USAID ASSIST Project

Cambodia Country Report FY18

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For more information on the work of the USAID ASSIST Project, please visit www.usaidassist.org or write assist-info@urc-chs.com.

Recommended citation
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Abbreviations

ASEAN Association of South East Asian Nations
ASSIST USAID Applying Science to Strengthen and Improve Systems Project
CCHPC Coordinating Committee of Health Profession Councils
CCN Cambodian Council of Nurses
CMC Cambodian Midwives Council
DCC Dental Council of Cambodia
FY Fiscal Year
HPC Health Profession Council
LRHP Law on Regulation of Health Practitioners
MCC Medical Council of Cambodia
MOH Ministry of Health
PCC Pharmacy Council of Cambodia
RMS Registrant Management System
UNFPA United Nations Population Fund
URC University Research Co., LLC
USAID United States Agency for International Development
1 Introduction

The primary purpose of the USAID ASSIST Project in Cambodia (June 2014–March 2018) was to work in partnership with the five health profession Councils (HPCs) along with the Ministry of Health to strengthen the system of health profession regulation in Cambodia in accordance with the HPCs' National Strategic Plan 2015-2020, which ASSIST supported the Councils to develop. The five Councils included the Medical Council of Cambodia (MCC), Dental Council of Cambodia (DCC), Cambodian Midwives Council (CMC), Cambodian Council of Nurses (CCN), and Pharmacy Council of Cambodia (PCC).

Strengthening the system of health profession regulation in Cambodia involved the five Councils establishing an appropriately resourced, cost-effective, and efficient body for the governance and operations to regulate all health professionals across all health care sectors – public, private and non-profit. This contributed to the Royal Government of Cambodia’s quality and safety agenda for improved health care services by ensuring the regulatory functions of registration of health professionals and license to practice of health practitioners; professional practice standards; monitoring and compliance against standards; and complaints management with disciplinary or protective actions are delivered in accordance with contemporary, regulatory legislation that is in alignment with the cultural context of Cambodia.

Developed with ASSIST technical support, the new law on Regulation of Health Practitioners was enacted on November 22, 2016 and reflects contemporary approaches and practices for effective regulation of all health professionals in Cambodia. The purpose of this new Law is to protect the health and safety of the public. This new Law, with other existing legislative instruments including Royal Decrees, Sub-decrees, and Prakas, provides the framework to establish and deliver health professional regulation in Cambodia. Further enhancements will be required to align the existing Royal Decrees, Sub-decrees, and Prakas to this new Law and achieve full implementation of contemporary health profession regulation.

Health profession regulation is an important means by which the public of Cambodia and health service employers can readily identify those who are registered health professionals and licensed health practitioners. A registered health professional is a person who has been assessed by their respective Council as holding the requisite professional qualification, skills, and competence to use the title of doctor, dentist, midwife, nurse or pharmacist. A health practitioner is a registered health professional with a renewable license to practice from their respective Council that recognizes they have maintained professional competence and are “fit to practice” their profession.

Registration for life with a renewable license to practice provides a safety mechanism for anyone to report those health practitioners who may not meet the professional standards of practice. Subsequent investigation may be required to determine whether the facts of the matter constitute a serious breach or a concern about the health professional’s standard of professional practice. When it is proven there is a risk to the safety of the public, these health professionals may have their practice restricted by conditions, suspended for a period of time, or permanently removed from the public register and stopped from practicing as a health practitioner.

In FY18, ASSIST continued to provide technical advice and assistance to the five Councils and the Ministry of Health to build on and complete the activities achieved in FY14-17. The project closed out on Friday, March 30th, 2018.

