



## PRESS RELEASE

### CAMBODIA, SWEDEN AND UNICEF UNITE TO PROTECT THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WHOSE SCHOOLS HAVE BECOME QUARANTINE CENTRES

**Phnom Penh, 24 February 2021** – Cambodia’s Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) and UNICEF are working together to urgently respond to the learning needs of students whose schools are currently being used as COVID-19 quarantine centres. Although the new school year began on 11<sup>th</sup> January, 13 primary schools, 18 lower secondary schools and 19 upper secondary schools in the north-western provinces of Battambang, Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey could not open as they are being used as quarantine centres for Cambodian migrant workers returning from Thailand. This is part of the Royal Government of Cambodia's ongoing COVID-19 transmission prevention efforts.

His Excellency Hang Chuon Naron, Cambodia’s Minister of Education Youth and Sport, said: “We welcome the additional support from UNICEF and Sweden for these schools and students in the border provinces. Despite the challenges that COVID-19 pandemic is bringing our way, we must make all efforts to keep children learning while making sure that they are also safe from the virus. That is why the provision of textbooks to affected students is a very important intervention to ensure children keep learning.”

MoEYS undertook a rapid needs assessment of students who are currently unable to attend these schools. Access to textbooks was identified as one of the most pressing challenges as students are required to learn at home or another school nearby. To address this challenge, UNICEF, with funding support from Sweden, has procured new textbooks for 50 primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools covering Grades 1 to 12 in core subjects. In total, 35,055 textbooks are distributed to north-western provinces, helping 32,486 students to continue their studies.

His Excellency Björn Häggmark, Ambassador of Sweden to Cambodia, said “Education is a fundamental human right, but COVID-19 continues to disrupt the schooling of thousands of children in Cambodia. Sweden is glad to assist with this important emergency response, ensuring girls and boys on the COVID-19 frontlines have adequate learning resources to continue their studies.”

In this second year of the global COVID-19 pandemic, vaccines have created new hope, but infections remain high around much of the world. In 2020, children’s education was severely impacted by the pandemic and subsequent school closures. UNICEF is advocating for the continuation of education around the world, and rebuilding and reimagining an education system which serves all children and is more resistant to such shocks in the future.

UNICEF Representative in Cambodia, Foroogh Foyouzat, said “UNICEF is grateful to the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of Sweden for working together to support these students at this challenging time. The urgent need to respond to COVID-19 has often led to disruption, but it’s crucial we reimagine education to fit these changing circumstances. Every child has the right to an education, and we must all work together to fulfill that right.”



She also said, “I encourage the Royal Government of Cambodia to examine all other options to support the safe return of workers, as using schools for quarantine centres should be a measure of last resort, so that school closures and their impact are minimized.”

Note to Editors:

**About UNICEF**

UNICEF in Cambodia works to promote the healthy development of children, to defend their rights and help them fulfil their potential, from early childhood to adolescence.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children, visit [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org).

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