

## Summary Report 2019-2026



### Executive Summary

This report summarizes the outcome of the joint Japan-WAPES Public Employment Services (PES) Transformation Pilot Project for Cambodia from 2019 to 2026. Its overarching objective was to enhance the foundation of PES performance in the Asia-Pacific region.

This pilot project focused on three significant challenges the National Employment Agency (NEA), Royal Government of Cambodia faced: **1. providing more customer-centric services, 2. improving service quality, and 3. increasing user access to services through partnerships with stakeholders.**

To achieve more effective outcomes, this project followed **an action research cycle comprising five steps: Fact-finding (Step 1); Planning (Step 2); Acting (Step 3); Observing (Step 4); and Reflecting (Step 5).** It took over six years to complete all steps, overcoming hardships during COVID-19.

As one of the breakthrough highlights, the project successfully developed **two self-assessment tools: the Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) and the Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS)** to address NEA's three challenges, thanks to various activities (1) Kick Off Meeting, (2) Study Visits, (3) Online Meetings, and (4) Planning of the Consultation Conferences) and practical advice from supportive experts. Furthermore, NEA's efforts led to the trial implementation of both tools in the selected job center, with favorable results. In the final step, NEA voluntarily analyzed the data both qualitatively and quantitatively to identify strengths and weaknesses in its daily services and to consider how to incorporate these insights into future job centers' activities.

As a result, the Project Team believes this long-term project could build a strong foundation that will have a significant impact on PES users and its stakeholders. A variety of activities through the project promoted teamwork in the NEA and job centers, which in turn drew the attention of the WAPES members.

In conclusion, we recommend that Cambodia continue to harness benchmarking and mutual learning ('bench-learning') beyond this project's formal completion to further improve its service quality. Also, we would like to request WAPES to extend the bench-learning approach to other countries by collaborating with relevant agencies and stakeholders.

## Part 1. Introduction

### 1. Background

The Asia-Pacific region has experienced remarkable economic and demographic change in recent years. The combination of robust economic growth and a rising population has positioned the region as a major player in the global economy and has contributed to its growing influence on the world stage. With the aging population, climate change, and digital transitions creating fundamental labour market challenges, governments in the region are seeking optimal ways to increase skills, productivity, and inclusiveness to maintain growth. Amid these changes, Public Employment Services (PES) play a crucial role in fostering inclusive and equitable transitions by constantly offering need-based services.

### 2. The role of WAPES

WAPES (founded in 1988) is a unique global network connecting more than 70 Public Employment Services worldwide and provides a platform for its members to exchange knowledge, learn from best practices, and collaborate to address labor market challenges such as digital transformation, skills development, and labor shortages. The aim is “To be a Knowledge hub for Public Employment Services”. WAPES actively holds conferences, cooperation projects, peer learning, and webinars.

Furthermore, WAPES is committed to promoting mutual learning with other global bodies, including the EU-PES Network, the ILO, and the OECD, based on the ‘bench-learning’ concept. ‘Bench-learning’ means combining two concepts of benchmarking and mutual learning, which have been shown to be effective methods for helping PES adapt to evolving labor market challenges by learning from best-in-class peer practice and adapting it to national, regional, and local contexts. As part of this wider bench-learning perspective, WAPES launched its ‘SamPES’ initiative to create a more robust platform with its accumulated expertise.

### 3. Establishing the WAPES-Japan Joint Project

Historically, promoting multi-lateral networking and learning activities between WAPES members in the Asia-Pacific region has been hampered by geographic, linguistic and organizational differences. These have constrained the management, effectiveness and sustainability of international cooperation projects in the region. To address these challenges, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) and WAPES agreed to initiate a Joint Project in 2019 resourced with a secondee from the Ministry to WAPES and voluntary contributions.

The Joint Project was established on 1 April 2019 through the cooperation agreement between WAPES and MHLW. The project's primary purposes are: (1) to contribute to the sustainable improvement of PES through cross-border collaboration among WAPES members and (2) to demonstrate the advantages of WAPES membership to potential non-member countries.

