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National Round Table 1 (NRT 1)

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Work package 3 – National Round Table 1 (NRT 1)

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1. Introduction

Within Work Package 3 of the CHAIIn project, the National Round Table 1 (NRT 1) was conducted on August 19th and 20th, 2024, at the University of South-East Asia (USEA) in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The NRT 1 aims to:

- ➔ Facilitate Collaboration: Foster stronger connections between DGHE (MoEYS) and HEI's IROs.
- ➔ Promote Dialogue: Cultivate a robust national discourse centered around HEI-IROs, encouraging meaningful discussions and knowledge sharing.
- ➔ Information Exchange: Facilitate both formal and informal exchanges of insights, ideas, and information related to IROs.
- ➔ Network Building: Create networks among IRO personnel, enabling collaboration, best practices, and mutual support.
- ➔ Data Collection: Gather comprehensive data to inform the development of a future Management Guide for IROs and an Internationalization Strategy.

1.1 Participant identification

1.1.1 CHAIIn Participants -

Position, Surname, Name, Institution	Attendance date

2. Panel Discussion and Sessions Summary

In the table below, various topics were discussed during the 2-day National Round Table 1 (NRT 1). The panels included not only CHAIN HEI members and MoEYS representatives but also HEIs outside of the CHAIN consortium. Most notably, students' voices were presented, and the keynote speeches by MoEYS and DAAD added significant value to the event. This marked the first time that IRO practices were openly and collaboratively shared, demonstrating participants' willingness to enhance and strategically develop the IRO Guideline and the IRO Strategy. Additionally, informal conversations during lunch and coffee breaks provided insights into networking and fostered strong connections among all participating HEIs. This fruitful meeting directly contributes to the further Internationalisation (INZ) Strategy development of each participating HEI and the nationwide strategy formulation in relation to IROs of HEIs in Cambodia.

Topic	Panels and Results
<p>Opening remarks</p>	<p>His Excellency Som Ratana highlighted the context of internationalisation and the knowledge-based society.</p> <p>Global Context: The movement of globalization continues to influence the transfer of skills and knowledge, pushing institutions to adapt to global standards and practices. Most countries strive to become regional education centers. In comparison, statistics show that Vietnam has 132,000 outbound students in Southeast Asia, while Cambodia has around 20,000. Globalization is an unstoppable force driving the transfer of skills.</p> <p>National Context: Cambodia has faced challenges in various fields, including politics, economy, and society. However, we must <i>“look forward to the future and not forget past experiences.”</i></p> <p>Challenges at the Institutional Level: (1) Lack of talented volunteers in International Relations Offices (IROs); (2) Lack of commitment due to resource constraints; (3)</p>

Topic	Panels and Results
	<p>Absence of unified leadership policies; (4) Lack of institutional mechanisms.</p> <p>International Context: (5) Need to prove students' skills (language mainly) and knowledge; (6) Encourage all in the internationalization process.</p> <p>H.E. highlighted that internationalisation brings quality.</p>
<p>Keynote speech I</p> <p>Internationalisation! Why & How? Some Examples from Vietnam</p> <p>Mr. Felix Wagenfeld, DAAD Regional Office Hanoi</p>	<p>Why Internationalisation: Internationalisation of higher education is increasingly recognized as a strategic investment in the future of science, society, and the economy.</p> <p>Added Value for Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances the quality of teaching and research • Increases knowledge and enables global participation • Increases the visibility of higher education institutions (HEIs) <p>Value for Society and Economics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters innovation, creativity, and technological advancement • Promotes diversity. <p>Mr. Felix Wagenfeld highlighted the dimensions of internationalisation of HEIs, and provided real examples from Vietnam:</p> <p>Inbound and Outbound: The <u>government</u> in Vietnam actively <u>supports</u> the internationalization of higher education by providing resources for students.</p> <p><u>Institutional Cooperation</u> and Agreements, Marketing: Increases the attractiveness for international students and researchers to come to Vietnam.</p> <p>Institutional Strategy, Governance, Structure, <u>Internationalisation@home:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establishes English-speaking programs and government scholarship programs.

