

# Cambodian National Curriculum and Human Rights Education

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**C**ambodia has suffered prolonged wars that ruined its social economy. To rebuild the country, the education system has to work hard to make children learn in the midst of poverty.

Cambodia is now at a turning point. After free and universal elections under United Nations supervision, the country achieved national reconciliation and political, social, and economic stability, and opted for economic liberalization and participation in the international free market. Foreign investment is now flowing into Cambodia, which needs a labor force with technical skills at all levels. The Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has to meet this need as soon as possible.

In the National Rehabilitation and Development Program submitted to the International Committee for Rehabilitation in Cambodia at its second conference held on 10–11 March 1994, in Tokyo, the government focused on the quality of education, since it is the most important factor in consolidating national unity and identity, and social and economic development.

MoEYS created 19 programs and 72 priority action points. Committees were established to develop urgently needed curriculums and textbooks.

## **Laws and Policies Bearing on the National Curriculum for Basic Education**

The national education policy focuses on providing skills to all students. MoEYS thus started developing curriculums for primary and secondary schools. Considering the Constitution,

MoEYS strategies, and the national situation, the committees adopted the following general education reform policies:

- One year will be added to primary education, so that general education will consist of 6 years for primary, 3 years for lower secondary, and 3 years for upper secondary education.
- Learning hours will be increased gradually to meet international standards (5,000 hours) by adding up to 6 hours of learning per day and 38 weeks of learning per school year.
- One instructional period will be 45 minutes at the primary and 50 minutes at the secondary level.
- Only six subject areas at the primary and eight at the secondary level will be required. Special activities must be included as part of the learner-centered approach. Such special activities help improve students' social skills and personalities. The upper secondary students must be divided into groups on the basis of subject area variation and practical needs.
- French or English will be taught beginning in grade 5 (primary level).
- The subject areas will include as many competencies as possible on human rights, tolerance, peace, hygiene, health, food, environment, tourism, economy, business, computers, AIDS, civics, etc.

- The curriculum will be based on concepts of humanization, localization, regionalization, and universalization.
- Attention will be given to knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, with emphasis on language and computation skills, information, problem-solving skills, independence, cooperation, physical education, learning and working, and application of scientific methods (observation, hypothesis making, experimentative data collection, and induction/deduction) to create competent, dignified citizens, creative people, environmentalists, and other socially useful people.
- The student-centered approach to learning/teaching will be used parallel to the educational philosophy of “progressivism,” which is applied by most countries, and gradually give up the teacher-centered approach.
- Learning and evaluation will be balanced.
- Life skills and vocational education to develop labor with appropriate skills for all areas will be promoted.

### **Philosophy and Rationale of the National Curriculum**

The philosophy of the curriculum extends from the philosophy of the National Goals and Aims of Education of Cambodia, which seek to develop human resources holistically—simultaneously with the mind, emotions, and body. This approach ensures the development of knowledge, skills, experience, morality, tolerance, cooperation, solidarity, national unity, national consciousness, love of justice, respect for law, respect for human rights, environmental preservation, identity, and valuing of national culture and civilization, self-reliance, self-confidence, ability to solve daily problems, creativity, industry, responsibility, ability to promote one’s family’s well-being, and participation in national rehabilitation and development based on democracy and pluralism. The edu-

cation system, therefore, has to train students in all levels of skills to meet social needs, as well as train intellectuals in management, administration, and science under the motto “Nation, Religion, King.”

The national curriculum supports the goal of developing knowledge, skills, values, personality, work experience, life experience, and useful habits of learners so that they can take active part in national development in the spirit of national unity and liberal pluralistic democracy.

### **Major Goals and Objectives of Basic Education**

Basic education aims to produce useful citizens and skillful workers by developing the following:

- general knowledge and skills and ability to apply them;
- ability of students to improve their health (physical and mental) and that of their families and their society;
- self-confidence, and the ability to solve family and social problems to make wise decisions and plans;
- tolerance, recognition of the welfare of other people, public spirit, and a sense of equality and empathy;
- love of study;
- industry, interest in modern technology, willingness to work with others, management knowledge and skills, and readiness to take on jobs suitable to the learners’ qualifications and preferences;
- awareness of social changes; national pride; love of nation, religion, and king; and awareness of the need to preserve the natural environment, natural resources, and traditional and modern arts and culture.

### **Abilities of Students at Various Levels**

Students completing the primary level should be able to do the following:

- Develop their personalities and adapt to social changes.

- Use the Khmer language appropriately and learn the basic elements of a foreign language.
- Use basic skills in mathematics, science, and technology.
- Practice sanitation and health protection.
- Analyze and solve personal and familial problems.
- Exhibit good conduct and desirable attitudes, and adopt a humanistic spirit and a tradition of respecting human rights.
- Appreciate work and labor, work cooperatively with others, and work well.
- Be aware of social conditions and duties.
- Know how to preserve the environment, arts, and culture.

Students completing the lower secondary level would be able to do the following:

- Prepare to serve society.
- Use Khmer well; gain knowledge, skills, and understanding of updated general education subject areas; and have basic foreign language skills.
- Improve their health and hygiene and that of their community.
- Suggest or find solutions to family and community problems.
- Develop a sense of humanity, respect for human rights, compassion, and self-reliance.
- Develop their talents, personal qualities, self-esteem, self-confidence, love of learning, and pride in rebuilding the nation.
- Love work, and work responsibly with others.
- Be aware of the evolution of society and perform the duties of good members of the community.
- Protect, preserve, and improve the environment, arts, and culture.

Students completing the upper secondary level would be able to do the following:

- Improve themselves to serve society.
- Use Khmer skillfully, have general as well as special science and technology knowledge and skills, and know a foreign language.