## Part 2. Framework of the project for Cambodia

### 1. Selection of Target Country – Cambodia

#### (1) About the NEA

The National Employment Agency (NEA) is the only Public Employment Services Agency in Cambodia, established in 2009 under the National Training Board (NTB) and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT). It has been a WAPES member since 2013. The NEA's target groups are 1) job seekers, 2) employers, and 3) training providers. Its services are delivered through 14 job centers, 8 mobile job

centers, 3 job center branches in various shopping malls, 5 Career Corners, and online services, including websites, Facebook, and other online applications. NEA's Vision is "To be a leading Agency to Provide Quality Employment Service and Labour Market Information in Cambodia"

## (2) Why was the NEA selected?

The NEA in Cambodia was selected for the project based on several factors, including a longstanding working relationship with WAPES and close ties to Japan.

To secure its core PES functions and respond to changing work arrangements, the NEA has committed to improving practical services to be more timely, efficient, and user-friendly, while leveraging digital systems, online platforms, and mobile applications. In this context, the NEA faced challenges in advancing its PES to the next stage, including **1) providing more customer-centric services, 2) improving service quality, and 3) increasing user access to services through partnerships with stakeholders.** On the other hand, WAPES and MHLW have the expertise and effective ideas to address these challenges through the development of self-assessment tools, mutual learning approaches, and practical advice from experts. This alignment led the Joint Project to select the NEA as its first target, along with a specific project scheme.

Courtesy visit of Cambodia and Korea to Japan



## 2. Project Scheme

The framework of the Joint Project was based on the cooperation agreement and designed to promote an effective partnership among five key actors (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Project scheme



<The project team (Five key actors) >

- 1) **The MHLW** is in overall charge of the planning and implementation of the project. The MHLW offers a voluntary contribution and dispatches a Project Coordinator to the WAPES executive secretariat.
- 2) **The WAPES Executive Secretariat** manages the project's implementation.
- 3) **The Korea Employment Information Service (KEIS)**, the Vice President of the WAPES Asia-Pacific region, facilitates communication among WAPES members in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 4) **The NEA** is the first target country, taking autonomy and implementing the project activities in collaboration with other actors.
- 5) **Three nominated experts from the MHLW, KEIS, and APM-Ingeus**, with a high level of knowledge and skills and rich experience in PES, advise the NEA to maximize the impact of the project's contents.

## Part 3. Methodology

### 1. Basic approaches

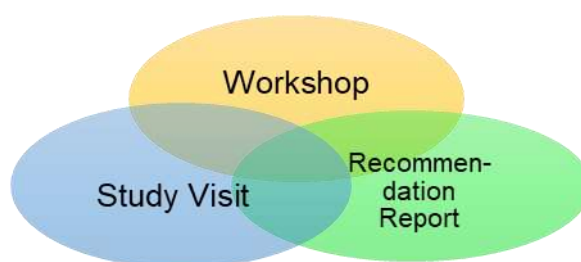
This Joint Project used three approaches to introduce a variety of activities in different settings, namely **1) Study Visit, 2) Workshop, and 3) a Recommendation Report** (Figure 2).

**The study visit** focuses on experiential learning, aiming to help participants (1) identify areas for improvement by viewing issues from multiple perspectives and (2) abstract their ideas by linking them to existing knowledge and understanding.

**The workshop** fosters mutual learning by planning and testing actions in a series. It uses a variety of formats, including conferences, training sessions, office tours, and visits to WAPES member countries for information exchange.

**A Recommendation Report** summarizes overall activities and encourages participants to reflect on their findings. Self-evaluation by the target country, together with advice from the Project Team, should promote a self-learning loop that supports continuous improvement.