Topic	Panels and Results
	<p>- <u>Transnational Education</u>: Includes study programs and international universities.</p> <p>Overall, he mentioned, the focus should be on the quality of internationalisation rather than merely increasing the number of partnerships or agreements. Real, meaningful collaboration is preferred over superficial Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs).</p> <p>The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD): Felix Wagenfeld also introduced DAAD to the audience, highlighting opportunities that all HEIs in Cambodia can benefit from, such as funding, scholarships for Master's, PhD, and research programs, institutional partnerships, HEIs cooperation programs, and alumni support through workshops.</p>
<p>Keynote speech II</p> <p>Supporting Higher Education Internationalisation in Cambodia</p> <p>Dr. Nith Bunlay</p>	<p>Dr. Nith Bunlay introduced Cambodia's vision and highlighted the challenges for quality in higher education institutions (HEIs). Below are some points for consideration and attention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low gross enrolment (18%) • The quality of higher education is not up to date • Higher education needs to be strengthened • Research and Development (R&D) often face several challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited resources allocated to R&D activities - Lack of skilled researchers in various fields - Weak internationalization (capacity gap, poor motivation) <p>He reiterated that the key aspect of internationalisation is the integration of international, intercultural, and global dimensions. This requires the involvement of new technology, and therefore, International Relations Office (IRO) personnel need these skills.</p> <p>Policy intervention (Higher Education Vision 2030) includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Quality and Equity ➔ Regionalization ➔ Governance and Finance.

Topic	Panels and Results
	<p>He emphasized to the audience that CHAI is for everyone.</p>
<p>Panel 1 – Internationalisation of Higher Education in Cambodia: What are Leaders’ Roles?</p>	<p>1. H.E. Tep Kolap, Rector, PPIU 2. Dr. Bun Kimngun, Deputy Director, ITC 3. Dr. Sok Seang, Dean, International College, NUM 4. H.E. Ly Navuth, President, Beltei International University 5. Dr. Mean Sothy, President, USEA Moderator: Dr. Nith Bunlay</p> <p>Below are the insights shared by the panelists:</p> <p>Question 1: Importance and Activities of Internationalization in HEIs:</p> <p><u>Beltei International University:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invested in internationalization activities, primarily sending high school students overseas for continued study. - Implementation of 2+2 degree programs, etc. - Partnerships mainly in the USA. <p><u>NUM:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Internationalization fosters diversification on and off campus. - Internationalized programs (outbound and inbound: short-term and long-term). - Dual degree 3+1 programs in France and the USA (Study + Travel). <p><u>PPIU:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural and study exchanges. - Inbound and outbound programs. - International partnership collaboration. - Innovating university policies. - Capacity building in research. - Alumni network. <p><u>ITC:</u></p>

Topic	Panels and Results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are 3 key aspects in HEI: Teaching and Learning, Research, and Community Services. - Has a strong network in the internationalization process, applying it for more than 30 years. <p>Question 2: Sustainability and Implementation in Projects:</p> <p>USEA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported by funds from various sources - World Bank, Government, USAID. - HEI Commitment and vision. - Research team not strong. <p>Question 3: What Are the Successful Activities, and What Are Not:</p> <p><u>Beltej:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need to build trust with other partners. - Financial support: lack of resources. <p><u>PPIU:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengths: commitment and qualifications of key stakeholders. - Need more commitment from all stakeholders, mainly from the faculties. - Improve communication within the institution. <p><u>ITC:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the process of preparing for future internationalization. <p><u>NUM:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improvement of infrastructure and English-speaking programs.
<p>Panel 2 – A Glance at CHAIN’s consortium HEIs:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Sieang Phen, Head of IRO, ITC 2. Dr. Siem Monileak, Dean of Digital Economy, NUM 3. Mr. Pinn Thira, Head of IRO, RUA 4. Mr. Rin Ratha, Deputy Head of IRO, USEA 5. Dr. Kieng Rotana, President, Western University (WU)

Topic	Panels and Results
<p>Where Does our IRO reside?</p>	<p>6. Dr. Ky Ravikun, Vice Rector for International Relations (PPIU) Moderator: Mr. Mam Sary, DGHE, MoEYs</p> <p>Question 1. When were HEI's IROs established and what are their roles?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ITC (2014): Acts as a bridge to coordinate the smooth flow of students. - RUA: Builds connections and ensures effective communication. - PPIU (2011): Started with cultural exchange, then moved to academic exchanges, one-semester exchanges, international programs and projects. <p>Question 2. What are the strategies of IROs?</p> <p>Answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase IRO activities. • Build trust and ensure good communication. • Be proactive. • Share a common goal. • Align with the university's goals. • Attract resources to boost enrolment. • Advance the curriculum; collaborate at the faculty level; ensure active involvement from the deans, and not rely solely on the IRO. • Provide loans for students, allowing them to pay back by working for the university. If they can't pay, they won't receive their degree. • Conduct surveys frequently to maintain an up-to-date strategy. • Enhance the quality of the program through internationalisation without adding more heavy work. • Start small and know oneself. • Prioritize quality. • Identify the mission, vision, and goals, including resources, capital, and human resources. What do

