

# *A FAIR SHARE FOR WOMEN*

## CAMBODIA GENDER ASSESSMENT

A collaboration between UNIFEM, the World Bank,  
ADB, UNDP and DFID/UK, in cooperation with  
the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

This report assesses the gender “terrain” in Cambodia. The assessment is based on a review of existing information from government, donor and non-governmental organization (NGO) sources and also from extensive consultations with various stakeholders. Limited original analysis was carried out for this assessment, and there are several areas, such as changing gender relations and issues affecting men, that have not been covered due to lack of information or time.

Original drafts were prepared by the World Bank from information collected and used by the Government in the preparation of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy. The final version includes additional information and analysis contributed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) as part of a collaborative agreement to jointly assist in the preparation of a comprehensive overview. The ADB contributions to the labor chapter are a result of technical assistance to the Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs, and the UNDP/UNIFEM contributions to each of the other chapters were made in the context of work done with the government to identify country specific gender-related targets for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

## 1. Social and cultural context

Cambodia’s population in 2001 was 13.1 million, of whom 52 percent were women and 80 percent of whom lived in rural areas. The population is projected to reach 16.6 million by 2006. Thirty-six percent of the population is poor, and 90 percent of the poor live in rural areas.

A baby boom in the 1980s resulted in a population bulge that is now of an age where they are entering the workforce and their reproductive lives. Fifty-five percent of the population is under the age of 20, although fertility rates in the past 10 years decreased from 5.4 to 4.0 children per woman aged 15–49.

The effects of 30 years of war and civil violence in Cambodia have left a devastating mark on the country’s men and women. Social capital in Cambodia was substantially destroyed by the Khmer Rouge and the protracted civil violence that followed the Khmer Rouge regime. Today, war widows and other women preside over one-quarter of Cambodian households.

One condition that survived the decades of turmoil and is now constraining the country’s development is the hierarchical order of the society, with notions of power and status conditioning social and gender relations. In this social order, women are considered to be of lower status relative to men.

Gender relations in Cambodia are undergoing tremendous change. While the culturally defined behavior norms for women, known as the *Chha'p*, constrain their opportunities outside of the household, economic, social and political developments are opening up new opportunities for them. And as Cambodian women pursue these opportunities, they are becoming a more integral part of the country's economic and social development.

There is also evidence that while the vast majority of men and women experience poverty, gender impacts that experience. Also, changes and opportunities for young men sometimes appear to be developing more slowly than for women, and changing gender roles are affecting relations between men and women. These changes are poorly understood, but potentially have serious social impacts.

## 2. Gender outlook on the labor market

Gender inequalities are endemic in Cambodia's labor markets. Traditional attitudes towards girls' education and 'appropriate' occupations for women and men have shaped existing inequalities and continue to perpetuate disparities in employment. Achieving greater equality is made extremely difficult within the context of the shift to a market-oriented economy, rapidly growing labor force, and limited new employment opportunities.

One of Cambodia's greatest challenges is to expand employment opportunities fast enough to absorb the 250,000 young people who are reaching working age and entering the employment market each year. The labor force in the group aged 20 to 24 grew an estimated 66 percent between 1997 and 2001, and the number of youth in the labor force age 15 to 19 years increased by 58 percent.

Women make up 52 percent of the workforce and Cambodia's female labor force participation rate, which is 82 percent, is the highest in the region. Women outnumber men in the labor force in all age groups from age 15 to 54, with the exception of those in the group age 25 to 29. Because Cambodia's population is largely rural, in 2001, 85 percent of the total labor force lives in rural areas, and of this, 53 percent of the work force is female.

Fifty-three percent of economically active women, as compared to 32 percent of economically active men, work in the unpaid family labor category and almost all of them are agricultural workers. The gender gap in unpaid family work has decreased in recent years as the percentage of women has fallen, and the percentage of men in this category has increased.

The paid employment market in Cambodia employs only 16 percent of the economically active population; 19 percent of men and 14 percent of women. The majority of employed women work in the garment sector.

Men, more so than women, are moving into a wider range of better-paid positions outside the agriculture sector. For women, the options are largely limited to the garment industry or the informal sector.

There are signs that women are beginning to enter formal employment at a faster rate than men, due mainly to growth in the garment sector and because more women are becoming paid labor in the agriculture sector. Eighty percent of the increase in the labor market between 1993 and 1999 was attributed to agriculture and fisheries, and 53 percent of these workers were women.

In the garment industry, women comprise up to 90 percent of the workforce. They are relatively well paid compared to women in other sectors and also relatively well educated: 61 percent have primary school education, 31 percent have lower-secondary education, and 8 percent hold high school certificates.

However, with the advent of increased trade liberalization, the future of Cambodia's garment industry is uncertain, and consequently, so are women's opportunities for paid employment. With growth in the garment industry, the trade union movement has grown as well. There are now more than 100 trade unions, and more than 90 percent of union members are women. However, only two women fill national leadership positions.

Outside of the agriculture sector, there is a pronounced segregation of occupations by sex: men tend to take up waged employment (61 percent of men and 33 percent women in non-agriculture employment), while women are more likely to be engaged in trade (49 percent women in non-agriculture employment).

Choices in employment for both men and women are shaped by their level of education. The gender gap in educational attainment strongly impacts women's opportunities for employment. When they have a higher level of education, women can compete with men for employment. However, as so few women are educated, only a small number are in a position to compete. In the white-collar professions, the proportion of better-educated workers is higher for women (40 percent) than it is for men (34 percent). However, men still out-number women three to one in this education group.

In the long run, achieving gender equity in the formal education system is clearly needed to attain greater equality in employment opportunities. More immediately, to increase employment opportunities for women already in the work force requires that greater attention be paid to reducing disparities in levels of literacy and levels of education, and in so doing improve occupational choices.

On average (taking experience, age and education into account), men's wages are 33 percent higher than those of women. The largest wage differences occur between young men and young women aged 15–29 who have no schooling. The wage difference across education levels is less for men than women. With an upper-secondary and post-secondary education, men and women can earn 42 percent and 80 percent more, respectively, in comparison with men and women with no schooling.