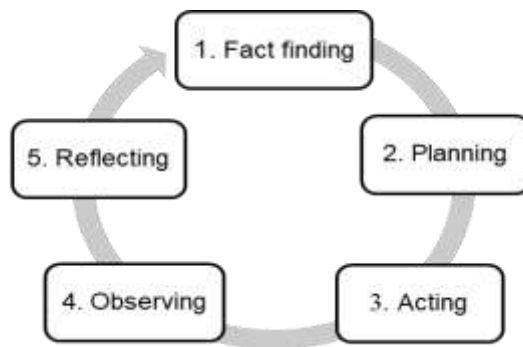
Figure 2. Basic approaches of the Joint Project



### 2. Five-step action research cycle

The progress of the project was managed using a five-step action research cycle: **Fact-finding (Step 1), Planning (Step 2), Acting (Step 3), Observing (Step 4), and Reflecting (Step 5)** (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Five Steps in the Action Research Cycle



#### <Project history>

(Step 1) Fact-finding: 2019-2021,

(Step 2) Planning: 2019-2021

(Step 3) Acting: 2021-2023

(Step 4) Observing: 2023-25

(Step 5) Reflecting: 2025-2026

Significant achievements were made through the Kick-Off Meeting, Study Visit, and two Online Meetings between 2019 and 2020. These activities facilitated experiential learning across Steps 1 to 3. The key activities in Steps 3 to 5 were planned for 2021, including implementing a trial of two developed self-assessment tools ((1) Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) and (2) Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS)) in model Job Centers and promoting social dialogue with stakeholders. However, the COVID-19 crisis imposed new and unforeseen pressures on PES in Cambodia, preventing the NEA from completing the planned activities. Despite these unfavorable conditions, the NEA's flexibility and persistence enabled core activities to continue online during pandemic restrictions and to resume promptly to complete them after restrictions were lifted. In 2023, the trial implementation of the self-assessment was completed, with positive reactions (Step 3). Afterwards, the NEA voluntarily analyzed the data both qualitatively and quantitatively and identified strengths and weaknesses in its daily services at Job Centers. These findings led the NEA to actively consider how to improve future Job Centers' activities (Step 4). These consistent activities have been shared with other WAPES members as one of the good practices through the WAPES conference and upcoming events (Step 5).

### 3. 'Bench-learning' Concept

'Bench-learning' means combining two concepts of benchmarking and mutual learning, with the aim of improving the performance of PES, introduced by the EU-PES Network. WAPES focuses on the concept and accumulates the expertise required for the effective implementation of its own projects.

This Joint Project also incorporates the concept into overall processes, such as study visits and workshops, to learn good practices and tips from MHLW and experts and adapt them to Cambodia's context.

## Part 4. Achievements

### 1. Overview of results

Since 2019, this project has been carried out in close cooperation with enthusiastic experts from the MHLW, KEIS, and APM-Ingicus. It primarily undertook 2 Study Visits (in Cambodia and Japan) and delivered over 4 Workshops focused on consultation and capacity building. These qualitative learning activities helped promote the pilot implementation of the developed self-assessment tools and supported the NEA in voluntarily analyzing the results to further improve practical PES in Job Centers. As a

wrap-up of this project, an outcome presentation was held at the WAPES Asia-Pacific Regional Conference (in person) in November 2025 (Table 1). Additionally, opportunities to share good practices from this project have continued through presentations at WAPES events.

## 2. Study Visits, Workshops & Best Practice Exchange

### (1) Kick-Off Meeting:

The NEA, WAPES Executive Secretariat, and MHLW clarified the role of PES in Cambodia and identified establishing performance assessments and developing a customer satisfaction methodology as priority areas for this project.



### (2) Study Visits

Two study visits were conducted with experts. First, the project team visited the NEA to assess the current capacity of the PES and its staff and to identify challenges for improvement. The NEA also visited Japan to explore good practices through active discussions of practical case studies. In particular, the NEA gained insights into developing two Self-Assessment Tools during the first study visit.



### (3) Workshops

Over four workshops were delivered by the Project Team covering the design, implementation, and promotion of the self-assessment tools.