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1 Available on the ASSIST website: https://www.usaidassist.org/resources/health-profession-councils-national-strategic-plan-2015%E2%80%932020
Scale of USAID ASSIST’s Work in Cambodia

Five health profession Councils: Medical (Est. 2000); Dental (Est. 2005); Midwives (Est. 2006); Nurses (Est. 2007); Pharmacy (Est. 2010)

Three levels of Council: 1 National Council; 5 Regional Councils; 25 Provincial Councils

Population of Cambodia: 15,958,693

Number and percentage of health professionals registered* by Council as of Sept. 30, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Number of registered health professionals</th>
<th>% of estimated total number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCC</td>
<td>5,686</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>6,015</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCN</td>
<td>12,461</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>2,580</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>27,929</strong></td>
<td><strong>72%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total estimated health professionals** (public & private health care sectors): **38,571**

2 Program Overview

What did we try to accomplish? | At what scale?
--- | ---
1. **Implement the 4th and final year plan of action that aligns with the priority strategic objectives of the five health profession Councils**
   - Implement activities to support the health profession Councils’ priority strategic objectives: legislative reform; organizational improvement; registration; and license to practice (as articulated in the Health Profession Councils’ National Strategic Plan 2015-2020)

*Strategic Goal #1: Legislative Review and Reform*
- **Enable the enactment of the new Law on Regulation of Health Practitioners** through the development of consequential amendments at the appropriate level of the law:
  - Single Royal Decree to establish existing and future Councils;
  - Sub-Decree on procedures relating to complaints on professional misconduct and requirements relating to inquiry into a health practitioner’s fitness to practice and complaints related to fitness to practice

*Strategic Goal #3: Organizational Redesign*
- **Establishment of the health profession Councils’ Joint Secretariat** in accordance with the approved Business Plan that builds capacity to establish and maintain effective and efficient business and regulatory systems and processes
- **Implement sound governance arrangements with robust financial accountability to deliver the five Councils’ shared business and regulatory functions over a 3-5 year timeframe**

* *predominately public health sector*
What did we try to accomplish? At what scale?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Goal #4: Registration</th>
<th>Strategic Goal #6: License to Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Enhancements to support full implementation of Councils’ new Registrant Management System, including health professional registration data migration, standardized reports, and mobile application</td>
<td>• Enhancement of the Registrant Management System for online application process and to meet minimum requirements for professional competence to practice through initial and renewable license to practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Strategic Goal #4: Registration

- Enhancements to support full implementation of Councils’ new Registrant Management System, including health professional registration data migration, standardized reports, and mobile application

*Strategic Goal #6: License to Practice

- Enhancement of the Registrant Management System for online application process and to meet minimum requirements for professional competence to practice through initial and renewable license to practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Activities, Accomplishments, and Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 1. Implement the 4th and final year plan of action that aligns with the priority strategic objectives of the five health profession Councils</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BACKGROUND**

The goal of this activity was to implement activities to support the health profession Councils’ priority strategic objectives as articulated in the Health Profession Councils' National Strategic Plan 2015-2020: legislative reform; organizational improvement; registration; and license to practice.

**KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND RESULTS**

**General: Technical assistance, workshops and meetings**


- Presentation on *Roles and Responsibilities: Bureau of Nursing & Midwifery MoH; Cambodian Midwives Council / Cambodian Council of Nurses and Professional Association or Society* at the *National Biennial Nursing and Midwifery Conference 2017 (NBNMC) - Improving the Quality of Care: Nurses’ and Midwives Impact on Patient’s Outcomes* (Phnom Penh; December 11-12, 2017).

- Attended the Ministry of Health Dissemination Workshop on the “National Policy for Quality and Safety in Health” and “Master Plan for Quality Improvement in Health” (Phnom Penh; December 29, 2017).

- Participated in UNFPA Midwifery Partners meeting to update the areas of human resources for health and midwifery and discuss the implementation of the bridging course from Associate Diploma of Midwifery to Bachelor of Science, Midwifery for midwife educators supported by UNFPA and provided in country by the University of Technology, Sydney (Phnom Penh; January 30, 2018).

- Presentation on *Using regulatory levers to strengthen the health profession workforce in Cambodia* as part of the *ASSIST Legacy Webinar Series: Strengthening Health Systems to Achieve Better Outcomes* (March 8, 2018).

