



**AMCHAM**  
**CAMBODIA**

## **Education Meeting August 5, 2021 – Notes**

**Location:** Zoom

**Date:** Thursday, August 5, 2021

**Time:** 4:00pm-4:45pm

**Participants:** 20

### **Key Outcomes and Next Steps**

- The Education Committee will focus on advocacy, networking, and training.
- Travis Mitchell will circulate the minutes to everyone and call for a meeting in one week's time. He will also look into the Working Group for Education.
- There, we will form a core group of people: Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary who need to be elected. Interested persons should contact Travis directly.
- At that meeting, we will create the terms of reference needed for the committee and determine how to move forward.
- Mr. Casey Barnett volunteered to represent AmCham on a Working Group with the government, and also volunteered to be a leader of the Education Committee.

### **Detailed Meeting Notes:**

#### **1. Opening Remarks by Executive Director**

Travis Mitchell welcomed the 20 participants and informed them that it's AmCham's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and that the Chamber is the largest it's ever been. It's grown 25% in 2021 alone. AmCham has five active committees: Women's, Real Estate, ICT, Beer, and Education, and now has a permanent seat the government-private sector Working Group on Law, Taxation, and Governance, which is important for advocacy. We've been very active hosting webinars, and invited Members to please inform him if they had any ideas.

#### **2. Introduction by AmCham Governor**

Ashley Irving, AmCham Governor, welcomed everyone and stated that he was delighted to reactivate this committee. As we have so many diverse members, he stressed that this Committee is what the Members make of it: their interests, their goals, and their ideas. Education is broad, so we must narrow it down a bit. He then invited each participant to express his/her ideas.

#### **3. Ideas from the Members**

- a. Mr. Casey Barnett from CamEd, stated that everyone is providing education is under the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) and must follow their regulations and accreditation requirements. He suggested having regular engagement with MoEYS so that we can express our concerns

and share our advice. One particular action item that they could do is release the 10 institutions who are fully accredited, but that information is not public. It would also be beneficial to talk to the private sector and other Chambers to get insights on employers' needs, particular which skills are needed. Having a forum to hear these insights would be helpful. Finally, we could give suggestions to the Working Group on Tax, for example suspending withholding tax for a few years. He asked if there was a Working Group on Education, as he would be interested in being part of the voice to the government.

- b. Mr. Devin Barta, AHF, is looking at workforce development, particularly continuing education. He wants to know what programs they can sponsor to develop their skillsets, whether that be financial, HR, or leadership. In the US, they would partner with local universities for technical or soft skills, so he's looking for the same, as an employer.
- c. Mr. Gareth Jones, ISPP, said that they are trying to get out of their own bubble and look more regionally and globally to share and exchange ideas. The goal is to create a learning hub. They'd like to develop teacher skills and other training skills. Covid has created challenges but there is still a passion there.
- d. Mr. Ashley Irving stated that there may be funding available since Cambodia will be the host of ASEAN in 2022. He has been in contact with the Education section of the US Embassy and has asked for their input.
- e. Mr. James Sutherland, Friends, stated that Covid has negatively impacted their organization and they're interested to explore opportunities. Ideally, they'd like to network with other businesses and partner.
- f. Ms. Thida Sok, IDP, mentioned she would like to focus on teacher training and connecting with MoEYS. Digital skills for the teachers is very important and these teachers need to upskill to be able to effectively teach.
- g. Ms. Rosa Ball, AUPP, said she would like to look at partnering with the private sector to provide internships to students as well as job prospects. She also would like to coordinate with the high schools for those who are interested in transitioning to the collegiate level.
- h. Ms. Stella Toh, Royal Chartered Institute, said that she has focused on education as a way to give back after being here for 22 years. Her institute focuses on education in the construction industry, and they're the first in Cambodia. Due to Covid, they've had a lack of overseas trainers so they're looking at who can support the school. The quality of education in that particular sector is very very low.
- i. Ms. Thuy Nguyen, University of Arizona, wants to focus on improving English language skills for students to enhance their careers.
- j. Mr. Sheldon Hutchinson, Northbridge, stated that networking is a big reason to be involved; while many have similar concerns and issues, each Member has a different perspective. Communication is really important during this time, and it's great to give and get information from others.
- k. Mr. Vanda Khan, Pernod Ricard, said that he works for a company that sells beverages. They're looking for an entry point to contribute to a CSR project, like raising awareness on road safety or anti-drunk driving for secondary school or university students.

- l. Ms. Kram Sokkhanin is interested in an education forum with MoEYS. Her organization is trying to push education and ensure every single student has access to one. They are trying to engage the public and private sectors together to train teachers. She will share some information to Travis and he will circulate it.
- m. Mr. Cody Rogers, Asian Hope Schools, is pleased to hear about advocacy, networking, and training. He thinks it's important to have a voice with the Ministry. Covid has really impacted everyone, and it's important to be able to talk to the government. Making connections with American universities is also important. Some may go into technical training, so the construction school sounds interesting to him.
- n. Teacher Savy, Caring for Cambodia, said that it was interesting to hear everyone. His organization is focusing on lifelong learning and soft skills. Many poor students are struggling financially during Covid, especially in the rural areas.
- o. Mr. Casey Barnett then volunteered to be on the Working Group for Education, and said we should try to prioritize getting the third Covid shot for those in education.
- p. Ms. Julina Mam, IDP, would like to engage parents in the discussion about education and their children.
- q. Mr. Gabriel Helmy, the Capacity Specialists, stated that he has a unique perspective. One of the pains he recognizes, as others have mentioned, is the skills gap. When young people reach the work force, they don't have the skills that employers need. He likes Casey's idea about having more engagement with the private sector and educational institutions because there must be a continual feedback loop. Education can't change unless they know what employers want.

#### **4. Moving Forward**

Ashley closed the meeting by saying that Travis will circulate the minutes by tomorrow and will call a meeting next week to vote a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary, and we can create a terms of reference. He asked anyone who is interested in being part of the committee, please let Travis know.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45pm.