Although barely visible in official labor statistics, the flourishing sex industry is an issue that warrants special attention. It is estimated that there are up to 100,000 women working in the sex industry in Cambodia. As with other women in the informal sector, these women are open to a range of abuses varying from harassment to exploitation. The informal labor sector is not covered by the labor law or provided with any form of social protection. Sex workers, often forced or sold into the occupation due to poverty, are ostracized by their families and communities.

The rural labor market in Cambodia is fragile and rapidly changing. When local conditions for employment are adequate, out migration is low. When local demand for labor is small, out migration is the only answer for unemployed workers. According to the 1998 Census, more than 80 percent of migrants were of working age (15–64). There were more women migrants than men in the 15 to 19 year-old age group. However, the number of women who migrate was lower in the 20–39-year-old age bracket.

It will be difficult for the formal employment market to absorb much of the new work force without substantial new investment. Employment creation efforts will need to look beyond the formal sector if they are to provide sustainable livelihoods for the majority of the labor force.

The government is working with multilateral organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and UNDP to develop an integrated framework (IF) for trade-related technical assistance to support Cambodia's application for WTO membership.

Although it is assumed that increasing trade will result in increased employment opportunities, little attention is being paid to the quality or gender distribution of this employment. Pro-poor, gender-responsive trade strategies are needed to provide both agricultural-related and non-agricultural employment opportunities to women and men in rural areas. As technical assistance in developing these industries moves forward, there are numerous gender concerns that need to be addressed in each of the IF sectors, including garments, handicrafts, agro-processing, tourism and labor services.

One of Cambodia's MDG targets is to achieve equity in access to new waged employment opportunities by 2015. Persistent inequalities in access to new opportunities are due to lower levels of education and socially prescribed occupational choices. These greatly constrain the position of women. Ensuring equitable access to the new job opportunities that emerge out of trade development efforts requires equitable access to appropriate training. If women are to be able to compete for new employment opportunities, they will need greater opportunities for higher education, and recognition that traditional attitudes related to what should be 'male' and 'female' occupations could impact opportunities in emerging industries.

### 3. Women, agriculture and rural resources

Ninety percent of the poor live in rural areas. The highest poverty rates are found among farmers and those households whose heads have little or no formal education. The poorest households are asset-less. Agricultural productivity is extremely low (US\$480 per ha) and food insecurity is still a serious problem for people who are poor.

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Cambodian economy, with 75 percent of the labor force earning their livelihood from agriculture. Most farmers are small landholders with less than 2 hectares. Although agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the vast majority of the population, this sector has been growing at an average annual rate of only 3.6 percent – half the rate for total GDP growth in recent years.

Rural women are responsible for 80 percent of food production, and more than 65 percent of women are farmers. Half of women farmers are illiterate or have less than a primary school education (compared to 29 percent for men), and 78 percent are engaged in subsistence agriculture. In rural areas only 4 percent women and 10 percent men are engaged in waged employment.

Despite the significance of agriculture, few farmers have access to high quality inputs, credit or information on farming techniques and markets. This is especially so for female farmers. Low agricultural productivity and increasing pressures on land are making it extremely difficult for most small farmers to survive. Access to agricultural extension services, market information, and financial services is very limited for all farmers, and even more difficult for women farmers.



Women household heads are more likely to work in agriculture than male household heads, and women are more likely to be landless or have significantly smaller plots of land. Nearly 80 percent of farmers are primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture. Women comprise 56 percent of subsistence farmers and 54 percent of workers in market-oriented agriculture. As a rule, women are unpaid family workers.

Few women benefit from agricultural extension services or credit made available to rural people, despite the fact that they comprise the majority of farmers and informal sector workers. Also agricultural research and extension efforts usually do not consider women's activities or take into account the fact that men and women tend to specialize in different rural tasks.

The vast majority of extension service staff are male and find it culturally difficult to engage in face-to-face communication with women farmers. As a result, women farmers do not have the access to information that they need to improve or increase production and their livelihoods.

Women's limited ability to protect their land rights also has had a negative impact on agricultural production and food security. Access to productive land and an accompanying land title granting secure tenure is a critical development and gender issue. A recent social assessment found that the rights of women, especially women-headed households, are often ignored, partly due to their lack of knowledge of land rights and of land titling procedures.

Land liberalization in 1989 and the confusion that followed due to unclear legislation, resulted in negative impacts on women's land rights, especially for female household heads. "War widows" own less land than the general population: of those that own land, 84 percent own less than half a hectare. Women in male-headed households face a different set of constraints with respect to land. Women's rights to land may be weakened by their subordinate status within a household where land rights are vested in the name of the male head of household. In cases of divorce, death or family break-up, women may lose their land rights, which leads to the impoverishment of women and children. The land law passed in 2001 includes a progressive measure to ensure that both women and men are identified as owners of the land, but women's low literacy limits their access to information about land issues, sales and rights.

Women and children from poor landless families, and especially women headed households, collect snails, shellfish, firewood, weeds, and other plants for consumption, as well as marketing. These activities are critical for food security, yet are threatened by natural resource degradation and limited community control over natural resources.

Women also have very limited access to credit. Credit providers reach only 20 percent of households. While women make up a high proportion of membership in credit schemes, they tend to be excluded from the decision-making processes and they receive smaller amounts of credit.

Also the travel or transport burden seems to be unequally shared between men and women. Women lack access to markets and services (such as healthcare and education) due to their restricted mobility for security and family reasons. This is a serious constraint, particularly in remote rural areas. Constraints can be significantly reduced by bringing services closer to women or by facilitating women's mobility so they can access services. Also related to travel, is the fact that due to lack of easy access to clean water, women and girls spend hours of their day collecting water for household needs. This is another drain on women's time and increases the opportunity costs of sending girls to school.

Women's significant contributions to the agriculture and rural development sector are not mirrored in their participation in decision-making and the civil service related to these sectors. Although women make up the majority of farmers, they benefit little from the provision of agricultural services. While women represent over 50 percent of all subsistence and market-oriented agricultural workers, they comprise only 20 percent of staff in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and most occupy low positions.