- Presentation on the *Outcomes of and Next Steps following USAID ASSIST Project to strengthen the system of health professional regulation in Cambodia* at the *Health Partners Group meeting* (Phnom Penh, March 29, 2018).

- ASSIST was funded for an additional six months of activities from October 1, 2017 and closed out the project effective Friday, March 30, 2018.

**Strategic Goal #1: Legislative Review and Reform**

- *The Comparative Study on Health Professional Regulatory Body Framework* (Mar 2018) was commissioned by ASSIST and presented to the five health profession Councils on March 1,
2018 by the Sithisak Law Office. This document provides a desktop comparative study of identified Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and western countries with regards to the establishment of, and governance by, different health professional councils using a single legal instrument or separate legal instruments for a new Royal Decree for the five health profession Councils in Cambodia and future Councils.

- The proposed Royal Decree on the Organization and Functioning of each health profession Council of Cambodia was drafted by Sithisak Law Office using the current template for a Cambodian Royal Decree and based on the findings and recommendations from the:
  a. Desktop Review of Legal and Procedural Framework to Support the Implementation of the Law on Regulation of Health Practitioners (Mar 2017); and

- ASSIST and Sithisak Law Office met with the five health profession Councils and select representatives from the Ministry of Health on March 12, 2018. This resulted in the review and amendment of 8 of the 35 Articles in the proposed Royal Decree for each health profession Council.

**Strategic Goal #3: Organizational Redesign**

- Procurement of, and installation of the office furniture, IT equipment, and software licenses for five of nine proposed staff positions for the new HPCs Joint Secretariat (March 2018).
- ASSIST contracted HR INC (Cambodia) Co. Ltd., a local human resources management company, to recruit, appoint, and employ five local staff for the HPCs’ Joint Secretariat in accordance with the five position descriptions. The Managing Director (March 12, 2018), Accountant (March 26, 2018), and Registration Specialist, IT & Data Base Specialist, and Administrative Officer positions (from April 2, 2018) will provide the operational support to the five health profession Councils by implementing agreed regulatory and business functions for all five Councils.
- ASSIST has secured funds and contract arrangements that will allow HR INC (Cambodia) Co. Ltd. to continue to employ and pay the salaries of the five staff of the HPCs’ Joint Secretariat until September 30, 2018.
- The original signed HPCs’ letter of Nominations for the Executive Committee of Joint Secretariat (May 2017) was amended and signed on December 15, 2017 to include the names of two, rather than one, additional members to the primary member from each Council for the Executive Committee of Joint Secretariat. The initial meeting of the Executive Committee of Joint Secretariat will be scheduled by the Managing Director for the Joint Secretariat for the members to: (1) review and approve the proposed roles and responsibilities for the Executive Committee of Joint Secretariat; (2) initiate the agreed funding contributions from each of the five Councils to support the operations of the HPCs’ Joint Secretariat; and (3) prioritize the Q3 and Q4 activities of the Joint Secretariat.

*Strategic Goal #4: Registration*

- ASSIST prepared for approval and dissemination by each Council the Notification on Implementation of Online Registration by using New Registration Application Form letter from the Ministry of Health (February 22, 2018).
- The Registrant Management System (RMS) for the five health profession Councils went live on Wednesday, March 21, 2018 for online application of local and foreign applicants for registration as a health professional (see Figures 1 and 2).
- Code’s Done has completed the development of a mobile application for Android and iPhone for the RMS and online payment. However, the online payment system is not operational because the five health profession Councils are still deliberating on the assignment of
signatories and bank account to receive the payments. Code’s Done is able to connect the HPCs’ bank account to the web as soon as this information is provided.

- Data entry or migration of 29,196 registered health professionals from four of the five Councils has been completed. The Dental Council of Cambodia declined ASSIST’s offer for Code’s Done to undertake the data entry for DCC’s 1,306 registered dentists from their manual records. This was based on DCC’s concerns about the accuracy and quality of their manual records.

