donors must improve coordination; donor activities can complement and build off one another across institutions to achieve long-term results despite short-term projects.
- Create long-term projects that can actually build capacity through consistency and development of key infrastructures. These projects must include salaries for local or home grown researchers and key mentorship positions.
- Academic research is considered by many policy makers and NGOs to be of limited quality or relevance. There is a need for mechanisms that promote more timely dissemination of sound research results prior to publication, and increased frequency and quality of engagements such as workshops bringing together academics, NGOs and the government.
- Ensure access to current academic journals. This could be achieved through direct funding for subscriptions as part of long-term capacity building or through initiatives binding well-endowed university or research institutions that holds subscriptions to databases should be bound to support partner institutions in developing nations by sharing subscriptions.
- Funded post-graduate research posts at local universities or various NGO's, would provide a tangible incentive to the most promising students, providing financial prospects after graduation.
- Provide adequate funding and mechanisms for research dissemination. Reports must be produced in the language of the host country and dissemination must reach all stakeholders, including policy makers.
- Support innovative dissemination tactics like, public service announcements, educational posters, or even an entertainment television program which shows a research team in action.
- Capacity must be streamlined in donor programming as essential to the aims of local ownership and social and democratic accountability. Donor programming should aim to foster collaboration between HEIs and CSOs in training, research, publication, and dissemination.

Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS)

- The MoEYS needs to clarify its role in the promotion of the research environment by procuring and managing the distribution of funds to support research and capacity development in universities.

- Include self-evaluation and research into ministry practices as part of research policy development.
- It should facilitate research dissemination that will reach diverse audiences (including targeting particular Ministries; Khmer language publications for public consumption; central repository for research).
- Institute policies that confirm professorial ranking and commensurate salary packages for advanced scholars to incentivize research.
- Forms in application for research funding should be clear, user friendly and easy to complete.
- Eschew blame on researchers for limited output in favor of creative solutions and structural adjustments. Support these efforts by effective decentralization, and rewarding proactive efforts at the institutional level to creatively build research capacity in spite of structural limitations.
- Students report that research is important for both social- and self-improvement. This ethos is not represented in any of the policy documents we have seen thus far and the Ministry would do well to include these along with the economic concerns that are prevalent.
- Even when universities receive funds, research does not advance. Policy interventions could increase efforts toward building institutional capacity to manage funds, design and implement research projects, and effectively disseminate research findings.
- Focus research funding toward mentorship initiatives and sustainable forums for engagement such rather than individual events. Mentors can assist with managing funds, research proposal and design, and disseminating findings.
- The ministry should promote collaboration between public and private universities in order to promote the culture of doing research in Cambodia through information sharing.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

- Emphasize collaboration and strengthen partnerships between public and private universities on human capital development and research capacity building.
- Promote academic freedom for lecturers and students in order to empower them to think critically and do research on critical issues pertaining society.
- Administrators must move beyond blaming local researchers for not valuing research and researchers must move beyond telling victimizing narratives of heavy workloads and lack of funding. Change is difficult if either structural conditions or individual capacities are held wholly responsible for any adverse situation.
- All institutions that provide incentives for publication, as lump payments or incremental salary increases tied to publications, should inquire into how many faculty members have received salary increase or utilized the publication funds, the criteria for application, the publication of the opportunity, and any factors hindering use to ensure that their efforts bear the desired fruit.
- Develop and implement formal research policies that reflect institutional capacity. Be clear about where policy implementation will require increased capacity and make the capacity development part of the policy.
- Research into institutional and human capacities should precede all policy documents

in order to allocate funds appropriately.

- Put dissemination plans at the forefront of research projects. If the findings go nowhere, what use is the research? Increase use of and support for professional and issue-based networks by faculty members.
- Begin research related courses in the Foundation Year (core courses mandated by ACC to first year student). This gives students adequate time to learn and practice their skills to produce a research project in their final year. Third-year research courses do not allow enough exposure to foster engagement.
- Research is a desired quality among students and has social capital. If your university has the money to hire international PhD students as teachers, encourage (and facilitate) their research activities and students will seek out your university for its quality reputation.
- Universities need to understand the desires and limitations of their own faculty; both excessive workload and insufficient capacity limit the ability to conduct research.
- Even when funds are available limitations on research activities of faculty may be limited by low capacities, but they may also follow from structural constraints, especially time limitations. Perhaps some research funds can be recoded toward developing faculty research capacity and offering research sabbaticals.
- Universities must actively seek to develop transnational links and international experiences for researchers, so as to improve capacity building opportunities and dissemination scope. Use institutional policies wisely to insure your institution has sufficient researcher capacity and also sufficient institutional infrastructure to manage the incoming projects.
- Incentives for faculty and students to conduct research and disseminate findings neither attend to nor compensate for the structural realities of heavy workloads. Research takes time as well as money and incentives must address both.
- Develop new curriculum to address the importance of doing research.
- Continue to build and strengthen human capital at all levels in research and development by means of policy frameworks and financial building.

HEI/CSO Collaboration

- We see potential pathways for improved dynamics between research and ministry uptake into policy. HEIs are well suited to incorporate scholarly literature and contribute to the theoretical and methodological components of NGO research projects. This will improve policy uptake and also contribute to real-world capacity building of HEI students through work on NGO projects.
- There is a need for academic mechanisms to provide more timely dissemination of results prior to publication such as workshops bringing together academics, NGOs and the government. Also, if academics work with NGOs then the results can be published right away in a report at the same time they are submitted for peer review.
- Formalize internship initiatives to provide practical research experience to university students, increasing the overall research capacity in Cambodia.

- Collaborate on best practices for inter-institutional cooperation, lessons learned, data-sharing, methodology approaches and training, and increasing public awareness at the grass roots level.
- Emphasize decentralized and bottom-up decision making, research priorities and the social value of research results.
- Strengthen the demand side for quality research by improving ongoing activities for capacity development of the youth.
- Commit to and uphold the principle of collaboration as the key to foster civil society and endogenously driven efforts at sustainable development.
- Emphasize action-based research projects to combine training and capacity building with ongoing advocacy efforts.

CSO/NGO/Think Tanks

- Make all documents including the website available in the local language.
- Foster relationships with university students to build their capacity and increase NGO research workforce.
- Develop formal research policies and institute research methods training.
- Increase communication and sharing between HEI's and Think Tanks that can tap into their academic research training for your institutions and can provide practical research experience to build student capacity.
- Reach out to HEI to invite students to discussions, workshops, and presentations on a regular basis.
- Focus on improving communication and collaboration with other CSOs to improve participation at the grassroots level through action-based research.
- Increase overall commitment to downward accountability to recipients instead of upward accountability to donors, by accepting and promoting a role for HEIs as independent monitors and analysts.