

STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS FACT SHEET

Rehabilitation Workstream



Project Brief

Project title: “Integrating speech therapy knowledge and practice into Cambodia’s services and workforce to support people with communication and swallowing difficulties in provincial areas”

This project uses speech therapy training and service provision to develop resources, referral pathways and data which can guide the development of future speech therapy profession and services.

Speech therapy involves the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and inclusion support for people with communication or swallowing difficulties. Speech therapists are university qualified rehabilitation professionals who are able to provide assessment, intervention and inclusion support for children and adults with communication or swallowing difficulties.

An estimated 600,000 Cambodians have communication or swallowing difficulties, implying that at least 1 in 25 Cambodians would benefit from speech therapy, 4% of the population (OIC Cambodia, 2013). Cambodia does not yet have a university training program for speech therapy and there is a profound shortage of speech therapy services. Likewise, there is low understanding and skills from educators, disability and health workforce to support and include people with communication and swallowing difficulties, resulting in exclusion from education, workforce and social opportunities, and lower health and wellbeing outcomes than people without these difficulties.

Currently, Cambodia’s limited speech therapy services are located primarily in Phnom Penh and are mainly run by the private sector. There are no speech therapy services or recognized workforce within government health hospitals or rehabilitation centres outside of Phnom Penh, leaving the majority of Cambodians with communication or swallowing difficulties unable to access speech therapy support. The vast majority of Cambodians who live with communication difficulties are solely reliant on informal community and family support with public services rarely considering inclusive practices (Net et al 2023). This mismatch of need and availability requires a significant investment, to build a speech therapy service and workforce able to respond to the community context.

Project Outcomes

Outcome 1: Building a Cambodian Speech therapy workforce and resources

Outcome 2: Facilitate the establishment of province-based speech therapy services within the government system to identify and support People with communication and swallowing difficulties.

Outcome 3: Build and use evidence base for speech therapy needs and services in Cambodia

Key Activities

1. Speech therapy Workforce training and resources

- Develop competency-based framework for speech therapy practice in Cambodia
- Develop and deliver 2 specialized speech therapy Workforce training programs: hospital based (Level 2) and health centre & community based (Level 1)
- Provide ongoing networking, coaching and professional development opportunities for the health and rehabilitation staff who completed the training

2. Speech therapy Services

- Piloting speech therapy services within provincial government health or rehabilitation facilities in target provinces
- provide speech therapy screening and limited scope of therapy services, referral, implement speech therapy focused parent groups and community awareness campaigns
- Advocate for the integration of speech therapy referral and services within health, rehabilitation and education systems.

3. Speech therapy evidence base

- Build evidence base: Research the need, service provision and workforce of speech therapy in Cambodia.
- Monitor and evaluate level 1 & 2 training programs and pilot speech therapy services.
- Share the research for Cambodian speech therapy profession development: locally and internationally.

Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries:

- 15 health and rehabilitation workers receive Level 2 training to support people with communication or swallowing difficulties (from Provincial/referral hospital, Physical rehabilitation centre and NGO rehabilitation workers) from target provinces
- 24 participants attend Level 1 Community - Focused Training - such as health centre staff, Provincial Council Committee for Women and Children (CCWC), Teachers, Village Health Support Group (VHSG), health workers, OPDs, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) workers from both target provinces
- 40 people with communication or mealtime difficulties received direct ST service (specific therapy services, stimulation group or ST assistive technology) within the target provincial areas.
- 100 children screened for communication difficulties (screening, referral and basic strategies) within the target province
- 24 caregivers receive information and strategies to support children communication development through parent support groups.

Indirect beneficiaries:

- 400 people with communication difficulty and their families living within the area received ST intervention service or advisory support from the trained participants within a target province.

Geographic Location

Key implementation locations:

Kompong Speu and Kratie (eligible for all districts)
Phnom Penh - National level activities (NPH and UHS partnerships)
Extension or alternative locations: Kompong Som, Phnom Penh.

Project Partners

National Pediatric Hospital Phnom Penh: Provide local input to OIC and external ST consultant into the design/delivery of 12-month ST workforce program and competency framework.

University of Health Sciences (UHS), Phnom Penh: Pursue formal partnership for development of future degree ST. Involve UHS staff as part of resource development and momentum to enable the training content and resources to become recognised within future formalized rehabilitation workforce.

Duration

January 2024 – June 2027

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