Figure 1. Screen capture of the new online Registrant Management System (RMS) for the five health profession Councils (Mar 2018)

Figure 2. Screen capture of the new online registration portal for the five health profession Councils (Mar 2018)
- **Automatic monthly, quarterly and annual reports for each Council** have been programmed by Code’s Done that display in graph and table:
  - Number of registered health professionals by Council
  - Number of retirees and deceased registrant per year
  - Gender breakdown – males and females
  - Registered health professionals by province or region
  - Age cohorts

- **Table 1** shows the number of registered health professionals’ in each Council whose data has been transferred into the new web-based Registrant Management System. From March 21st, 2018, each registrant’s data from their online application for registration will automatically be entered into the Registrant Management System.

### Table 1. Registered health professionals’ data transferred into the RMS as of March 26, 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council</th>
<th>Number of registered health professionals as of September 30, 2017</th>
<th>Actual number of registered health professionals’ data per Council transferred to RMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCC</td>
<td>5,686</td>
<td>7,032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCC</td>
<td>1,187</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>6,015</td>
<td>6,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCN</td>
<td>12,461</td>
<td>13,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC</td>
<td>2,580</td>
<td>2,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>27,929</td>
<td>29,196</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* DCC declined to transfer their existing registrant data to the RMS

- **ASSIST funded technical assistance from Code’s Done** to support additional Council-led, one-day training workshops for the online registration application forms and process and web-based Registrant Management System. These one-day workshops were included in the:
  - **Dental Council of Cambodia Annual Conference for all dentists in Phnom Penh** (October 6, 2017). ASSIST and Code’s Done provided one-on-one training to the DCC President who then delivered an additional one-day training workshop on March 23, 2018 for 100 Council members. DCC plans to provide additional training workshops in Battambang and Siem Reap provinces.
  - **Cambodian Council of Nurses two-day workshop for all Provincial Council members in Siem Reap** (March 15 & 16, 2018). Sixty (60) Council members participated, and CCN now plans to provide additional training workshops at regional and/or provincial level, focusing first on the provincial Councils that require more development and assistance.

- **ASSIST, with technical assistance from Code’s Done**, delivered an additional one-day training workshop (February 22, 2018) for 25 HPCs’ staff and members in Phnom Penh. The aim was to update staff and HPC members involved in registration to be proficient in:
  - How to complete the online registration application form;
  - The online registration application process, including the registration fee payment;
  - The online Registrant Management System (RMS) for all health profession Councils.

- The Cambodian Midwives Council took the initiative and as part of their five scheduled regional workshops provided online registration training sessions to Council members in preparation for implementation of the online registration (February 28 and March 9, 16, and 23, 2018).
• ASSIST has funded a twelve-month maintenance service contract between Code’s Done and the five Councils from April 1, 2018 to March 30, 2019 to maintain and improve the online system and processes and RMS.

**Strategic Goal #6: License to Practice**

• ASSIST completed the development of the online forms for registered health professionals to apply for initial and, in the future, renewal of license to practice as a health practitioner (March 2018). These forms for local and foreigner registered health professionals have recently been approved by all five health professional Councils and subsequently programmed by Code’s Done.

4 Sustainability and Institutionalization

The following principles underpin the approach ASSIST has applied to strengthen the system of health profession regulation in partnership with the five health profession Councils and the Ministry of Health.

1. **Co-design:** The ASSIST annual work plan is informed by the ASSIST project team; the five health professional Councils and their National Strategic Plan 2015-2020; the Ministry of Health; health development partners; and other key stakeholders.

2. **Ongoing development of the activity:** This is in recognition of the forces for change that will present during the life of the project. These include changes to the way the health system is planned and resourced; the resources available to deliver health profession regulation; the Royal Government of Cambodia’s policy in relation to the system for health profession regulation; and the public’s expectations.

3. **Enable not implement:** The ownership for this initiative remains vested with the Councils, the Ministry of Health, and other stakeholders in Cambodia and is designed to harness the Cambodian expertise and lessons learnt and support the development of relationships and collaboration with regulatory peers, both regionally and globally.

