

World Vision

National Reading Day

11 March 2016

Public Statement on improving libraries in Primary schools to increase reading habits of Cambodian children

Coinciding with Cambodia celebrating National Reading Day 2016 to promote the habit of reading nationally, World Vision has released a brief study on the *Current Situation & Use of Primary School Libraries: A snapshot across 5 provinces of Cambodia*. The brief study demonstrates the need for increased focus on libraries to achieve improvements in reading and learning. Quality of education in Cambodia remains low. Results of the national Early Grade Reading Assessment showed that one third of grade 2 students could not read a single word.

Global studies increasingly show a strong connection between well-managed and well-resourced libraries and increased reading and learning outcomes of students. In 2011, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Cambodia developed and adopted “Standards for Primary School Library” in order to ensure greater quality and effectiveness of library facilities for learning and teaching at the primary school level. While the adoption of the library standards has undoubtedly resulted in many more functional libraries across Cambodia, the new study found shortfalls in the implementation of these standards.

24 schools, across 5 provinces, were surveyed against 10 government standards; just one library met all ten standards. 58% met half of the standards, while the remainder met less than half of the standards.

This brief study found that only 62% of the schools surveyed had the required number of librarians, though most of the librarians had not received the requisite trainings on library management. It also showed that while children often have access to libraries, they lack the stimulating reading related activities that are critical for learning (such as storytelling and study games or art activities). The limited availability of learning resources was also highlighted, with only around 25% of schools having sufficient books and reading resources according to government standards.

World Vision would like to acknowledge and congratulate the Royal Government of Cambodia for the good progress made towards improving educational infrastructure and student enrolment. In welcoming the Government's leadership to launch Cambodia's National Reading Day 2016, World Vision is also calling on the Royal Government of Cambodia to:

1. Increase financial and technical support to sub-national administrations to further assess and manage libraries through a clear action plan to first ensure that all schools have library facilities, and ensure compliance with the government's library standards, especially reaching the mandated number trained librarians and increasing the number of textbooks and reading materials for students.
2. Improve skills training for librarians – first ensuring that all existing librarians have the minimum amount of prescribed training; and then focused training on techniques and strategies to conduct creative and engaging library activities.
3. Require librarians to build upon and improve practices of recording student access the library and maintaining borrowing records.
4. Support schools to increase efforts to encourage borrowing of books: such efforts might include increasing frequency of access times, group reading exercises, reading aloud, and storytelling (rather than just encouraging independent reading).