Topic	Panels and Results
	<p>you want to do? Where do you want to go? Build a structure!</p> <p><u>Requirements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Specific IRO structure. ➔ ICM - International Credit Mobility. ➔ Build an image. <p>Question: Does the IRO have any methods to respond to new trends and the needs of students?</p> <p>Answer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They need support from the institution's management. • Conduct tracer studies. • Require an IRO head with broad knowledge. • IRO should stay close to the students and observe the study environment.
<p>Panel 3 – The Internationalisation Best Practice at Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mr. Touch Pheakdey, Head of IRO, Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) 2. H.E. Dr. Reth Chanthoun, Vice President, Beltei International University 3. Assoc. Prof. Serey Mardy, Head of IRO, Svay Rieng University 4. Mr. Chhoun Samlie, Director of Pannasastra University of Cambodia (PUC), Siem Reap <p>Moderator: Ms. Yim Chanvisal, USEA</p> <p>One of the speakers from Panel 4 requested to move up to Panel 3, as the topic is the same.</p> <p>Summary of this panel -</p> <p>Many HEIs, to some extent, have implemented internationalisation (INZ) activities in addition to their traditional teaching and learning, and research. The areas of INZ include –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dual degree programs (2+2, 3+1), • semester exchanges, and

Topic	Panels and Results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • international programs for topping up credits, among others. • They also host international events. <p>It is interesting to hear about some challenges they have faced, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of financial support from the government and institutions for sending students abroad (outbound). - Lack of support for obtaining passports, which are still costly. - IRO head has highlighted the lack of tangible support for IRO staff compared to teaching staff. In other words, financial support for IRO is low in some public HEIs.
<p>Panel 4 – The Internationalisation Best Practice at Cambodian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)</p>	<p>Paragon International University (PIU)</p> <p>As one panel moved to Panel 3, in Panel 4, there was one panellist who presented his HEI’s internationalisation (INZ) progress, which in a nutshell, sounds as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The issue of MoUs – passive during COVID but activated after the pandemic. 2. Destinations – Germany, Taiwan, and South Korea. 3. Accreditation and recognition by government accreditation agency, ACC. 4. Bringing more international students to Cambodia – Issue to continue working on. 5. Projects implementation to benefit faculty and staff. 6. Cambodia is an English-speaking country with an affordable living standard – promotion, marketing in INZ. 7. Supporting students’ needs. 8. Call for mechanism to attract international students to come to Cambodia, and to study in this country.

Topic	Panels and Results
<p>Panel 5 – Lesson Learned from EU Experiences in Internationalisation</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dr. Ky Ravikun – PPIU 2. Dr. Mean Sothy – USEA 3. Dr. Huon Thavrak – RUA 4. Mr. Kim Veara – NUM 5. Mr. Alam Shamsul – WU 6. Dr. Ek Pichmony – ITC <p>Moderator: Ms. Ly Sokunthy</p> <p>With the question of what we have learned and observed in the two EU partner HEIs, below are some insights and sharing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU HEIs receive full support from the government. - Curriculum and faculty resources are similar, but what is important is student support (inbound & outbound). - They have strategies to promote both inbound and outbound mobility. - Strong IRO teamwork. - They have software for IRO. <p>The panellists have also made it clear that there are different contexts between Germany and Spain, even though they are both in Europe. Therefore, we too need to first know ourselves and set our priorities.</p> <p>They also highlighted that international student are not only about academic exchange but also about cultural exchange. The panellists talked about strategy and partnership, specifically activities that HEIs ought to target.</p> <p>When it comes to the discussion about challenges and solutions:</p>

Topic	Panels and Results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural diversity => Intercultural training, workshops, exchange programs require. - Finance => Rely on external sources, currently the EU, as the finance holder. - Language => English programs are a priority. <p>They acknowledge that we need to move step by step and gather all relevant stakeholders, cooperation, commitment, and patience.</p> <p>Everyone strongly believes that internationalisation (INZ) is a strategy for HEIs. Internationalisation starts from informal relationships with Dean/Faculty connections. It can start with informal communication.</p> <p>Issue about internal working environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IRO and Faculty cooperation, no barriers. - Faculty, HEIs need to seize opportunities for increasing partnerships. - IRO and Faculty create fun activities. <p>What are the long-term impacts of INZ:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building of human capital. - Creating a sufficient platform to support IRO and staff. - Creating a support mechanism. <p>In conclusion, everyone realized the need for support from the government and relevant stakeholders for INZ to grow.</p> <p>There were questions from the audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Are there standards for INZ?