- Encourage community health services and initiatives to improve hygiene.
- Come up with ideas to tackle problems in the community and national society.
- Care for others with empathy and sense of equality.
- Apply new technology in carrying out their duties, and constantly improve their capability.
- Transform their appreciation for work into accomplishment with a cooperative spirit and competent management.
- Be aware of international social progress and be able to develop the nation.
- Preserve and improve the environment, arts, and culture.

The above goals, aims, and vision incorporate the Four Pillars and more, and were established before the publication of the *Delors Report* (1996).<sup>1</sup> However, the seminal earlier report of UNESCO, “Learning to Be,” contributed significantly to the deliberations.

### Curriculum Development

The current curriculum was developed by learning from the experiences of the 1954 and 1967 curriculums (Sangkum Reas Niyum regime), the 1980 and 1986 curriculums (People’s Republic of Kampuchea), and from the curriculums of developing and developed countries within and outside the Asian region. The curriculum is now compatible with humanistic principles.

When the first reforms were initiated in 1980, after the Khmer Rouge period of genocide, the country lacked the expertise to implement changes in the system. On the job, however, expertise developed rapidly and helped implement the 1994 reforms. More external experts later helped develop textbooks and teacher guides by suggesting an update of content for different subject areas.

From 1980 to 1994, human rights concepts were embedded in morality, traditional ethics, codes of conduct, rites and rituals, and religious

principles taught in Khmer and social studies. Human rights education has been strengthened with the addition of such content as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), children rights, women's rights, etc.

The current curriculums have the following allotment of hours per subject:

### Implementation of the National Curriculum

Educators in public and private schools throughout the country are kept informed about the new reforms through successive national education conferences. The public is informed about these conferences via the mass media.

Learning Hours by Subject Area per Week, Primary Level									
No.	Subjects	Class						Total	%
		1	2	3	4	5	6		
<i>Hours per week</i>									
1	Khmer	14	12	12	11	8	8	65	29.00
2	Foreign Language	0	0	0	0	3	3	6	2.68
3	Math	5	5	5	5	5	5	30	13.39
4	Science	2	3	3	3	3	3	17	7.59
5	Social Studies	6	7	7	8	8	8	44	19.64
	• History and Geography	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	5.36
	• Morals and Civics	1	2	2	2	2	2	11	4.91
	• Arts	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	5.36
	• Technology	1	1	1	2	2	2	9	4.02
6	Physical Education and Sports	2	2	2	2	2	2	12	5.36
7	Special Activities	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	2.68
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>99.99</b>

Learning Hours by Subject Area per Week, Lower Secondary Level						
No.	Subjects	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Total	%
1	Khmer	6	5	5	16	14.04
2	Foreign Language	5	5	5	15	13.16
3	Math	4	5	5	14	12.28
4	Science	5	5	6	16	14.04
5	Social Studies	5	5	5	15	13.16
	• History and Geography	3	3	3	9	7.89
	• Morals and Civics	2	2	2	6	5.26
6	Technology and Home Economics	3	3	3	9	7.89
7	Aesthetic Education (drawing, music, songs, dances, and plays)	2	2	1	5	4.38
8	Physical Education	2	2	2	6	5.26
7	Special Activities	1	1	1	3	2.63
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>99.99</b>

The public was informed about the new curriculum through schools in 1996, simultaneously with the introduction of the new textbooks and learning materials. Thus, the reach of information was extensive. The curriculum was piloted in a few schools or areas before adoption. The pilot schools were selected from remote provinces, suburbs, and cities.

With limited production of learning materials, the curriculum was introduced and implemented year by year continuously from grades 1 to 7, providing useful lessons for designing textbooks and teacher guides, and the opportunity to orient manageable numbers of teachers each year on how to implement the curriculum.

### Role of Different Agencies

Various agencies took part in developing the curriculum, textbooks, and learning materials. The ministries of environment, culture and art, health, women and veteran affairs, national defense, foreign affairs, among other national agencies shared ideas and information in setting the curriculum's goals and aims as well as the objectives of textbook themes and lessons. Agencies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF); United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Cambodia Secondary English Teaching Project (CAMSET); Cultural Center of France (CCF); Programme d'Appui au Secteur de l'Education Primaire au Cambodge (PASEC); Save the Children-Norway, etc. provided funding and technical support and shared ideas on integrating new content and processes of curriculum development.

### Textbooks, Instructional Materials, and Teacher Training

Previously only textbooks were supplied, with a pupil-textbook ratio of 1:3. In rural and re-

mote areas the ratio was much lower. Besides textbooks, teacher guides and supplementary learning materials such as posters, equipment, books, etc. are distributed to local schools all over the country. The ratio is now one textbook per pupil. Textbooks have better-quality paper and good binding.

Each textbook lesson contains diagrams or colorful pictures and suggestions for activities. The type size is appropriate for the pupils. The textbooks incorporate the appropriate pedagogy.

Teachers are trained in the subject matter, updated pedagogy, and use of the textbooks and other instructional materials.

The major teacher training activity is the cascade strategy. A supplementary activity takes place regularly through the cluster school system to continuously upgrade the capacity of the teachers. The orientation of teachers was done parallel with that of principals and supervisors, using especially designed manuals.

### Delivery of Curriculum in Classrooms

Students receive curriculums through textbooks and teacher guides. Group and peer learning, whole-class learning, self-learning, and learning through assignments out of class are the methodologies employed.

Several strategies are used to translate the curriculum into classroom practices such as child-centered active learning, appropriate learning events for initial learning, reinforcement of learning, and application of learning. Child-centered active learning and local specific activities are the most effective strategies to increase the subjects' relevance to learners.

Several factors contribute to the positive results in curriculum delivery:

- child-centered methodology,
- updated content of curriculum,
- the new education system,
- untiring contribution of teachers,
- provision of a textbook and supplementary learning materials to each pupil, and
- consistent MoEYS policy actions.



