

2nd Cambodia Education Research Forum: Science and Technology for Development
18-19 December 2015

Concept Note

Background

In February 2014, the first Cambodia Education Research Forum (CERF) was held under the initiative of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, and the Cambodia Higher Education Association (CHEA) with supports from UNESCO and the private sector. The two-day forum was a major milestone in Cambodia's education reform and provided much needed scientific evidence, best practices and policy options from latest research by local and international scholars to support the government's reform efforts, particularly at the tertiary education.

Per the recommendation from the 1st CERF to hold the event annually, MOEYS is partnering with the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), Institute of Technology Cambodia (ITC) and UNESCO to hold the 2nd CERF in December 2015. The theme of this 2nd CERF is **“Science and Technology for Development.”** This theme has been selected as a result of a recent meeting on **“Science for Cambodia”** organized in November 2015 by CDRI with representatives from MOEYS, SIDA, ITC, RUPP and the private sector. It is aligned with the government's rectangular strategy (2014-2018) on building capacity and developing human resource through “Strengthening and Enhancing Education, Science and Technology and Technical Training.”

Latest data shows that Cambodia has only 56 persons engaged in S&T for every 1 million people, lagging behind Viet Nam (508) and Myanmar (100). Cambodia is the only country in ASEAN that does not have a central leading and coordinating national agency dedicated to science. In addition to the lack of institutional support, the country also lacks a national policy and strategy on promoting S&T. Scientists generally do not have career path and lack the social status and respect that is enjoyed by those in developed nations.

A senior government official acknowledged that “a nation with a lack of knowledge in science and technology (S&T) could not compete in the world market”. To address this issue, in March 2015, the First Cambodia Science and Engineering Festival was held at the Royal University of Phnom Penh. The organizers hope to inspire Cambodian youths about STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) and promote STEM as a study major or career choice. However, there remains a lack of a serious discussion with wider stakeholders, particularly the private sector associations, on how to promote scientific research and youth awareness in the hard science field.

Objectives

The objectives of the 2nd Cambodia Education Research Forum are to:

- discuss the current status of scientific research in Cambodia and how to promote dialogue, research and mentorship on S&T for young Cambodian students and researchers;
- promote, strengthen and disseminate research practices and capacities of higher education institutions to support young academic researchers..

Contents and format

The 2nd forum will involve prominent keynote speakers, round table discussions, parallel scientific sessions, poster presentations and exhibitions. The round table discussions will focus on the following sub-themes:

- 1- Science as an institution
- 2- Promoting Science in academia
- 3- Mentors and mentees in S&T
- 4- Popularization of science

The parallel sessions will include standard paper presentations, and pitching sessions by students and junior researchers. During lunch and coffee break sessions, there will be opportunities for student poster presentations and exhibitions by private sector representatives.

Venue

The management of the Institute of Technology of Cambodia has kindly agreed in principle to provide the venue with supporting facilities to host the forum free of charge with details to be discussed and finalized. ITC is a leading institute in Cambodia in producing quality engineers and promoting S&T. In addition to its large conference facilities, it is one of the few HEIs in Cambodia that employs full time research faculty members with dedicated scientific tools, equipment and laboratories.

Key partners

The MOEYS will work with CDRI, a leading policy research think-tank to organize the conference. We expect technical and financial contributions from UNESCO with a few opportunities for additional funding through CHEA and corporate sponsorship. ITC will provide technical support and facilities to host the conference. A major focus of 2nd forum is to intensify private sector and media engagement in promoting S&T.

Budget

The estimated budget for the forum is \$7,000. We request the kind support of UNESCO of \$5,000. MOEYS, CDRI and ITC will seek additional funding through other development partners (namely SIDA), CHEA and corporate sponsorship if necessary. The detailed budget is available in a separate sheet enclosed.