Topic	Panels and Results
	<p>Panelists tried to respond using their knowledge and expertise.</p> <p>For the standards of INZ, all panelists agreed that there are none, but perhaps each HEI can set its own. However, if we talk about credit articulation and recognition, then for sure, there is a need for appropriate standards.</p>
<p>Panel 6 – The voice of stakeholders: Students’ View in the internationalisation of Higher Education</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ms. Pheak Sodavit, Student of PPIU 2. Mr. Eang Limkang, Student of RUA 3. Ms. Ei Sandi Kyaw, Student of PPIU 4. Ms. Vouch Sievhour, Student of USEA, Siem Reap 5. Ms. Loeum Chanboramey, Student of PUC, Siem Reap 6. Ms. Yeourn Sreyvin, Student of AU, Siem Reap <p>Students’ views about International Relations Offices (IROs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most said they know about it from friends, by accident, or through their activities in the HEIs. - None mentioned any official channels or HEIs officially talking about IRO. - Students mentioned an IRO info session that they, later as sophomore students, benefited from. <p>What internationalization activities they have participated in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An inbound student from PPIU highlighted the strong support from the IRO, stating that the IRO staff work with their hearts, making them feel at home. She joined many activities such as Culture Day, International Day, and various events both inside and outside the campus. - There are students in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh who benefited from the HEIs’ INZ process; they were exchange students to China and Thailand, similar to the inbound student, one of the panelists in this session. - As one of the key stakeholders, students see their great support for HEIs’ INZ.

Topic	Panels and Results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firstly, the information dissemination. They encourage HEIs to put more effort into it. • Secondly, to keep continuing the INZ process, as it is of great benefit to students. <p>In terms of the existing strategy of IRO, here is what we have noticed. Some HEIs conduct Study Abroad Info Sessions to promote outbound students. The assignment of IRO staff to support inbound students with all sorts of logistical matters (housing, airport pick-up, visa extension, etc.) is part of their inbound promotion strategy.</p> <p>Inbound students receive regular monthly meetings with IRO staff, providing a forum where they can express their thoughts and make recommendations to the HEI for improvement. The discussions revolve around their studies, livelihood, and other issues pertaining to their presence at the HEI and in Cambodia.</p> <p>All students agree that they are part of HEIs INZ, and they are proud to be in it. One student highlighted the inclusiveness of INZ. She called for consideration of financial support for merit students for their overseas study opportunities. She also encouraged all students participating in the NRT1 to start preparing their passports, as only a few raised their hands when asked how many had a passport.</p>
Preliminary Management Guide for IRO (MG for IRO), and the INZ Strategy	<p>Dr. Ky Ravikun once again presented the contents of the MG for IRO, the template of the INZ Strategy, and the timeline for the establishment of these two important documents. With the needs analysis results, the experiences from the two EU-HEIs study visits, and the NRT1, we, CHAIN Cambodian HEIs, ought to be able to come up with these good paper documents.</p> <p>After exchanging insights and ideas, we agreed to give other members who failed to provide feedback a few more days</p>