### Quality Assurance in Recruiting New Teachers and Improving Teachers' Working Conditions

Graduates of the teacher training centers are recruited to teach. The teachers are in four categories: (1) the pioneer cadre from early 1980s, whose content and pedagogical competencies were low; (2) teachers with grade-8 general education plus 1 year of teacher training; (3) teachers with grade-12 general education plus 2 years of teacher training; and (4) an emergency cadre of "contract teachers" of various proficiencies to solve teacher shortages.

The newly recruited teachers are oriented on how to implement the curriculums. In spite of severe financial constraints, the government has raised teachers salaries. Other attempts are under discussion, including saving-credit schemes to help improve the teachers' living conditions.

### Feedback Mechanisms on the Implementation of the National Curriculum

MoEYS's supervision/reporting and quality control systems are geared to perform at national, provincial, and school levels. Among the people involved are the head teachers, as the in-situ supervisor; officials of the provincial education offices; and MoEYS officials. Staff of the Department of Pedagogical Research (responsible for curriculum development), undertake technical supervision. Additional feedback is available from a variety of sources such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the field. The effectiveness study (discussed later) shows how important assessment of curriculum is in reform.

### Achievement Indicators

How well the curriculum is implemented can be gauged through the enrollment and dropout rates, and the percentage of students passing national achievement tests or qualifying examinations at primary, elementary, and secondary levels.

MoEYS hopes to reduce the repetition rate and increase learning hours. In school year (SY) 1997–1998, the repetition rate in grade 1 was 41.2%, and the promotion rate only 46.9%. In SY 1999–2000, the repetition rate was 37.8% and the promotion rate 51.0%. In general, grade-1 students have the highest repetition rate. Dropout rates are still very high, especially in grades 1, 2, and 3, even though the rates decreased in 2002:

Grade	Dropout Rate (%)	
	1997–1998	1999–2000
1	11.9	11.2
2	15.25	12.4
3	14.9	12.9

Poverty is a major factor in dropping out and repeating class. Early dropouts might become illiterate.

The nationwide pupil-teacher ratio is 50.6:1 in primary schools, and 16.7:1 in lower secondary school. The shortage of classrooms is critical for urban schools, at 70.5 pupils per classroom, thus forcing some schools to conduct three shifts per day. The shortage of rural schools within walking distance is also of serious concern.

Selected Education Indicators, 1999–2000		
	Primary Level	Lower Secondary
Gross Admission Rate	123.6	
Net Admission Rate	71.4	
Gross Enrollment Ratio	100.3	22.9
Net Enrollment Ratio	85.5	14.4

Research-based studies have been done on the state and effectiveness of various aspects of the National Curriculum and its implementation (i.e., research on the effectiveness of curriculum content, existing pedagogies and instructional approaches, teacher training, and textbooks and instructional materials). The Textbook Availability and Utilization Study and

the Impact Study were done over 3 years, from 1999–2001. The first study covered grades 1–3 and 7–9, in Khmer, mathematics, and science. The second study covered Khmer, mathematics, and science in grades 3–5.

The studies found that delivery records at district offices show that textbooks usually arrive on time, but their quality suffers from reuse. Other preliminary issues identified in the reports include cases of students paying fees to borrow textbooks, late distribution of textbooks in the classrooms, students being fined for damaged or lost books, mixing different editions of textbooks in the classrooms, and inaccurate records on the textbooks. While these problems can seriously hamper textbook use, they can be corrected fairly quickly. A new user-friendly culture is required, and this is being established gradually.

The student-centered approach is insufficiently used, and textbooks have too much content while teachers' manuals have too little. Books are said to lack explanations and examples to clarify lessons. One reason is donor-imposed restrictions on the number of pages. Applying the new methods is difficult for all teachers. In many places, classes have more than 40 students, which makes the organization of student-centered activities difficult. Teachers who accessed training attended a 1-week teacher orientation program only. Many did not access any training because of financial and time constraints. The anticipated "topping up" through the cluster system requires more time (and resources). Another reported reason is the poor level of content knowledge, which makes it difficult for teachers to understand and apply new concepts. In many cases, books are not clear enough for teachers, who need more detailed explanations and further teaching steps in the teachers' manuals.

Many of these issues are due to inadequate school- and district-level management. The ministry has provided a series of workshops and materials to improve this aspect but changes are slow.

At teacher training colleges, the new textbooks are often noted for using high-level skills and technical or new vocabulary. The movement to giving teacher training colleges greater responsibility for in-service training helps ease these difficulties and encourages the colleges to develop supplementary materials to support such training.

In addition, a review system to maintain the quality of curriculum implementation becomes significant in terms of new MoEYS policy emphases, such as the decentralization of curricula/learning events. This review system is currently under development.

The annual national conferences provide significant forums for reviewing the implementation of the National Curriculum. The sector and subsector analyses of aid agencies such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and UNICEF provide detailed reviews. The Textbook Availability and Utilization Study has provided significant and specific inputs in the reviews.

### **Strengths and Weaknesses of Human Rights Education and the National Curriculum**

The studies reviewed the considerations that went into curriculum planning and development and implementation of the National Curriculum, and identified its strengths and weaknesses, and the threats to it.

#### **Strengths**

- The National Curriculum seeks to develop learners' knowledge, skills, values, personality, work and life experience, and ability to take part in national development in the spirit of national unity and liberal pluralistic democracy.
- Textbook development was done with financial and technical support from various local and international agencies.
- The National Curriculum was implemented in schools while local and inter-

national NGOs promoted human rights, democracy awareness, and community improvement.

#### Weaknesses and problems

- The National Curriculum is not implemented well due to widespread poverty. However, the review system to maintain the quality of curriculum implementation is under development.
- In many places, classes have more than 40 students, making organization of student-centered activities difficult.
- The shortage of classrooms in urban areas is critical.
- Teachers have poor level of content knowledge, which makes it difficult for them to understand and apply new concepts.
- Applying the new methods is difficult for all teachers.
- Teachers work inadequately owing to their poor living conditions.