- **Capacity Building Workshops** were delivered to help improve the NEA's processes and skills, referring to actual practices from Japan, Korea, and other countries.
- **Consultation and Social Dialogue Workshops** were held to share project methodologies and objectives with stakeholders and discuss their needs to improve the service quality of Cambodia's PES.



#### (4) Best Practice Exchanges among WAPES members

The NEA was actively provided opportunities to report on its ongoing project activities at WAPES events. In addition, the NEA could take advantage of its international networking and learning opportunities with other WAPES members.

#### Asia Pacific Regional Conference 2025 in the Philippines



Table 1: Main Activities of the Joint Project for Cambodia 2019-2026

When	Venue	Objective
2019 Jun	Japan	Official agreement to launch the project
2019 Sept	Cambodia	Kick-off meeting
2020 Feb	Cambodia	1st Workshop
2020-2021	Online	Meetings for trial implementation
2021 Aug	Online	Publication of Recommendation Report (2019-21)
2022 Oct	Cambodia	1st Study Visit NEA Career Fair/Preparation meeting
2022 Nov	Japan	2nd Study Visit
2023 Feb	Cambodia	2nd Workshops (Consultation)
2023 Oct	Online	Publication of Digital Progress Report
2023 Dec	Cambodia	3rd Workshop (Capacity Building)
2024 Feb	Cambodia	4th Workshop (Consultation)
2025 Nov	Philippines	Outcome Presentation in WAPES Asia-Pacific Regional Conference 2025
2026	Online	Publication of Project Summary Report (2019-26)

### 3. Two Self-Assessment Tools: Performance Assessment Framework (PAF), Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS)

Developments of a PAF and CSS were expected to narrow the gap between policy and practice through the involvement of people at different levels; empower the front service offices to continuously monitor, evaluate, and improve the PES deliveries; and receive sufficient feedback from PES users to re-design and tailor the services to meet the users' needs.

## (1) The PDCA improvement cycle approach

Two Self-Assessment Tools were developed and promoted in line with **the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) improvement cycle approach.**

- **Plan:** Identify problems, set specific goals, and create a detailed plan
- **Do:** Implement the plan and collect data
- **Check:** Analyze the data collected during the "Do" to see if the plan achieved the expected results.
- **Act:** Adjust the original plan to improve it based on findings from the PDC, then restart the cycle.

## (2) Implementation and results

Two trial self-assessments were conducted between 2020 and 2023. These tools were developed in-house by the NEA.

### a. Performance Assessment Framework (PAF)

The PAF was not only a major step toward enabling the NEA to identify the actual needs of service users but also provided front-line service staff with the autonomy to continuously monitor, evaluate, and improve PES delivery. The PAF developed by the NEA is expected to become one of the fundamental tools for improving the performance and daily practices of PES, enabling the NEA and its front-line staff to identify gaps between the plan and practices.

The PAF's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) consisted of three main user-oriented pillars.

- Pillar1: Increase in the number of service users
- Pillar2: Increase in the number of staff and staff capacity buildings
- Pillar3: Decrease in skill mismatches

The KPIs were designed to measure the impact of Job Centers' services on their users.

As a pilot implementation, model Job Centers in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap conducted the PAF-based study (Table 2).

Table 2: Key Results - Performance Assessment Framework

Pillar	KPIs	Results compared to the target number
Pillar 1	<b>Increase the number of service users</b> Number of 'walk-in' visitors Number of employer visits	<b>91%</b> <b>130%</b>
Pillar 2	<b>Increase the number/capacity of staff</b> Number of volunteers/ interns recruited Number of Training events	<b>Offered 3 people to volunteer at JC</b> <b>6 staff trainings</b>
Pillar 3	<b>Reduce skills mismatches</b> Number of job placements	<b>101%</b>