#### 4. Gender disparities in education

The gap between boys and girls in Cambodia increases markedly as they progress to higher levels of education. While almost equal numbers of boys and girls are enrolled in preschool and primary school, only 63 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys in lower secondary school. At upper secondary and tertiary education, less than 50 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys. Poverty and distance to schools are the major barriers reducing girls' access to education, in addition to higher opportunity costs of educating girls.

Enrollment of girls into primary school from communes in the poorest quintile has seen the highest rate of increase of any group. In 2001, the growth in enrollment of this group was 26 percent more than in the previous year. Overall, growth in enrollment for children from the poorest communes was 24 percent. By comparison, the growth in enrollment of children from the communes in the richest quintile was 7 percent. While progress with enrollment has been good, girls tend to drop out of school at a higher rate than boys. Repetition rates are also higher for girls and their attendance is lower.

The gender disparity increases dramatically at the lower secondary school level. The percentage of girls in the student body falls from 50 percent at primary school to 37 percent at lower secondary and 32 percent in upper secondary school. Nationwide, enrollments in lower secondary school were 19 percent in 2001–2002 and only 16 percent for girls. In remote areas, only 1 percent of children were enrolled in lower secondary school.

Senior secondary enrollments are not only small, they are decreasing, and at a faster rate for boys. In 1999, 9.3 percent of all children were enrolled, of whom 11.8 percent were boys and 6.8 percent were girls. By 2001, this figure had fallen to 7.4 percent for all children – 9.4 percent for boys and 5.4 percent for girls. The gender gap in enrollments has narrowed, but this is due to the faster rate of decrease in boys' enrollment, rather than to an increase in girls' enrollment.

Illiteracy rates are very high: 25 percent of men and 45 percent of women are completely illiterate, and 71 percent of women and 50 percent of men are functionally illiterate. Shortcomings found in the formal education system are also found in the vocational training system, where the opportunities for women are limited to “women's skills” such as dressmaking.

The government plans to address the gender imbalance by building more secondary schools, thus minimizing the distance children have to travel, as well as creating a scholarship program for poor girls. However, significantly more commitment and investment will be needed to achieve equality in education.

Gender disparities in education are directly related to MDGs 2 and 3, which concern education. Cambodia's efforts to achieve these two MDGs are reflected in the government's Education for All Program, which aims to achieve universal basic education by 2010. Upper secondary and tertiary education have not received the same attention as basic education in Cambodia. The government has set targets to eliminate the gender gap in upper secondary and tertiary education by 2015.

## 5. Gender issues in health

The provision of quality health services, especially for the poorest people, is also a fundamental development challenge. Life expectancy at birth is low: 54.5 years for men and 58.3 for women. Affordability of health care is a major problem, especially for the poor, and often leads families into debt and forces them to sell their productive assets, such as land. Utilization rates and family spending on health care are about the same for men and women. However, due to their reproductive health needs, women's health needs are greater than men's. Therefore, equal rates of health service utilization indicate that women's health care needs are not being met.

Maternal mortality, at 437 per 100,000 live births, is one of the highest in Asia. Infant mortality is 95 per 1,000 live births (no sex disaggregated data available). High maternal and infant mortality rates are a result of 1) insufficient access to birth-spacing information, supplies and services; 2) poor access to and utilization of maternal health services; and 3) low-quality health facilities. There is evidence of a large unmet demand for contraception — only 24 percent of women currently use contraception, yet the Ministry of Health estimates that about 78 percent of Cambodian couples would be interested in birth control or spacing if they had access to contraceptives. Poor availability of contraceptives also leads to a high rate of abortion, often resulting in death and contributing to high maternal mortality rates and unwanted births. It is estimated that 24 percent of births in Cambodia are unwanted.

Sixty-six percent of women and 87 percent of children younger than one year of age are anemic. Only 38 percent of pregnant women receive prenatal care from trained health personnel, and only 10 percent of births take place in health facilities. Trained medical staff assist at only 32 percent of births. Despite a strategy of basic training to increase the number of midwives, the number of nurses and midwives in the public health care system has declined.

Between the ages of 15 and 49, a man is more likely to die than a woman. The mortality rate for men aged 15–49 is 4.8 deaths per 1,000, whereas for women it is 3.5 per 1,000. For men, health issues include a higher risk of accidents. Compared to women, men are twice as likely to be injured in an accident, and the most widespread cause of accidental injury or death is a road accident. Twice as many men as women are physically impaired — mainly due to landmine injuries.

The Ministry of Health has prepared a sector-wide strategy for 2003–2007 that emphasizes improving maternal and child health, the right to health care and pro-poor delivery of services. The strategy recognizes that Cambodia will probably not be able to achieve the MDGs relating to health and have set alternative targets, which are still ambitious. The government's health sector strategy has raised some concerns from a gender perspective. While concerted efforts are being made by the government and donors to address reproductive health issues, strategies in the health sector tend to be “gender blind”, meaning that no distinction is made between the differing constraints confronting men and women in accessing general health services. Access to basic health services is a gender issue that requires gender-responsive strategies, actions and indicators.

## 6. Gender and HIV/AIDS

The epidemic poses a major threat to human development in Cambodia. Cambodia has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Southeast Asia, though the epidemic rate has decreased. Since 1997, the national prevalence rate among adults has declined steadily, from 3.9 percent to 2.8 percent. The number of new HIV infections each year has been declining since 1994 among men, and since 1996 among women. The number of men currently living with HIV has been declining since 1997 and, while the number of women currently living with HIV continues to increase, it has begun to level off.

While progress has been made, especially in addressing transmissions between sex workers and their clients, there is growing concern about the increase in the rate of transmissions between husbands and their wives and consequently between mothers and children. New strategies are urgently needed to prevent transmission among these populations, but options are limited. Social and cultural norms and gender relations make it difficult for women to negotiate condom use with their partner. Women feel uncomfortable suggesting condom use to a spouse or sweetheart, as it implies infidelity, yet for men extramarital sex is widely accepted.

Another gender dimension of HIV/AIDS is that women, young and old alike, must shoulder the burden of caring for AIDS patients and AIDS orphans.