#### Opportunities

- MoEYS is undergoing administrative reform.
- The government is implementing programs to reduce poverty.
- NGOs are committed to raising awareness of human rights.

#### Threats

- Dropout rates caused by poverty are still very high, especially in grades 1–3.

#### Lessons Learned

Implementing the National Curriculum gave rise to several lessons:

- A single national curriculum should be interpreted through learning sequences that take into account the needs of diverse locations.

- Most children come from poor families and may lack the required readiness and competencies for school learning.
- A participatory evaluation system for curriculum implementation involving concerned persons, including parents, would be constructive.
- Additional especially designed learning materials for learners and teachers is a priority need.

Fast population growth, destruction by landmines, poverty, illiteracy, poor health conditions, child trafficking, need for reconciliation, among other problems, have to be solved.

#### Human Rights Education Program

Since Cambodia is predominantly Buddhist, human rights education has been considered parallel to formal religion courses offered by religious institutions. Human rights concepts are integrated easily into Khmer and moral and civic subjects, and harmoniously interpreted by students based on some Buddhist principles:

- *No killing*, assuring the right to
  - live,
  - be free from slavery,
  - be free from torture,
  - personal security, and
  - live in a good environment.
- *No stealing*, assuring the right to
  - own property,
  - protect one's privacy, and
  - social security ( Social Protection Law).
- *No sexual misconduct*, assuring the right to
  - security in the family and society,
  - be accepted as a human being,
  - dignity,
  - found a family, and
  - own property as a couple (Marriage and Family Law).
- *No lying*, assuring the right to
  - individual honor and dignity,
  - fair judgment, and
  - access to accurate information.



- *No drinking alcohol or using prohibited drugs*, assuring the right to
  - protect one’s health,
  - protection of one’s self, and
  - live with dignity.

A venerable monk recited the following:

May all human beings have loving kindness and compassion and help each other in doing good actions and be happy with their good actions, because good actions provide happiness to all beings.

The Lord Buddha<sup>2</sup> teaches us: “In all circumstances, each time our corporal, verbal and mental actions are good, this is the highest blessing, and auspicious time, moments and instants. And good actions always produce good results for the well-being, advantage and happiness of all of us and for all beings.”

Human rights education has often been modified into religious education and integrated into Khmer language and social studies textbooks.<sup>3</sup> Articles on the UDHR summarize the

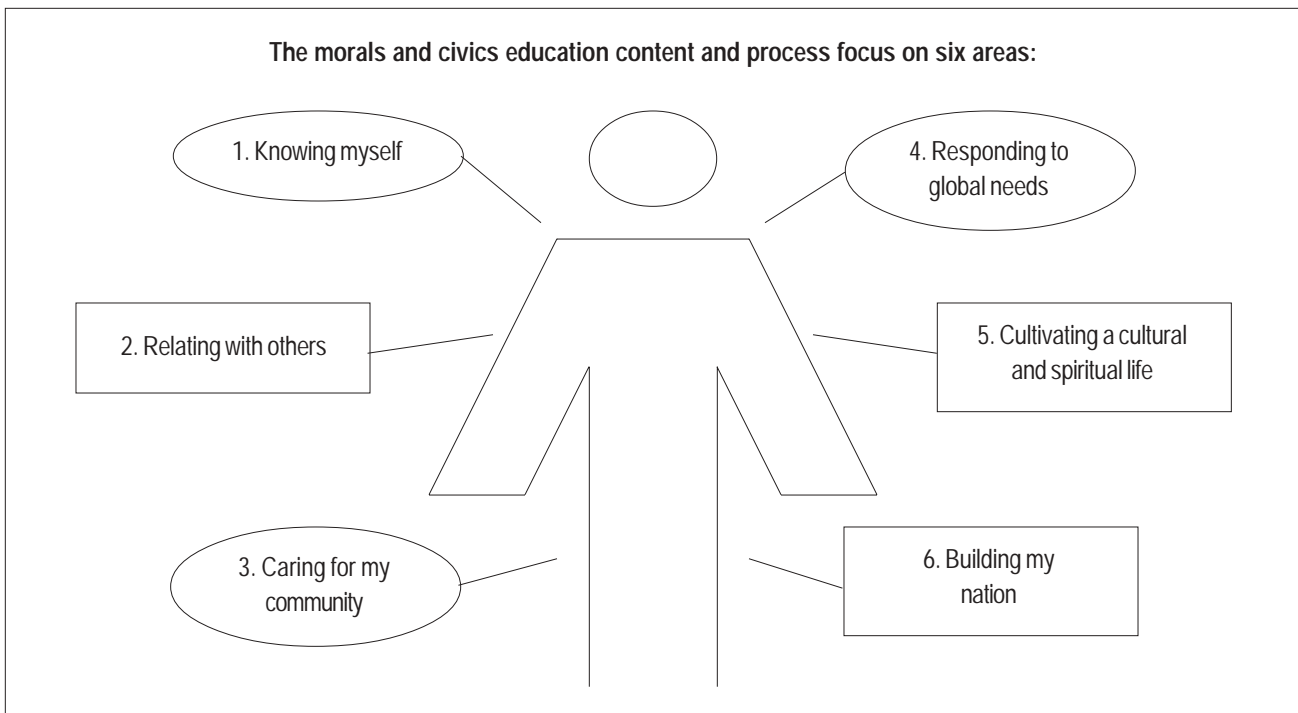
lesson. Children who finish primary school can recite and translate one part of the monks’ recitation.

Moral and civic education is based on the holistic philosophy that every person is formed simultaneously by his or her own experience as a member of a larger community. Total development happens when a person’s potential is maximized. Human dignity is the overarching value.