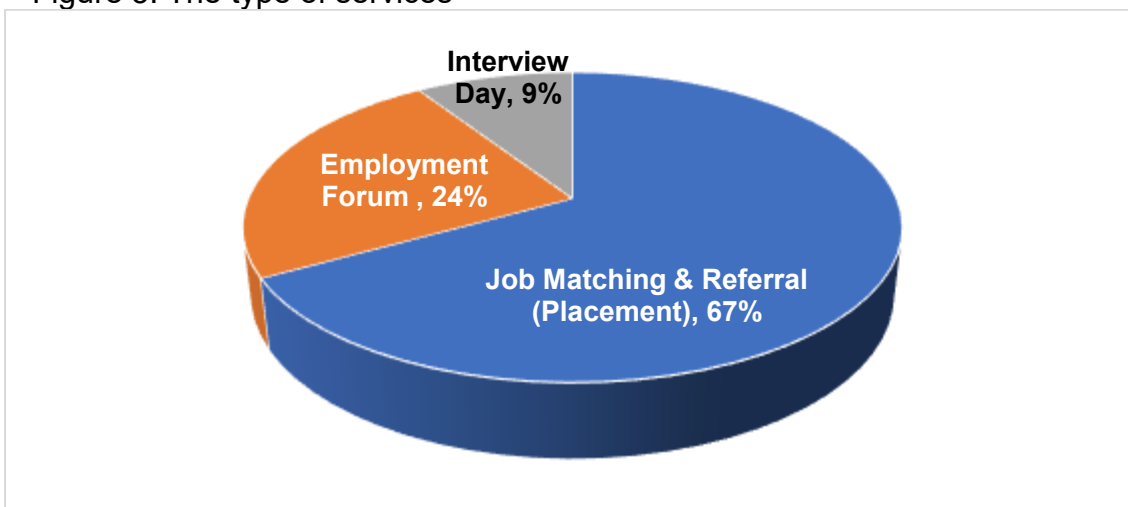
- Pillar 1 : Increase in the Number of Service Users  
The number of employer visits exceeded the target by 30%, while the number of 'walk-in' visitors was below the target in 91%. On the objectives for using the job centers, "Career Counseling/Guidance" accounted for about 60% of the total 'walk-in' visitors (Figure 4).

Figure 4: The objectives of the 'walk-in' visitors



- Pillar 2: Increase in the Number of Staff / Staff Capacity Building  
 A total of six trainings for staff were implemented, the contents of which were: 1. Soft Skills, 2. Pre-Employment, 3. High School Career Guidance, 4. Career Counseling and 5. CPES System Refresh Training. Also, it offered three jobseekers to volunteer at the Job Center.
- Pillar 3: Decrease in Skill Mismatches  
 The number of job placements was 101% of the target, slightly exceeding it. Approximately 70% was made up by "Job Matching & Referral" (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The type of services



Overall, although the PAF did not show notably positive or negative results, the data-gathering exercise still established important benchmarks that will support the NEA's services going forward. Additionally, it could help enhance understanding of practical situations and raise motivation to improve among NEA staff, in cooperation with various stakeholders.

**b. Customer Satisfaction Survey (CSS)**

The CSS is the basic tool used to assess PES performance by collecting feedback from service users (jobseekers, employers, and training providers). It reflects on the sufficient services provided, especially by the NEA's front office officers. Moreover, it will be useful to re-design and customize the services to fulfill the actual needs of the service users.

The main objectives of the CSS are:

- To assess NEA service performance
- To improve NEA service Quality

Since 2019, the NEA designed the CSS framework using five criteria (timeliness, accessibility, respectful treatment, reliable information, and expected customer outcomes) through several in-person and online discussions with the project team. In the pilot study, the CSS framework measured user satisfaction across four pillars (timeliness, accessibility, respectful treatment, and reliable information). It targeted 1,820 jobseekers and 785 employers registered in the NEA’s database across 14 NEA Job Centers in Cambodia in 2023. Satisfaction levels were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “very dissatisfied” to “very satisfied”: “very dissatisfied”, “relatively dissatisfied”, “generally satisfied”, “relatively satisfied”, and “very satisfied”.