4. **Encourage solutions to better utilize/mobilize available resources within the health system:** Stakeholder ownership and capacity to develop, test, lead, and implement sustainable solutions will be strengthened as stakeholders are connected with the best international technical expertise.

Strengthening human resources for health is an integral component of the quality and safety framework for a country’s health care system. A competent and flexible health workforce that meets the existing and future health care needs of the Cambodian community is critical to ensure that the community has access to safe, quality health services. To prevent the risk of harm to the community, all health professionals must be easily identified and recognized as competent and safe to practice.

A country’s system of health profession regulation is established by the government through a legal mandate, with the primary purpose being to protect the public from harm. The establishment of an appropriately resourced, cost-effective, and efficient body or bodies for the regulatory governance and operations of all health professionals across all health care sectors will support the Royal Government of Cambodia’s health care quality and safety reform agenda.

The newly established office and employment of five of the nine designated staff for the HPCs’ Joint Secretariat will provide increased capacity and capability to the five health profession Councils for key regulatory priorities as identified in the HPCs’ National Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020. In addition, the new Executive Committee of the Joint Secretariat will provide the governance framework for this new organization where members from all five Councils have been appointed “to check and govern, identify strategy, policy, procedures and roles, duties of the Joint Secretariat.”

With the support of the HPCs’ Joint Secretariat along with each Council’s staff and members, the five Councils will need to continue to promote and implement the new online registration application process and system to ensure that each Council reaches 100% registration for all health professionals in Cambodia. This will then need to be followed up by training and implementation of the newly developed online initial license to practice application process and system for Cambodian and foreigner registered health professionals.
Following the transfer of four of the five Councils active registrant data into the new Registrant Management System (DCC declined to transfer their existing data), the five Councils will need to continue to improve the quality of each registrant’s data so that the over time the quality of the data will be accurate and reliable for regular reporting by Council, type of registrant, and a variety of other parameters (e.g., age, gender, province).

The establishment of the Coordinating Committee of the Health Profession Councils by the Minister of Health in January 2017, in accordance with Article 31 of the new Law, provides a mechanism whereby the Presidents of the health profession Councils, in partnership with designated Departmental Directors from the Ministry of Health, are tasked with “the responsibility to coordinate and organize procedures and mechanisms in order to help the health profession Councils fulfill their roles and tasks to effectively enforce the new Law on Regulation of Health Practitioners.”

The new law on Regulation of Health Practitioners provides the new legal regulatory framework by which Councils are able to regulate all health professionals in Cambodia. The five Councils will need to continue to work with the Ministry of Health to review the remaining legal instruments and align them to the new law as previously prioritized by the Coordinating Committee of Health Profession Councils. The Councils will need to continue to review the proposed Royal Decree and finalize and recommend this new Royal Decree for each health profession Council to the Prime Minister for signature by the King.

To ensure institutionalization and sustainability of the activities undertaken by the USAID ASSIST Project in the past three years and six months, the five independent health profession Councils and the recently established Joint Secretariat will require ongoing technical assistance and financial support to continue to increase their capacity and capability and thereby strengthen and transform the system of health profession regulation in Cambodia.

5 Knowledge Management Products and Activities

- Summary Findings of Comparative Study on Health Professional Regulatory Body Framework (March 2018)
- Proposed Royal Decree for each health profession Council including amendments to Articles 1 – 8 (March 13, 2018)
- Approved online application forms for each health profession Council in Khmer and English for: (1) Cambodian and foreigner applicants to register as a health professional and (2) Cambodian and foreigner registered health professionals to apply for initial license to practice and renewal of license to practice (March 2018).
- Registrant Management System mobile app for Android and iPhone for online applications (March 21, 2018). Online payment through app developed but not yet implemented by Councils.
- ASSIST Legacy Webinar Series presentation titled Using regulatory levers to strengthen the health professional workforce in Cambodia (https://www.usaidassist.org/content/legacy-webinar-series)

6 Gender Integration

- Automatic monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting for each Council have been programmed by Code’s Done that will display in graph and table format the percentage of registered health professionals and, in the future, the percentage of males and females licensed to practice as a health practitioner.
7 Key Accomplishments – Life of Project (2014-2018)

- **Development of, and subsequent launch of the five health profession Councils’ National Strategic Plan 2015-2020** by the Minister of Health that has guided the implementation of priority improvements to strengthen the system of health profession regulation (June 8, 2015).