These areas are emphasized in particular grades and presented so that students understand them:

- Grade 7 – Knowing and discovering oneself and potentials
- Grade 8 – Relating well with others
- Grade 9 – Caring for my community
- Grade 10 – Building my nation
- Grade 11 – Cultivating my cultural and spiritual life
- Grade 12 – Responding to global needs

Lesson delivery is andragogical or experiential, student-centered, and process-oriented. The student is the center of the educational endeavor, and the teacher acts as a facilitator,



processor, and director of learning in each carefully planned lesson. Universal values related to the six areas are contextually presented to address the Cambodian reality. Highlighted in lesson preparation and implementation is the development of desired learning competencies and skills. Self-analysis, reflection, critical thinking, decision making, and action learning are essential skills that students must learn as they progress in the secondary school. Team building and teamwork are much emphasized in the process.

### The Role of the Teacher in Moral Education

The teacher is significant in the valuing process of the student. The teacher is a great resource of human experience and knowledge but must be exposed to many strategies, approaches, and methodologies for effective and relevant moral and civics education. The teacher must also be a model of positive attitude, hope, faith, and love.

The teacher takes on the following roles:

- *a prophet* of humanity who lays the foundations of peace and is a peacemaker,
- *an artist* who works with the precious clay of the human personality,
- *a builder* who builds with the higher and finer values of civilization and progress,
- *a friend* who responds to the faith and devotion of his/her students with gentleness and love,
- *a citizen* who improves society and challenges the young to be responsible, and
- *a believer* in the improvability of the human race and the enormous possibilities for growth.

### Textbook approach and methodology

The textbook employs a student-centered approach and uses a four-phase valuing process. Each lesson has lesson objectives, core and related values integrated in the development of the lesson, teaching materials and references, time allotment, and procedures in de-

livery. The four-phase valuing process includes the following:

<p><b>First Phase</b> <i>Activity:</i> Students are introduced to a structured learning experience such as writing, analysis, reflection, group dynamics, role play, brainstorming, moral dilemmas, and others.</p> <p><i>Teacher's role:</i> Initiator, motivator, and time manager</p>	<p><b>Second Phase</b> <i>Analysis:</i> The teacher helps the students analyze their affective and cognitive learnings by using clarifying response strategy. The art of questioning should be developmental, from basic what, where, and when, to the higher levels of how and why.</p> <p><i>Teacher's role:</i> Values clarifier, facilitator</p>
<p><b>Fourth Phase</b> <i>Application:</i> Students are encouraged to respond to the lessons' challenges. Students are encouraged to act.</p> <p><i>Teacher's role:</i> Project initiator, challenger</p>	<p><b>Third Phase</b> <i>Abstraction:</i> The teacher acts as the director of learning, telling students what is moral and essential in accordance with cultural and social standards.</p> <p><i>Teacher's role:</i> Director and synthesizer</p>

Evaluation instruments are suggested to assess students' affective and cognitive learning at the end of each lesson. The instruments are used for a formative evaluation of students' performance. Summative evaluation must include affective and cognitive items at the end of each chapter.

Reflection statements at the end of each lesson stimulate further thinking, capture the lesson's main message, and synthesize the teaching-learning experience.

The strategies and process of values development will help learners attain their full potential.

### Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the role of Ma. Paquita D. Diongon, a Filipino education consultant, in developing the Cambodian school curriculum. She worked with MoEYS' Population Education Program during the 1997–1998 period, after another education consultant (Ms.

Magdalena E. Dugenia) ended her 1996–1997 stint.

### Endnotes

1. The Four Pillars refer to (1) Learning To Know; (2) Learning To Do; (3) Learning To Be; (4) Learning To Live Together.

2. This is taken from a Buddhist dharma manual named “Viney Bedak” in Pali language, written in Khmer script and published in the early 19th century. This is a well-known Buddhist material among Cambodians.

3. The textbooks referred to were produced by the MoEYS for grades 1–12, during the 1996–2001 period.

**ANNEXES**  
**Cambodia**  
**Lesson Plan on Human Rights**

**Title** : Key Role of Women in National Reconstruction  
**Grade Level** : 10  
**Subject** : Moral-Civic Education  
**Concepts** : Equality  
**Time Allotment** : 40 minutes x 2  
**Authors** : Yahan Chin, Horn Pheng, Kheng Ly, Dara Yi

**I. Objectives**

At the end of the lesson, the students should be able to do the following:

1. Identify the specific role of women in national reconstruction.
2. Discuss and explain the women's status in Cambodia and in the world.
3. Explore possible solutions to women's issues and concerns.
4. Analyze women's role in the 21st century.
5. Appreciate women for their uniqueness and singular contribution to the human race.

**II. Resources**

- Document: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948, Article 1
- Teaching resources:
  - Slide on Article 1 of the UDHR
  - Slide on value concept
  - Lists of the role and demands of women during the 1993 National Women's Summit, Phnom Penh
  - Copies of the lecture on the situation of women in Cambodia and elsewhere

**III. Procedure**

**SESSION 1**

**A. Opening**

*Preliminary activity: Unfinished sentences.* The teacher motivates students by asking them to complete one statement from among the many written on the board and to share their statement. The statements could be the following:

- As a girl, I feel .....
- I look at women as .....
- One thing I don't like in girls is .....
- The best thing about women or girls is .....
- The good news about women is .....
- I respect women who are .....
- I like girls or women who .....

The teacher solicits students' responses, writes them on the board to facilitate the discussion on reactions of students toward women and girls in general.

**B. Development of Activities**

*Activity 1: Debate*

1. The teacher divides the class into two groups—affirmative and negative—and asks them to go over the selection and react to the role and demands of women during the 1993 National Women's Summit. Cite the negative or positive points of their statement and be ready to defend either positions.
2. The groups select their two spokespersons/representatives.
3. 15 minutes are allotted for debate.
4. Class discussion and processing follow.