To address the increase in mother to child transmission, the government has developed guidelines to prevent such transmission and plans to expand access to drugs for pregnant and postpartum women through its program on expanding anti-retroviral therapy treatment in Cambodia.

As part of its effort to achieve MDG 6, Combating HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Cambodia's MDG target is to reduce the transmission of HIV/AIDS by 2015 and the government has set targets for reducing prevalence, intensifying prevention measures and providing care and support to people living with HIV/AIDS.

The national strategic plan for HIV/AIDS and STI Prevention and care (2001-2005) is focused on three elements, reducing transmission in high risk situations, increasing health education and prevention among the general population, and equipping the health system to cope with increased demand. The Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs is also implementing HIV/AIDS prevention activities and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Education and Youth has plans to start activities; while the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs (NCHADS) is responsible for the national sentinel surveillance systems, and also develops plans and programs for HIV/AIDS.

## 7. Violence against women

A reported increase in gender-based violence, such as domestic violence, rape (including gang rape), violence against sex workers, as well as a reported increase in the number of women and children being trafficked into neighboring countries, is a major concern. The government has made progress in establishing a legal framework to address these issues, but law enforcement is extremely weak and compounded by a corrupt environment.

Cambodian gender advocates, and particularly MoWVA, feel that freedom from fear of violence in the home and the community is a necessary prerequisite for gender responsive development. Thus Cambodia has added an additional target to MDG 3, which is to eliminate all forms of violence against women: domestic violence, rape, sex trafficking.

Achieving this target will require intervention at three levels. First, the development of a legal framework is essential, but it cannot be effective, and may even send the wrong message if it is not enforced. Only the development of enforceable laws and wide publicizing of such laws will challenge the prevailing culture of impunity.

Second, measures are needed to prevent domestic violence, rape and trafficking, including prevention action plans, adapting school curricula to include these issues, commune level programs on prevention of violence against women, and other forms of education in the mass media.

Third, the social and economic reintegration and rehabilitation of survivors must also be addressed. Training of professionals in health and social work to provide counseling to victims, which is just beginning in Cambodia, should be expanded. Currently, victims' services, community-based interventions to reintegrate victims of trafficking into communities, skills training for former sex workers, and other interventions are underway, but only on a pilot scale, mostly through NGOs. These will need to be expanded and replicated.

## 8. Women's voice in politics and decision making

Cambodia's Gender Empowerment Measure is among the lowest in Asia, reflecting the extremely low representation of women in government and parliament. Some progress has been made. Following an election in November 1998, two female Ministers were appointed among the 25 ministries and four female Secretaries of State were appointed out of a total of 50. This is an improvement over the 1993–1997 government in which only four women were political appointees and there were no female Ministers, Secretaries of State or Provincial Governors. In the 2003 elections, 15 of the 123 people elected (12%) were women.

Although a quota of 30 percent of seats was proposed prior to the 2002 election of Commune Councils, it was rejected and only 8.5 percent of the councilors elected were women. Only 9 percent of the 169,000 civil servants are women, and only 8 out of 110 judges are women. Nor are any prosecutors women.

The government has committed to increasing the number of women in decision-making, but in practice there has been little progress and their ambitious targets are unlikely to be met.

## 9. Legal framework and laws

The Constitution of 1993 clearly reflects the principle of gender equality and Cambodia is a signatory to several international agreements including the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. Several laws and amendments have been passed, including ones to modify the restrictive national law on abortion. The 1997 Labor Code recognizes gender specific concerns and affords liberal rights to women in employment, inheritance laws and to counter human trafficking. A law to address domestic violence is being debated.

There has been significant progress in establishing a level institutional “playing field” for women and men. This has created a policy environment quite favorable to protecting the equal rights of women. But in practice, the situation is very different. Socio-cultural norms and a weak enforcement capability mean that these laws are rarely enforced, and the strategies are poorly implemented. Efforts to strengthen the enforcement capability of the country’s judicial and administrative agencies are critical if gender equality in basic rights is to be achieved.

## 10. Institutions and policies to promote gender equality

The Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs (MoWVA) became a full ministry in 1996 and has a mandate to influence and guide the line ministries and lower-level administration units to mainstream gender. They have sought to influence the Second Social and Economic Development Plan (SEDP II) and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS). They also work directly with sectoral ministries and implement their own programs in areas such as legal and literacy skills training. However, gender-mainstreaming strategies produced by MoWVA are not reconciled with overall government strategies and have no associated budget. Gender mainstreaming in ministries tends to be donor-driven or carried out by MoWVA, and there is little ownership by the executing ministry. While there is a reasonably high level of awareness among ministries of the need to address gender issues, there is little capacity to put this into practice.

The Cambodian National Council for Women was established in March 2001 and is tasked with advocacy, monitoring and evaluation of laws, regulations and policies of the government from a gender perspective, and with monitoring compliance with international conventions. The Council consists of Secretaries of State from 14 ministries and thus has the potential to influence the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs within these ministries.

Through the process of developing the Socio-economic Development Plan and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy, MoWVA has had increasing opportunities to provide inputs to national strategies. Non-government organizations have also made significant inputs with respect to gender. However, the integration of gender in these documents is not consistent across all sectors — land rights, legal reform and governance, for example, pay little attention to gender. Maintaining the role of MoWVA and the NGOs in monitoring the implementation of the NPRS is going to be a challenge.

The Governance Action Plan published in 2001 by the Royal Government of Cambodia includes gender equity as one of five cross-cutting areas and identifies four broad gender equity objectives: 1) to implement and coordinate programs to promote the rights of women and children; 2) to influence various reform programs so that they can fully take into account the particular needs of women and children; 3) to recognize women’s contribution as full-fledged members of society; and 4) to invest in promoting the leadership role of women. Progress has been made in some areas, but not in the matter of increasing the number of women in decision-making positions.