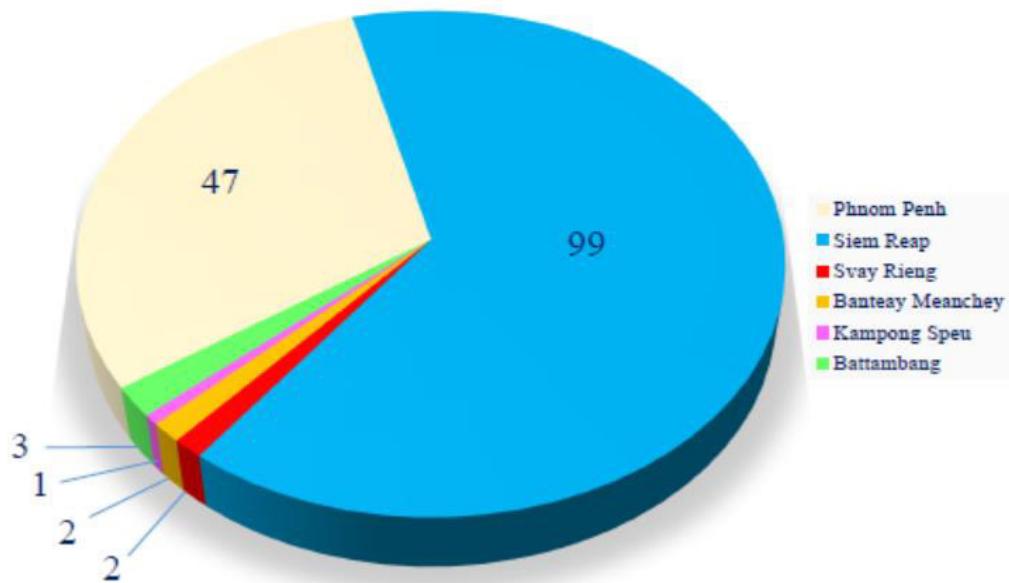
Topic	Panels and Results
	<p>before we execute our document composition as planned. The MG for IRO is targeted to complete the draft and send it to the CHAIIn coordinator on 02nd December 2024, with the final version targeted for January 2025 (project month 12).</p> <p>The INZ Strategy is targeted to be sent to the coordinator for review and approval on 28th February 2025, with the final document to be completed in April 2025 (project month 15).</p> <p>All the Cambodian HEIs pledged to contribute to these two main documents.</p>
<p>Closing of the NRT 1</p>	<p>These are the concluded points made at the closing session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Student View: INZ Inclusiveness and Financial Support for Merit Students in Overseas Study Opportunities. ➔ Networking: keep it going. ➔ Participation of non-CHAIN HEIs adds the greatest value. ➔ CHAIIn aims to restructure HEIs' IRO and build an INZ strategy that is applicable to all HEIs. <p>There was a call for inputs in the survey questionnaires of the NRT 1 meeting.</p>

3. NRT 1 participants data factsheet

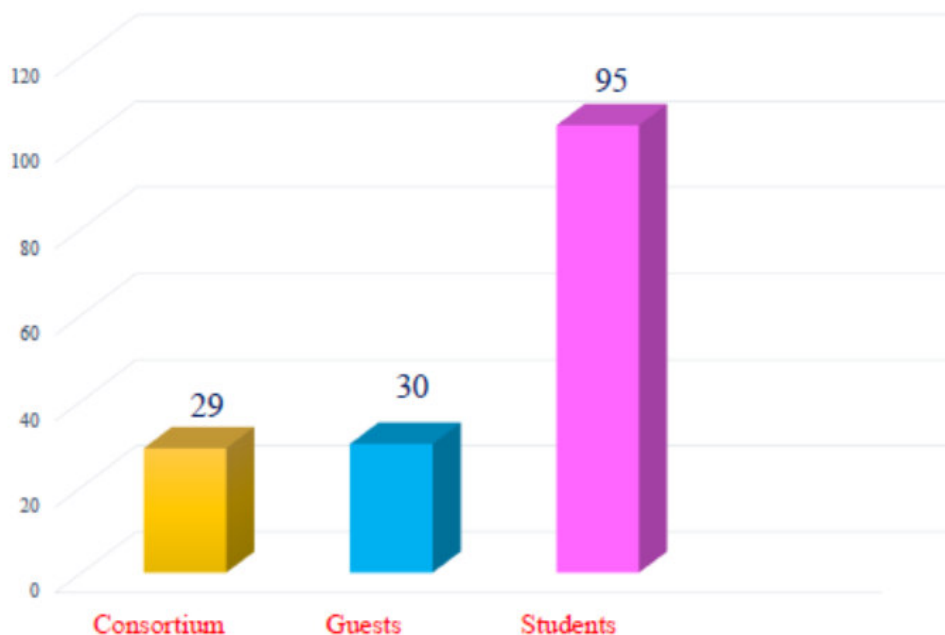
The map below shows the participating HEIs in the NRT1 by province, and the red colour indicates the CHAIIn HEIs –



Although the majority of the participants are from Siem Reap, the participant population is spread across six different cities and provinces.



The majority of the participant population is students.



4. Outcomes of the NRT 1

The NRT 1 meeting has successfully achieved its set expected outcomes. Below are the accomplishments of this meeting:

1. Attendance and Participation: There was 128% attendance (154 attended, 34 participants above the planned number). In terms of participation, the satisfactory level reached. *(Please see Annex 10)*

2. Content:

* Strong connections have been established between Directorate General of Higher Education (DGHE), MoEYS, and HEIs present at NRT 1, particularly the HEIs' IROs. The presence of high-ranking MoEYS officials demonstrated their commitment to this endeavor.