### Cambodian Women's Statement of Commitment

#### **Recognition**

*We are major economic producers. We are farmers, entrepreneurs, and professionals. A third of us are heads of households. We bear the main responsibility as mothers for bringing up the next generation. Many of us are widows on whom children depend for material and emotional support. We want recognition in official statistics, in law, in practice for our distinct productive and reproductive roles.*

#### **Participation**

*We form 60% of the Cambodian population. Therefore, we want to participate actively in decision making about our lives and livelihood. We want to participate in the electoral process through an effective secret ballot which will enable even nonliterate to vote freely. Under the new government, we want to participate at all levels of policymaking, including drafting the new constitution, introducing legislation, and formulating development planning programs.*

#### **Equal Rights**

*We want the following women's rights to be included in the legal system and enforced in a just and equitable manner: family law; protection against domestic violence; alimony for deserted and divorced women; labor laws that promote and protect equal employment opportunities, conditions of work, and wages, both in public and private sectors; and protection of commercial sex workers.*

#### **Development**

*We want the new government to invest in developing the human resources of the country by improving access of urban and rural women to skills, technology, information, health (pre- and postnatal care, birth spacing, and HIV/AIDS) and education, thereby enabling our socioeconomic and political empowerment. We want stabilization of the macroeconomic environment so that inflation is controlled and investment projects geared to promoting the employment of Cambodian women and men.*

#### **Solidarity**

*To strengthen the solidarity created by the Summit, we want to come together in the same spirit every year to follow up the implementation of our proposals with the new government.*

*We look forward to and will work toward fair, democratic, and free elections. As citizens, we commit ourselves to exercising our basic human right to elect the people who will set the direction for the future of our beloved country.*

#### *Activity 2: Group Discussion*

1. How does society view women and men in general, in the labor force, in education, in social life?
2. What problems do women face in Cambodia?
3. How can women become an important component in society?

After the group report and their synthesis, the teacher directs students to the following value concept by using a slide with the following text:

**Value concept:** *Equality* is experiencing oneself as having the same value and rights as all other human beings in such a way that one is set free to be that self and to free others to be themselves. This is the critical consciousness of the value of being human. *Equity* is the awareness of the moral and ethical claim of all persons, including oneself, to legal, social, and economic equality and fairness, plus a personal commitment to defend this claim. Women are equal to men in many aspects. Domestic violence, sexual harassment, and physical abuse are incompatible with their role in molding the citizens and future leaders of Cambodia. Empowering women is establishing a "culture of caring" for women.

BREAK



## SESSION 2

*Activity 3: Abstraction/Generalization*

The teacher asks students to read the following:

**The Situation of Women in Cambodia and Elsewhere**

1. *Women in Cambodia and in most parts of the world have been given less value or importance than men. Women have not fully participated in social and economic activities.*
2. *Generally, women have little or no influence in the decision making in the family or society.*
3. *In many countries, people prefer sons. A female baby usually receives less care and love from her parents than a male. In some countries, women receive less food, education, health care, freedom to choose employment, and attention from society than men.*
4. *According to the Programme of Action adopted by the delegates of International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, Egypt in September 1994, reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being—and not merely an absence of disease or infirmity—in all matters relating to the reproductive system and its functions and processes. Some women are not able to attain optimum reproductive health due to incomplete knowledge about health and human sexuality; the unavailability or poor quality of reproductive health care services, and the limited power of many women and girls over their sexual and reproductive lives.*
5. *Generally women are easily infected with diseases, especially AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases, through sexual intercourse. They are endangered during birth delivery, unsafe abortion, and inadequate health services.*
6. *Mortality rate for mothers in developing countries is 15 to 60 times more than in the developed countries. Worldwide, an average of 73 women are HIV positive compared with 100 HIV-positive men. Some women suffer domestic violence or rape and, therefore, not only physical but also serious emotional abuse.*
7. *The illiteracy rate for women in developing countries is higher than for men. Two thirds of 960 million people are women who cannot read and write. Illiteracy is an obstacle to peace and prosperity.*
8. *In developed countries, women participate actively in the work force and generate 80% of total productivity. In most countries, however, housework is not seen as a paid job, even when women do nothing else from dawn to dusk.*
9. *Women's contribution is usually seen as less important than men's and is not appreciated. Most poor men suffer human rights violations, but women also suffer domestic violence and oppression worsened by poverty, sexist social structures, and so on.*
10. *In parts of the Sahara, 60–80% of women are productive but not more than 8% have the right to own land.*
11. *Even highly educated women participate only in a limited way in public affairs. Women's decisions are considered trivial. Only 5% of positions of leadership in the world are held by women. In Cambodia, only 11 out of 120 parliament members are women.*
12. *An increasing number of women are becoming involved in political, social, and economic activities through NGOs, Ministry of Women's Affairs, and women's associations. Women's groups and movements have emerged rapidly in the last 20 years and joined the international arena. In the ICPD, 400 women's organizations gathered from 62 countries to find ways to improve women's lives.*
13. *At the ICPD, all countries accepted that population concerns are at the heart of sustainable development strategies. Rapid population growth and high fertility hold back development. They perpetuate poverty and make it hard for countries to plan the future because resources are used up for present needs.*
14. *The conference also put an end to the concept of "population control" and stressed free choice—the idea that most women, given the choice, will have fewer children than their mothers did. The conference also gave more attention to education for women and girls, women's access to a range of reproductive health services, leadership, accurate information, active participation in community, and the government and private sector agenda. The conference stressed protection of women's legal rights: empowerment, equity, and equality.*
15. *The Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, People's Republic of China, in September 1995, also stressed universal access to quality health services by 2015 and reduction of maternal mortality; sharing of responsibility between men and women in matters relating to sexual and reproductive behavior; granting of equal land, credit, and employment access to women; establishment of effective personal and political rights; and education of girls and young women as the key intervention for their empowerment. These efforts aim to eliminate all violence against women and to ensure women's ability to control their own fertility. Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education, and means to do so.*