There is still a long way to go to mainstream gender in the line ministries. In the face of competing priorities and demands, gender is often not high on the list, and much of the gender work tends to be donor-driven. MoEYS is the only ministry to have its own Gender Mainstreaming Strategy, and the skills and capacity in other ministries to develop and implement something similar are limited. MoWVA has created a network of gender focal points in ten ministries. However, these people are not in high-level positions, are not influential, and lack support and funds. There is no functional

mechanism in Cambodia to ensure that relevant gender issues are incorporated into the planning process and adequately funded. In addition, throughout the various ministries, inadequate collection and reporting of key information makes it difficult to assess the extent to which strategic plans are followed by adequately budgeted programs and the extent to which adequately budgeted programs meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries.

In addition to capacity and budget-related issues that inhibit the implementation of gender-sensitive laws and programs, there are also concerns about whether there is political will to make these changes happen. Some critics argue that the government will pay lip service to promoting women in the government to please donors but have resisted substantive change, and will continue to resist taking action on this matter.

## 11. Conclusions and recommendations

In just a decade, Cambodia has made significant strides in rebuilding the human capital and social fabric that had been so brutally destroyed. Social indicators for health and education have shown steady improvements, along with economic indicators, and the country has enjoyed relative stability in recent years.

However, there is a pressing need to create jobs for the rapidly expanding workforce—the “population bulge” generation—so they can contribute to the country’s economy. If these opportunities can be found, this generation will become the engine for Cambodia’s economic growth. In the absence of opportunity, they, and their children, will increasingly burden the State; and their frustrations will put the security of the nation at risk.

Proactive measures to break down the persistent barriers and constraints to women’s active and equal participation in social and economic development need to be implemented if the gains made to date are not to be lost.

Several important challenges to achieving gender equality in Cambodia are presented here, along with recommendations made to help prioritize the activities needed to address them:

### ***11.1 The challenge of economic empowerment increases as the adult population expands***

**Formal paid employment opportunities need to expand rapidly to absorb the growing labor force**  
The labor force is increasing at a rate of 3.5 percent (or roughly a quarter of a million people) per annum, yet paid employment opportunities are severely limited and not increasing at a rate that can go anywhere near to absorbing this increase. The ability of the country to attract foreign investment will be critical, yet the latest indications point to decreases in foreign direct investment. A weak governance environment and endemic corruption are pinpointed as major disincentives to potential investors.

#### ***A broader range of formal employment choices is needed for both men and women***

As the agriculture sector shifts from subsistence to market-oriented production, both men and women are moving into waged employment in this sector. However outside of agriculture there have been relatively few new employment opportunities for men in their ‘traditional’ occupations which combined with rising expectations in a market economy, is a source of great frustration.

Women are taking on increased responsibility for contributing to household livelihood within their ‘traditional’ occupations, while still remaining responsible for housework and child care. Or they are migrating to seek employment in urban areas where they are highly vulnerable to exploitation. There is a heavy reliance on the garment industry for women’s paid employment – but this is fragile, and the future is uncertain. If the industry fails, any gains made in getting women into the paid employment sector will be lost. At the same time, the garment industry is not providing employment for young men, and employment in the traditionally ‘male’ public service sector has become a much less viable option for most young men. With demobilization, administrative reform, and privatization of services, public sector employment is expected to decrease. As unemployment is a key factor triggering social unrest and instability, the country faces serious problems if young people, particularly young men, are unable to find gainful employment.

#### Employment opportunities in rural areas are limited and unreliable

The majority of the poor live in rural areas, and while the agriculture sector has been the backbone of rural employment, it cannot continue to absorb labor force entrants as it has done, without significant changes. There are few alternatives for these people. Local labor markets are fragile and change rapidly and when local labor opportunities are not available, migration is the only option for many men and women – making them vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Local non-farm employment in rural areas, including opportunities for women, would help reduce rural poverty, mitigate one of the drivers for trafficking, and help to develop secure communities.

#### Emerging opportunities, but women have limited capacity to compete

Although education for women has a high premium in terms of job opportunities and wages, far fewer women than men are literate or have more than a primary school education. Although women with a higher level of education seem to be able to compete well with men with the same level of education, the vast majority of women in the existing labor force simply do not have the education they need in order to avail themselves of new employment opportunities.

#### Recommendations:

- *Improve governance to encourage investment and growth.*
- *Promote decentralized growth and expand efforts to develop employment opportunities in rural areas.*
- *Support the development of small enterprises and the informal sector.*
- *Develop strategies for upgrading the literacy and skill levels of women in the existing labor force.*
- *Address the social protection needs of female migrant workers.*
- *Expand monitoring of compliance with the labor code.*

## **11.2 Rural women do not have the access to resources and services that would help them reduce poverty and ensure food security**

### Most of Cambodia’s women farmers do not have access to the resources they need

Formal employment aside, 80 percent of the increase in the employed population between 1993 and 1999 — 1.28 million people, of whom 53 percent were women — were absorbed into the agriculture and fisheries sectors. If this trend continues, then services (advice, markets, technology) and resources (credit, land, inputs) for farmers — most of whom are women — need to be significantly improved and expanded. As it is, women have considerably less access to extension services, land, or other resources, than do men. Women are more likely than men to be involved in agro-food processing, trading, livestock raising and other activities with export potential.



Basic services such as roads and water supply are a priority for poor women as well as poor men. Lack of basic infrastructure has a tremendous impact on society. Collecting water, especially, is not only a burden on women's time, but lack of clean water exacerbates health problems and figures heavily in maternal and child mortality. Better provision of water reduces the opportunity cost of keeping girls in school and better roads will improve access to schools and health care.

#### Recommendations:

- *Develop innovative ways to provide agricultural services, extension and information to women*
- *Provide women with improved, and secure access to land and natural resources.*
- *Continue investment in **locally-planned** rural infrastructure, so that both men's and women's needs are recognized and addressed.*

### 11.3 Gender inequality in access to health and education services is most severe among the poor, and in rural areas

Gender inequalities in education are worst in rural areas, and among poor people who are predominantly concentrated in these areas

At the primary school level there are no significant differences in enrollment rates between urban and rural areas, and girls' enrollment in the poorest quintile has increased faster than for any other group. There is, however, a much higher drop out rate for girls in primary school. Differences between male and female enrollments increase significantly at the secondary school level, and especially in rural areas. Rural girls must be kept in secondary school if they are to compete in the labor market and contribute to improving life for the next generation. A significant number of women over the age of 40 cannot read or write, and many more are functionally illiterate.