**<Implementation of the CSS>**

- ✓ Purpose: Assess PES performance from use’s perspective  
(Timeliness/Accessibility/Respectful Treatment/Reliable information)
- ✓ Participants: 1820 Jobseekers, 785 Employers,  
(Randomly selected from the past users)
- ✓ Time: July-August 2023
- ✓ Method: Online Interviews with Google Form by 10 trained interviewers
- ✓ Scale: 5 Scales  
(very dissatisfied, relatively dissatisfied, generally satisfied, relatively satisfied, and very satisfied)
- ✓ Languages: Originally made in English, translated into Khmer

As a result of the survey (Table 3), both job seekers and employers expressed positive views of NEA’s or job centers’ services, with over 90% of respondents rating “very satisfied” or “relatively satisfied.” More specifically, 80 to 90% of respondents rated “relatively satisfied.” Although most of NEA’s services were highly rated, some challenges were identified. Specifically, the following items were rated “relatively dissatisfied” by about 0.05% to 0.13% of respondents from Job seekers and Employers:

- Easy to understand instructions and responses of the officials
- Finding solutions for my case with high responsibilities
- Clear introduction of duties and responsibilities

Reviewing these negative numerical outputs, the NEA identified its weak points in daily services. This prompted them to begin voluntary discussions on how to follow up at each Job Center and how to improve the service menu to better match users’ needs across the Organization, especially focusing on the following menu:

- Pre-Employment and Soft Skills Training
- Career Counseling and Guidance
- Job Matching and Referral
- Employment Forum
- Stakeholder Meeting (Partnership)

It means that the basic concept, ‘The PDCA improvement cycle approach,’ worked in practice across the series of activities in this pilot survey implementation. It is expected that the NEA aims to harness the CSS methodology to create a virtuous cycle of assessment and service improvement, leading to even greater levels of user satisfaction.

Table 3: Results from Customer Satisfaction Survey

### <Jobseekers>

Overall		“Satisfied” (%)
	Satisfaction with the services provided overall	97.86%
	Recommend NEA services to others	96.21%
Specific		
Quality of	Online service	92.75%
	Career counselling	92.69%
	Job matching	93.57%
	Events (career fairs, employment forums etc.)	94.01%
	Pre-employment and Soft-skills Training	94.34%
Timeliness		
		91.21%
Accessibility		
Easy to	Find contact channels (website, address, Telephone number etc.)	92.20%
	Understand instructions and responses from officials	92.91%
	Access services both online and physical access in business hours	93.02%
Respectful Treatment		
	Receiving services with respect and understanding	93.52%
	Finding solutions for my case with high level of responsiveness	92.03%
	Keeping jobseekers’ information confidential	90.93%
Reliability of information		
	Clear introduction of duties and responsibilities	91.92%
	Provision with up-to-date info of the employer’s demands/available jobs/ apprenticeships	92.36%
	Quality of advice/information given	92.92%

### <Employers>

Overall		“Satisfied” (%)
	Satisfaction with the services provided overall	98.98%
	Recommend the service to others	99.23%
Specific		
Quality of	Job search/ consulting services	98.72%
	Online services	98.22%
	Recruitment services	98.72%
	Job announcements	98.73%
	Events (career fairs, employment forums etc.)	98.72%
	Pre-employment and soft-skills training	98.22%
Timeliness		
		98.35%
Accessibility		
Easy to	Find contact channels (website, address, telephone number etc.)	98.47%
	Understand the instructions and responses of the officials	98.47%
	Access services both online and in person during business hours	98.73%
	Find contact channels (website, address, telephone number etc.)	98.47%
Respectful Treatment		
	Receiving services with respect and understanding	98.60%
	Responsiveness to finding solutions for my case	98.47%
	Keeping jobseekers’ information confidential	98.59%
Reliability of information		
	Clear introduction of duties and responsibilities	98.47%
	Provision of up-to-date info of employer’s demands/available jobs/ apprenticeships	98.35%
	Satisfaction with the quality of advice/information given	98.09%

## 4. Impact on the NEA Team

Impact on the team (the NEA and Job Centers) was assessed from three critical perspectives (Satisfaction, Autonomy, Communication). The key questions are

- Was the team highly satisfied and motivated? (Satisfaction)
- Did the team members experience organizational/personal growth? (Satisfaction)
- Did the team control the agenda and progress of the project? (Autonomy)
- Did the team facilitate internal and external communication? (Communication)

Overall, the project had a significant impact on the team, with high satisfaction, a great deal of autonomy, and effective communication.