- * NRT 1 has fostered dialogue centered around HEI-IRO. All stakeholders had the opportunity to voice their opinions, most importantly, the students voice.
- * All IROs had the chance to discuss issues related to their areas of responsibility, share their challenges, and seek appropriate solutions and recommendations.
- * In terms of networking (WP8), NRT 1 was an excellent start for building such a network. Following this meeting, participants tend to stay connected; a Telegram channel was created, an email list was made, and as people got to know each other, they became more open.
- * The final outcome achieved by NRT 1 is the gathering of all consortium members to contribute actively to the main future policy papers. The CHAIN Cambodian HEIs are now clear about their roles in these two future policy papers.

5. Conclusions

The CHAIN National Round Table 1 was the first forum where discussions focused on the International Relations Office of HEIs and the internationalization of HEIs in Cambodia. When it comes to concerns about HEIs, topics such as teaching and learning (TnL), research, and community involvement are often discussed. However, these discussions typically cover the quality of HEIs, the accreditation process, and progress, but rarely address how HEIs engage in internationalization or whether they have a dedicated international relations office. This two-day meeting brought attention to these topics, encouraging HEI leaders to consider that internationalisation is a leading and key factor for improving TnL and research.

As mentioned by His Excellency Som Ratana, Undersecretary of State of MoEYS, the booming global population has significantly increased the demand for responsive education worldwide. To attract learners, HEIs need to maintain and improve quality. One of the keynote speakers said that including an internationalisation component in HEIs will directly impact all outcomes, including teaching and learning (TnL), research, and service. He added that internationalisation contributes to the quality of graduates.

Mr. Felix Wagenfeld from the DAAD Regional Office Hanoi has outlined the ten dimensions (keys) of internationalization (INZ), which include: (1) inbound student mobility; (2) outbound student mobility; (3) international teachers and researchers; (4) international study programs; (5) international cooperation in research; (6) institutional cooperation and agreements; (7) marketing, visibility, image, and profile; (8) institutional strategy, governance, and structure; (9) internationalisation at home; and (10) transnational education.

Other stakeholders at NRT 1 have raised concerns and called for immediate action and contributions from all relevant high-ranking officials, both at the HEI level and the national level. They see that Internationalization (INZ) requires both human capital — qualified staff with consistent capacity building — and financial capital for sustainability. Like conventional education, INZ needs to aim for inclusivity, ensuring that all qualified students benefit from it. In this context, issues such as obtaining a cross-border passport remain a challenge for many young Cambodians, including students.

Moreover, the NRT 1 has revealed that the two core topics — the International Relations Office (IRO) and the internationalization (INZ) of Cambodian HEIs — appear to be weak and varied in both tangible and intangible aspects. Some institutions have IROs, but their functions are performed by non-IRO staff; others have moderately functioning IROs with permanent staff. The perception of the IRO and INZ varies among HEIs. There seems to be an understanding gap and a lack of connectedness between HEIs and their INZ efforts. Some envision INZ as part of credit articulation and recognition, meaning that for them, INZ represents a set of standards that HEIs must minimally comply with.

What made NRT 1 exceptional this time was the involvement of students. The student panel saw an increase in the number of participants, providing evidence that the internationalization of HEIs is of interest to them. They found themselves

engaged in the process and were willing to participate, strongly believing that it benefits them and their future careers.

In short, NRT 1 concluded with the acknowledgment of the importance of HEIs' internationalisation (INZ):

- The demand for education worldwide.
- The quality of education — teaching and learning (TnL), research, and services — will improve with the INZ process and progress.
- HEIs require a strong strategy, infrastructure, and IRO structure.
- Priority areas of INZ are advised.
- A support mechanism for IRO and INZ is highly recommended.
- INZ inclusivity — promotion of activities that can involve the maximum number of students (voice of key stakeholders - students).

General observations indicate that the culture of straight talk and sharing real concerns on the aforementioned topics is still not fully present. Most high-level representatives of HEIs tend to overstate their performance and understate the real concerns they face.

Nevertheless, the practical team in IROs had a great deal to learn and a chance to voice their opinions, which are valuable messages for future papers, the Management Guide for IROs, and the INZ Strategy.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: Picture 1



ANNEX 2: Picture 2



ANNEX 3: Picture 3



ANNEX 4: Picture 4



ANNEX 5: Picture 5



ANNEX 6: Picture 6