#### Current health services are not reaching rural areas, and especially to rural women and girls

At 437 per 100,000 live births, Cambodia's maternal mortality is one of the highest in the region, and improvements have been slow. Although utilization rates and spending on health care appear to be the same for men and women, when reproductive health is taken into account, women's needs are greater than men's and utilization rates should be higher. Women often cite costs and time for travel as a reason for not accessing health care. Thus, these services may need to be moved closer to where women live. Needed services include contraception, for which there is high unmet demand and without which, a second-generation population bulge will occur.

#### Recommendations:

- *Keep girls in primary school, increase girls' enrollment in secondary school, and provide non-formal education.*
- *Make health services affordable for poor women.*
- *Prioritize outreach using culturally appropriate methods.*
- *Try out new approaches to increasing the number of midwives in rural areas.*

## **11.4 Those that are especially vulnerable have little support and nowhere to turn to**

### *Transmission of HIV/AIDS is declining, but moving into the broader population*

Cambodian women and girls are increasingly at risk of contracting HIV. In a country where access to information, care and support, and treatment are low, and sexual risk taking behaviour of men is high, and gender dynamics in Cambodian culture make it difficult for women to negotiate condom use, women are especially vulnerable to contracting HIV.

The pattern of transmission of the HIV epidemic is shifting: prevalence is decreasing in all groups surveyed, but at the same time, groups such as married women and women in longer-term sexual relationships still remain extremely vulnerable, and the epidemic may still evolve rapidly in these groups. Mother to child transmission, and husband to wife transmission, are becoming increasingly important. Methods for prevention in these populations are limited, but are urgently needed.

Most Cambodians do not have access to ART or even to regular treatment of opportunistic infections such as pneumonia, diarrhoea, and toxoplasmosis. Caring for family members suffering from any of these infections places significant demands on women's time and resources, and results in deepening poverty in already poor households. Women have less access to treatment and are less likely to receive follow-up and counseling to ensure compliance.

Existing institutional arrangements may not be effective in addressing prevention as the epidemic moves from sex workers into the broader population.

### *Violence against women takes many forms and few services are available for victims of violence*

Cambodian women and girls are vulnerable to domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, and are trafficked for labor or commercial sex work. A weak and ineffective legal framework contributes to a culture of impunity, and inadequate support and services for survivors leaves little if any options for recourse.

Cambodian traditions do not condone violence in the home, either by parents towards children or husbands towards wives. Nonetheless, 23 percent of ever-married women over age 15 who were surveyed in the CDHS 2000, reported being physically abused in the home. Abused women have limited options. If they do not own land or other assets, they risk losing financial support for themselves and their children if they leave their husbands. If a husband is imprisoned, the wife loses his income for that period and it is unlikely that he will change his behavior on release. A draft law on domestic violence was still under review early in 2004, but had yet to be passed in the National Assembly.

Rape victims find it difficult to report rape or seek help: societal scorn and family shame resulting from loss of virginity perpetuate the notion that a rape victim is no longer a woman of value. Many victims of rape internalize the negative view that people hold of them and end up in commercial sex work. Although rape is a crime in Cambodia, perpetrators are seldom sentenced. Many families do not wish to involve the authorities due to the stigma associated with rape and prefer to protect their reputation and settle out of court by accepting a compensation payment.

Trafficking takes place both internally and across borders in Cambodia, which is a sending, receiving and transit country for trafficked humans. Conditions of poverty, social upheaval, under-developed legal infrastructure and weak law enforcement have contributed to the growth of the sex industry. Prostitution is not illegal in Cambodia, although it is illegal to facilitate it or profit from it. Unfortunately, those who are breaking the law are not those who are punished.

#### Recommendations:

- *Provide care and support for vulnerable groups, including those suffering from HIV/AIDS.*
- *Develop a systematic approach to assist survivors of violence against women.*

### **11.5 Social, legal, and political institutions perpetuate gender discrimination and vulnerability**

Gender-related social norms and behaviors can have negative impacts on both men and women. Social norms, behaviors and cultural factors influence the transmission of HIV, the incidence of gender-based violence (trafficking, domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation) and men's vulnerability to accidents. Socially prescribed roles and endemic inequalities persist despite an improving economic environment. Positive changes need not necessarily come from outside the culture. In any society, women and men typically have different views about norms and behaviors and finding a balance between those views can help reverse negative trends.

Inequalities based on traditional attitudes towards gender roles are clearly reflected in the jobs allocated to men and women and their status in different industries. Traditionally, boys have been encouraged to go to school so that they can qualify for highly desirable positions in government, hence the dominance of men in the public service and in decision-making positions. Education for girls has been seen as less important in Cambodia's predominately agrarian society where women work in the rice fields, take care of the house and children, and possibly work as a market vendor or produce handicrafts.

#### Participation of women in decision-making is essential at all levels in order to bring about improvements

Women's representation is weak at all levels of decision-making: in government, in parliament, in the judiciary and at the commune and village level. Unless this is increased dramatically, social norms and accountability for gender equality are unlikely to change. Government has set ambitious targets for women in decision-making but are unlikely to meet these.

#### Judicial systems and law enforcement agencies need to be held accountable through improved monitoring and reporting of their activities

Although a reasonable legal framework to uphold women's rights is now in place, weak law enforcement, impunity of violators to prosecution, and complicity of law enforcers increases the vulnerability of people who are poor and especially of women. In a corrupt environment, women are the least-supported by the legal system, and they have the least resources to bypass it.

#### Recommendations:

- *Develop consensus on the meaning of gender equality in the Cambodian context.*
- *Introduce affirmative action policies.*
- *Increase women's participation at village level.*
- *Monitor the functioning of the legal and judicial system.*

## 11.6 Institutions still struggle to mainstream gender effectively

Weak governance and poor financial management are a major constraint to improving gender equality

The social and agriculture sectors are under-financed, and budgets that are allocated do not necessarily reach their intended beneficiaries. The irregular distribution of funds to service delivery points, especially in rural areas, reduces the effectiveness of services. This, and the poor compensation paid to civil servants, encourages requests for informal fees. Where services become expensive, or the opportunity costs are too great compared to perceived returns, women will be more affected than men.