After the reading, the teacher asks students the following questions:

1. How much value are women in Cambodia and elsewhere given? (Less value or importance than men.) Why? (Because people in many countries prefer sons.)
2. Why are some women unable to attain optimum reproductive health? (Because of incomplete knowledge about health and human sexuality; unavailability or poor quality of reproductive health care services; and limited power of many women and girls over their sexual and reproductive lives.)
3. What is the mortality rate for women in developing countries compared to those in developed countries? (Mortality rate for women-mothers in developing countries is 15 to 60 times more than in developed countries.)
4. What is the illiteracy rate for women compared with that for men in developing countries? (It is higher than for men.) What is the implication of the difference? (Illiteracy is an obstacle to peace and prosperity.)
5. Between men and women, who suffer more domestic violence, oppression accentuated by poverty, sexist social structures, and so on? (Women.)
6. What is the extent of women's participation in public affairs in Cambodia? (Out of 120 members of parliament only 11 are women.)
7. What has emerged from the ICPD? (It gathered together 400 women's organizations from 62 countries to find ways to uphold and improve women's health care, rights, and opportunities.)
8. What was stressed at the Fourth Conference on Women? (See above.)

(Note: The teacher should ask one student to write the summary answers on the board to help students make generalizations.)

### Generalization

The teacher directs students to the following generalization using a slide on Article 1 of the UDHR:

*Women and men are equal. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."*

#### Activity 4: Application/Evaluation

The teacher asks students to write a reaction paper on the description of a woman, below.

1. Do you agree with the description? Why? Why not?
2. Is the description relevant to the role of women in the 21st century? Why? Why not?
3. How would you revise the description?

### From the Book of Proverbs

A woman of character is more precious than any jewel.

Her husband has complete confidence in her; she is of great benefit to him.

She brings him only good all the days of her life.

She gathers wool and flax, and works them with skillful hands. She gets up while it is still dark and feeds her household.

If she sets her heart on a field, she buys it and plants a vineyard with her own hands.

She is full of energy and her arms show her strength.

She knows her works is successful, and at night, her light remains unextinguished.

She reaches out her hand to the helpless and gives to the poor.

Her husband is well respected; she sits at the council with the elders.

Strength and dignity are her clothing.

She speaks wisdom and teaches kindness.

She manages her household well and is never idle.

Her children call her blessed, and her husband praises her.

Many women are excellent and she is clearly among them.

Charm is deceptive and beauty is vain: the woman who is wise should be praised.

May she enjoy the fruits of her labor and may all praise her for her works.

*C. Closing*

The teacher asks students to think of any proverbs or slogans relevant to gender equality. An example, "Most beautiful things in life come in twos or threes, by dozens and hundreds. There are plenty of roses, stars, sunsets, rainbows, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, but only one mother."

Cambodia  
Lesson Plan on Human Rights

**Title** : Buddha's Dharma  
**Grade Level** : 9  
**Subject** : Moral-Civic Education  
**HR Concept** : Freedom of thought and conscience  
**Time Allotment** : 40 minutes x 2  
**Authors** : Yahan Chin, Horn Pheng, Kheng Ly, Dara Yi

**I. Objectives**

At the end of the lesson, students should be able to do the following:

- Explain Buddha's fundamental principles
- Identify human rights principles in Buddha's teachings; and
- Practice human rights principles in accordance with Buddha's teachings.

**II. Resources**

- Textbook Moral-Civic education, Grade 9
- Teaching resources: pictures of monk preaching, board and markers, paper sheet
- Definition of terms: *Celebration of spiritual qualities*: is a value from which every human being can draw inspiration
- Link: Article 18 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

**III. Procedure**

**SESSION 1**

**A. Opening**

The teacher says the following:

- Human beings need inspiration not only from fellow human beings but also from spiritual principles such as those embodied in Buddha's Dharma, or Jesus Christ's sacrifice, etc.
- In achieving enlightenment, Buddha linked his life to preaching Dharma to save creatures drowning in "the sea of suffering" until he passed away. Buddhists thus have the qualities of admiration, gratefulness, self-sacrifice, and obedience.

**B. Development of Activities**

*Activity I: Making captions*

The teacher presents three pictures of the preaching of Dharma and ask the students to write a caption below each of them.

Preaching  
Dharmas on one  
bed (one monk  
preach Dharmas)

Preaching  
Dharmas on two  
beds (two monks  
preach Dharmas)

Preaching  
Dharmas on three  
beds (three monks  
preach Dharmas)

The teacher ask the students to think about this

**Value Concept: Celebration** of spiritual qualities—the performance of sacred rites to honor God—is a value from which everyone can draw inspiration. In Buddhism, perfection is achieved through meditation and Buddhists are called to celebrate their faith by following the Dharma.

*Activity 2: Group discussion*

The teacher divides the students in groups to discuss the following questions:

1. What are Buddha's Dharma?
2. What is the significance of knowing the Buddha's teachings?
3. How can a person attain perfection in Buddhism?
4. Why do Buddhists aspire for Nirvana?

The teacher asks a student to write the answers to all questions on the board to help students come up with the generalization.

BREAK

**SESSION II**

*Activity 3: Generalization/Abstraction*

The teacher leads the students to read and study the meaning of the whole reading below.

**Buddha's Dharmas**

Dharma is Buddha's Word that is good in the beginning, in the middle and at the end, perfect in meaning and letter, homogenous, complete, and pure. From the night of the Enlightenment until the night of the final Nirvana, all that the Buddha uttered and taught is true. The Good Word of the Buddha is distinguished by four characteristics: first, it is well-spoken; second, it is agreeable and pleasant; third, it is conformity with welfare; and fourth, it is truthful.