- **Enactment of the new Law on Regulation of Health Practitioners (LHRP) (November 22, 2016)** which gives the power and authority to all five Councils to effectively regulate all health professionals in Cambodia. It includes new requirements for registration for life as a health professional; new requirements for an initial and renewable license to practice as a health practitioner; penalties for those persons who are not a registered health professional yet practice the profession and for those who practice their profession without a license to practice; and investigation of complaints into the professional competence and/or conduct of individual practitioners with the authority to apply disciplinary sanctions or protective actions to protect the public from harm.

- **Promotion of the new Law and its requirements among the five Councils.** ASSIST sponsored a Council-led dissemination workshop on the new law for four of the five Councils in December 2016 with participation of 240 members from the national, regional, and provincial Councils. The Dental Council independently delivered a separate dissemination workshop on the new Law to its national and sub-national Council members.

- **Identification, prioritization, and drafting of amendments to subsequent legal instruments to fully implement the new Law.** To align with the requirements of the new law, amendments to the five health profession Councils’ Royal Decrees, Sub-decrees, and Prakas required:
  1. Development of a Ministry of Health/health profession Councils’ Activity Plan to guide the implementation of the new LHRP (Sep 2016).
  2. Comprehensive desktop review titled *Desktop Review of Legal and Procedural Framework to Support the Implementation of the LHRP* (Mar 2017) that identifies all the legal and procedural requirements necessary to support implementation of the new Law.
  3. Prioritization of the amendments to the Councils’ existing Royal Decrees, Sub Decrees and Prakas by the Coordinating Committee of Health Profession Councils (CCHPC) with referral to the Ministry of Health to arrange amendments to other existing laws, such as the Law on Abortion.
  4. Development of proposed Prakas for the role and responsibilities of the CCHPC as per Article 31 of the new Law (Sep 2017).
  5. Report titled *Comparative Study on Health Professional Regulatory Body Framework* (Mar 2018) that reviewed selected ASEAN and Western countries’ legal frameworks and provided findings and recommendations to develop a template Royal Decree for each health profession Council that meets the new Law requirements, contemporary regulatory practice, and the Cambodian legal system requirements.

- **Developed the Business Plan** (Dec 2015) including the organizational model and three-year budget 2017-2019 for the five health profession Councils’ Joint Secretariat to build capacity and capability to deliver the shared business and regulatory functions. This included the design of a governance structure through roles and responsibilities of an Executive Committee for the Joint Secretariat (May 2017) and appointment of the members (Dec 2017). An Implementation Plan for the health profession Councils’ Joint Secretariat was also developed (Dec 2016).

- **Established the HPCs’ Joint Secretariat** (March 2018) through the development of nine staff position descriptions; sourcing suitable office premises for Councils to lease; procurement of office furniture and IT equipment; and recruitment and funding of five of the nine positions until September 30, 2018.

- **Developed Social Behavior Change Communications (SBCC) Strategy for Health Professions Registration and communications materials** (May 2017).
• Developed online registration application forms for Cambodian and foreigner applicants and process with a web-based Registrant Management System (RMS) for implementation on March 21, 2018.

1. Together with local IT developer, Code’s Done, ASSIST conducted regional workshops to train 255 members and staff from all five Councils across the 25 provinces (Aug–Sep 2017). These workshops focused on how to complete the new online application for registration by Cambodian nationals; new registration application process, including registration fee payment; and new web-based RMS for all health profession Councils.


• Developed online application forms, process and payment system, for desktop and mobile platforms, for initial license to practice and renewal of license to practice for registered Cambodian and foreigner health professionals. Training by the Councils and HPCs’ Joint Secretariat for implementation of online application for license to practice will be required following the successful implementation of the online registration application process.