The mechanisms to integrate gender into the budgeting and planning process are limited in their effectiveness

Targets –especially for gender balance – are inconsistent with planned spending. Realistically, targets may need to be brought into line with both capacity and available financial resources (World Bank 2002a).

Mechanisms to mainstream gender in line agencies are weak and only partly effective

There is still a long way to go to mainstream gender in line ministries. In the face of competing priorities and demands, gender is often not high on the list, and much of the gender work tends to be donor-driven. MoEYS is the only ministry to have its own gender mainstreaming strategy, and the skills and capacity in other ministries to develop and implement something similar are limited.

MoWVA's capacity to sustainably mainstream gender issues in the policy process remains weak.

MoWVA has taken steps to create networks in the sectoral ministries, but the gender focal points selected are in low level positions and not influential. While they have achieved much in getting a seat at the table in policy discussions, their capacity to effectively influence is limited by lack of capacity to analyze and monitor impacts of policies and laws, and to advocate for changes.

### Recommendations

- *Strongly support efforts to improve management of public expenditure, and increase accountability of service providers.*
- *Improve mechanisms to integrate gender into planning and budgeting processes.*
- *Improve collection and analysis of data to effectively monitor gender targets.*
- *Line Agencies should develop their own gender mainstreaming plans with monitorable indicators.*
- *MoWVA should continue to build its capacity to focus on policy analysis and advocacy to sustainably mainstream gender issues in policy processes.*
- *Donors should continue to work together, and in partnership with MoWVA, to improve coordination and the effectiveness of all their combined efforts.*

# PREFACE

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The Royal Government of Cambodia, as well as donors, are increasingly recognizing the importance of addressing gender issues in poverty reduction strategies and development goals in order to promote sustainable development for women and for the whole population. Gender disparities in access to and control of a wide range of human, economic and social resources and opportunities must be eliminated if Cambodia is to reduce poverty. The need to engender the process and outcomes of development strategy formulation and the identification of development goals, targets and indicators requires a comprehensive gender mainstreaming strategy. The State plays a central role in the promotion of gender equality. Thus, a significant commitment from government agencies across sectors and at all levels is needed to examine and revise agency policies and practices to address gender inequality.

UNDP recognizes the centrality of institutional commitment to gender equality as illustrated in the 1995 UNDP Human Development Report. The Report concludes that, because of inequities in power structures, gender equality will not come about through gender neutral economic and political processes. Governments need to formulate policies and introduce affirmative action to promote equality and ensure that women have access to productive resources (Kabeer, 2003).

The World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have also concluded that competitive markets alone will not eliminate gender discrimination, and that governments have a vital role to play in regulating markets and providing critical economic infrastructure. Recent World Bank research shows that when women and men are relatively equal, economies tend to grow faster, the poor move more quickly out of poverty, and the well-being of men, women, and children is enhanced. (*Engendering Development*, WB 2000).

All agencies acknowledge that there are two complementary approaches to gender equality: a rights-based approach based on the premise that gender equality is a matter of human rights; as well as an emphasis on the role women play in development, noting that economic growth and poverty reduction will be enhanced by efforts to promote gender equality.

Both perspectives are relevant to a gender analysis of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). On one hand, MDG assessments should consider the differential implications for women of each goal to ensure that women's human rights are realized; on the other, policy should also consider women's contribution to the achievement of each of the goals. Thus, the combination of a rights perspective and a more instrumental approach will ensure that women benefit more from, and contribute more to, the achievement of the MDGs.

In Cambodia, the collection of information on gender issues was carried out alongside the preparation of the NPRS throughout 2002, and supported by AusAID. In October 2002, a paper on Gender Planning and Budgeting was prepared as part of the Public Expenditure Review (PER) and discussed in a workshop with the Ministry of Finance and sectoral agencies. The research on gender issues done for the NPRS and the PER paper were combined into the early draft of the assessment. When UNDP began assisting the Council for Social Development (CSD) in localizing the Millennium Development

Goals (MDGs), UNIFEM was contracted to provide recommendations for integrating gender into the Cambodia MDGs. At the same time, an ADB technical assistance initiative with the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs (MoWVA) was also engaged in analyzing gender concerns related to economic empowerment, livelihood and employment.

Each of these assessments would draw on the same body of statistics, other relevant studies and national planning processes—but analyzed from a gender perspective. In recent years, quantitative information has become more available from national surveys (e.g., the census, the labor force surveys, the demographic and health survey) and line ministry information systems (most notably health and education). More qualitative information became available through ADB, which had sponsored a Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) as input into the preparation of the Second Socio-economic Development Plan (SEDP II). In addition, the World Bank had sponsored a series of community consultations as part of the process of preparing the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS), which were carried out by the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs, in partnership with two non-government organizations, Women for Prosperity and Amara. Recognizing the value of a joint gender assessment, the four agencies (the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, UNDP and UNIFEM) agreed to combine their resources. This report meets the institutional requirements of the World Bank and ADB for a thorough assessment of gender issues to provide input to their respective organization's country strategies.

*A Fair Share for Women* is based on secondary data and a review of existing research and work by Government, donors, and NGOs. This was supported by extensive consultation with key stakeholders and gender advocates in government, donors and civil society. Formal consultations were conducted with civil servants at the national and provincial levels, NGOs, civil society and donor agency representatives and Commune Council and VDC members. Consultations were not intended to reach consensus, but to ensure that the perspectives of a diverse group of stakeholders and interests are reflected, and to raise awareness of the importance of addressing gender issues in policy processes. Finally, in December 2003, the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs hosted an extensive national consultative conference to consider the draft recommendations of the assessment. For two days, representatives from six departments from each of the 26 provinces and municipalities in Cambodia, together with line ministries, NGOs and donors, reviewed and amended the draft recommendations, which will be passed to the Council of Ministers for further consideration.