The Doctrine of Dependent Origination, the norm governing the arising and passing away of all things, constitutes the leading theme of the Dharma. It is the doctrinal code that contains truths that the Buddha did not originate, but of which he had a pure knowledge and which he transmitted to his disciples.

The Word of the Buddha has only one flavor: that of deliverance. Its aim and effect is to end universal suffering. The content of Buddha's Dharma is condensed in the Four Noble Truths expounded by Buddha: (1) Everything is suffering; (2) The origin of suffering is desire and ignorance; (3) Abandonment of desire and ignorance is the way to end suffering; (4) A Path, defined by the Buddha leads to Nirvana, where there is no suffering.

"Every thing is suffering" refers to the impermanence of all things. Everything is transitory, perpetually changing like the body changes from instant to instant. Feelings, perceptions and volition are changing so as consciousness appears and disappears. All existence are stamped with the same defects. The five forms of rebirth are those of hell-born, animals, ghosts, humankind and gods. The first three are qualified as bad, and the last two as good. In the first three, there is more suffering than happiness; in the human, the two are balanced; in the divine, happiness transcends suffering. However, all existence are suffering because they are transitory.

The five forms of rebirth are spread throughout the Triple World namely:

- The World of Desire, in which beings enjoy the five sense objects (colors, sounds, odors, taste and tangible objects). This world of desire includes the rebirth of the hell-born, animals, ghosts and humankind, plus some other lesser gods who are still subject to sense-pleasure.
- The World of Form, inhabited by the seventeen classes of Brahma gods, endowed with subtle form, detached from sense-pleasure but experiencing the joyful effects of the four meditative absorption in which they dwell.
- The Formless World, appertaining to the higher gods, who are formless, exist in the shape of "pure mentality" and are plunged in the blesses of four formless attainments where they contemplate the infinity of space, consciousness, nothingness and the summit of existence.



Buddhism is the doctrine of the NO SELF and is thus the reverse of Brahmanism and Hinduism that believe in the existence of a permanent, stable, eternal and unchanging SELF.

"The origin of suffering is desire." The Dependent Origination comes down to three things: passion, action, and result. Passion invalidates action and action causes a retributive result. According to Buddhist doctrine, these three things vitiate life: craving, hatred and delusion. The Buddha laid great stress on individual moral responsibility: "This bad action which is yours was not done by your father or mother or anyone else. You alone have done this bad action, you alone will reap its fruit." Only by overcoming craving, hatred and delusion can one achieve Enlightenment.

"There exist a Nirvana, an end to suffering." Nirvana is presented in the following way:

- It is the destruction of desire and the basic passions (craving, hatred and delusion). The destruction of the passion neutralizes actions and prevents them from yielding any result.
- Nirvana is the disappearance of form, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness.
- Nirvana is supreme happiness.
- Nirvana is unconditioned. Free from arising, disappearance, duration and change.

"A Path, defined by the Buddha, leads to Nirvana." This refers to the Eightfold Path:

- |                   |                         |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. right view.    | 5. right livelihood.    |
| 2. right resolve. | 6. right effort.        |
| 3. right speech.  | 7. right mindfulness.   |
| 4. right action.  | 8. right concentration. |

These come down in three basic elements: morality, concentration and wisdom. Morality consists of conscious and willed abstention from misconduct of body (taking the life of living beings, theft, sexual misconduct), of speech (falsehood, slander, harsh and useless speech), and of mind (covetousness, animosity, wrong views). Its aim is to avoid any action that might harm someone else.

Concentration is the fixing of the mind on one point. It is the same as the absence of distraction and mental tranquility. It normally involves successive stages of meditation. The practice of concentration is eventually completed by insight. The practitioner possesses six spiritual powers such as psychic power, the divine eye of immense farsightedness, the penetration of other's thoughts, divine hearing, the remembrance of former existences and finally the destruction of impurities which ensures liberation in this life.

Wisdom is the ultimate and main element of the Path. If it is pure, that is completely free from delusion and wrong views, it sees in-depth the true nature of things. The Noble One who becomes the Enlightened would declare and deliver: "I have realized the Noble Truths: ended are rebirths; I have lived the pure life; what had to be done has been done; henceforth there will be no further rebirth for me."

*Activity 4: Essay Test/Evaluation*

The teacher asks the students to encircle the letter of the correct answer in the following statements using the code: **a**–correct **b**–incorrect **c**–not sure

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Buddha searches for selfish interests.               | a | b | c |
| 2. Buddha searches for the Four Noble Truths.           | a | b | c |
| 3. Dharma help followers to know how to end sufferings. | a | b | c |
| 4. Dharma are disadvantageous to human beings.          | a | b | c |
| 5. Death results in rebirth for all humankind.          | a | b | c |
| 6. Nirvana is the absence of suffering.                 | a | b | c |
| 7. The Word of Buddha has six characteristics.          | a | b | c |
| 8. Impurity in the world is the root of all sufferings. | a | b | c |
| 9. Buddhism is the doctrine of eternal Self.            | a | b | c |
| 10. The Path refers to the way of life toward Nirvana.  | a | b | c |

*Activity 5: Application*

The teacher tells the students to write an essay on "Personal Ways to Follow Buddha's Dharma" as their homework.

**C. Closing**

The teacher asks the students to think of any proverbs or slogans relevant to the practice of human rights in accordance with Buddha's teaching. An example is:

*"Man is made or unmade by himself, in the armory of thought he forges the weapons by which he destroys himself; he also fashions the tools with which he builds for himself heavenly mansions of joy and strength. By the right devise and true application of thought man ascends to the Divine Perfection."*