Through many internal team meetings and a series of activities, team members were highly satisfied because they received useful advice, technical support, and experience-sharing from the first project coordinator and experts. They also reported frequent organizational and personal growth during the development of two assessment tools, along with a sense of autonomy and active involvement by staff at different levels. Communication between the NEA and Job Centers was well-organized thanks to regular meetings and the submission of reports. Additionally, communication among the NEA, the project coordinator, and the experts was organized flexibly to meet the NEA's needs.

These practices finally enabled the NEA to collect both quantitative and qualitative data and to analyze the results independently, allowing the NEA to proceed to the next step. This process should help clarify the impact of PES performance on the users.

A scene from the online meeting



## Part 5. Recommendations for future development

This final part presents the key recommendations based on a series of lively experiences during the long-term project between 2019 and 2026. The Project Team hopes these recommendations guide subsequent actions even after the project concludes. Moreover, they are believed to be useful for other WAPES members, especially those intending to improve a self-assessment framework in PES.

### <Three recommendations **CAN** for the NEA>

1. **C**ontinue Self-Assessment Activity aiming at the 'Model Country
2. **A**ctive communication in internal discussion with autonomy
3. **N**avigate to the desired outcome with a consistent concept

### **1. Continue Self-Assessment Activity aiming at the ‘Model Country.’**

The Project Team recommends that the NEA continues Self-Assessment activities using both quantitative and qualitative approaches based on **‘The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) improvement cycle approach’**:

- **Plan:** Identify problems, set specific goals, and create a detailed plan
- **Do:** Implement the plan and collect data
- **Check:** Analyze the data collected during the "Do" to see if the plan achieved the expected results.
- **Act:** Adjust the original plan to improve it based on findings from the PDC, then restart the cycle.

Furthermore, the team expects the NEA to improve its activities through the **‘Benchmarking’ concept (benchmarking and mutual learning)**, including peer learning and mutual performance reviews with other WAPES members, especially in the Asia-Pacific Region, with the aim of becoming a ‘Self-assessment Model Country.’

### **2. Active communication in internal discussion with autonomy**

The Team also recommends that the NEA should maintain:

- To have a formal team structure consisting of a leader, a coordinator, and task-oriented sub-teams, while respecting autonomy
- To identify a suitable “Champion” within the NEA who volunteers or is selected to facilitate internal communication and productive discussion among members
- To appoint a competent, “well-respected” Champion to take the internal lead in making decisions and coordinating activities in a manner appropriate for the Cambodian context.

### **3. Navigate to the desired outcome with a consistent concept**

Finally, we recommend that the NEA should:

- Develop solid and common concepts under agreement in autonomous discussion
- Stick to the concepts, including KPIs, the purpose, and the reasons behind actions, consistently, while implementing activities
- Enable all players, especially the front-line staff, to understand the concepts and their background, thereby motivating them to improve their behavior based on the perspective of user needs-based services.

We believe these three recommendations will help the NEA achieve its desired outcome even after the project is completed. We also ensure that the Joint Project fosters a strong sense of NEA ownership and that the WAPES network supports the Cambodian PES’s commitment to active participation in future activities.

Finally, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Dr. Sang Hyon Lee of the Korea Employment Information Service (KEIS) and to Mr. Anton Eckersley of APM-Ingeus for their attentive technical advice.

## Disclaimer

This publication was produced jointly by the World Association of Public Employment Services (WAPES), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) of Japan, and the National Employment Agency (NEA) of the Royal Government of Cambodia as part of the WAPES-Japan Joint Project for Cambodia (2019-2026).

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