Although information gaps remain which will need to be addressed as the national statistical system develops further, this assessment draws on the best information available at this time. It is hoped that this assessment will provide a foundation on which gender analysts and advocates can build in order to continuously improve the analysis of poverty and gender issues in Cambodia. Finally, this assessment aims to highlight the need to put in place mechanisms to collect and analyze gender-responsive information as part of the monitoring process for both the NPRS and the Cambodian MDGs.

Another key starting point for advocating for pro-poor gender responsive policies is by monitoring what governments and donors have committed to, what they are actually doing and the impact, from a gender perspective. The NPRS and CMDG Reports and their monitoring and reporting process represent a strategic opportunity for gender advocates to enlarge the space for dialogue on, and build a broad national commitment to, women's human rights and gender equality, specifically through feeding into the NPRS Annual Progress Reports and the revised Policy Action Matrices. Ideally, the NPRS and MDG Reports should reach out to a wide range of national actors, including communities, civil society groups and the media. The Ministry of Economy and Finance, together with the Supreme Economic Council, and the Ministry of Planning, together with the Council for Social Development, should initiate wider debate and dialogue around key development choices and enable citizens to demand

accountability from their governments. The engendered NPRS and CMDGs represent the government's vision for "A Fair Share for Women" in the future, and are being included as targets and indicators in the current revision of the NPRS Policy Action Matrix.

The completion of *A Fair Share for Women: Cambodia Gender Assessment* is not an end by itself, but in fact, a starting point for action. The partners involved in this initiative are committed to working with all stakeholders to transform the analysis and recommendations into concrete changes to achieve gender equality in Cambodia. One immediate example of this commitment is that the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) country assistance strategies will include gender action plans elaborating how they will address the recommendations of the CGA through their programs.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Socio-Economic and Cultural Aspects of Gender Relations in Cambodia</b> .....	<b>19</b>
Cambodia at a Glance .....	21
1.1 Status, trends and issues .....	22
1.1.1 Strong traditions grant women a lower status than men .....	23
1.1.2 The division of labor is changing .....	23
1.1.3 Women still have heavier work burdens .....	24
1.1.4 Men still make most household decisions .....	24
1.1.5 Gender relations between women and men are shifting .....	25
1.1.6 HDI, GEM and GDI are among the lowest in Asia .....	26
1.1.7 The Human Poverty Index is greater for women than men .....	26
1.1.8 Women-headed households are among the poorest in a community .....	27
<b>Chapter 2: Gender Outlook on the Labor Market</b> .....	<b>31</b>
Cambodia at a Glance .....	33
2.1 Status, trends and issues .....	33
2.1.1 Labor force is growing rapidly .....	34
2.1.2 Labor force participation rates are increasing, female rates are exceptionally high by regional standards .....	36
2.1.3 Young people account for the majority of the unemployed .....	38
2.1.4 Women are over-represented in unpaid family labor, but the rate of unpaid family labor for men is on the rise .....	38
2.1.5 Female share of waged employment is rising but gender imbalances persist .....	40
2.1.6 Occupation and industry groups highly segregated by sex .....	42
2.1.7 Little support for the development of small and micro enterprises – a “hidden sector” of critical importance to women .....	43
2.1.8 Women are under-represented in professions and decision-making positions .....	44
2.1.9 Level of education affects wages and job opportunities .....	44
2.1.10 Women earn less than men .....	46
2.1.11 More young people are migrating to find employment .....	46
2.1.12 The garment industry has a profound impact on women’s lives .....	47
2.1.13 Trade and employment policies have different implications for men and women .....	49
2.1.14 Will the proposed export processing zones benefit women? .....	50
2.2 Government policies and strategies .....	51
<b>Chapter 3: Women, Agriculture and Rural Resources</b> .....	<b>53</b>
Cambodia at a glance .....	55
3.1 Status, trends and issues .....	55
3.1.1 Women have a major role in agricultural production .....	57
3.1.2 Women have a potentially more important role in reducing food insecurity .....	57
3.1.3 Extension services are minimal and women receive fewer extension services than men .....	58
3.1.4 Diminishing access to natural resources is threatening livelihoods .....	60
3.1.5 Despite a new gender-responsive land law, women are vulnerable to having their land rights ignored .....	60
3.1.6 Access to financial and non-financial services is very limited .....	62
3.1.7 Rural roads and transport is a priority for women, as well as men .....	63

3.1.8	Women also prioritize clean water supply .....	63
3.1.9	Women are under-represented in agriculture sector decision-making and the civil service .....	64
3.2	Government policies and strategies .....	65
<b>Chapter 4: Gender Disparities in Education .....</b>		<b>69</b>
Cambodia at a glance .....		71
4.1	Status, trends and issues .....	71
4.1.1	The gender gap in education increases with levels of schooling .....	72
4.1.2	Enrollments are increasing in primary and lower secondary school .....	72
4.1.3	Fastest increase of school enrollment is for girls from poorest communes .....	73
4.1.4	Survival and completion rates are lower for girls than boys .....	74
4.1.5	Shortages of teachers, especially female teachers, are greatest in rural areas .....	76
4.1.6	Gender and income disparities remain largely unchanged at upper secondary level ...	76
4.1.7	Net enrollment rates have fallen, especially for boys .....	78
4.1.8	Reasons for gender disparities in secondary school .....	78
4.1.9	Gender disparities are greatest in higher education .....	80
4.1.10	Gender gaps in literacy rates increase with age .....	81
4.1.11	Vocational training options are limited – especially for women .....	82
4.2	Government policies and strategies .....	83
<b>Chapter 5: Gender Issues in Health .....</b>		<b>87</b>
Cambodia at a glance .....		89
5.1	Status, trends and issues .....	89
5.1.1	Women are disadvantaged in accessing basic health services .....	90
5.1.2	Poor access to health services closely linked to poverty and women’s education .....	90
5.1.3	Cambodia’s maternal mortality is among the highest in the region .....	92
5.1.4	Women’s nutritional status is poor .....	93
5.1.5	Unmet demand for family planning and birth spacing remains high .....	94
5.1.6	Women do not receive care during pregnancy and deliver in unsafe conditions .....	96
5.1.7	Shortage of skilled birth personnel and poor distribution of health service providers .....	96
5.1.8	Young men more likely than young women to die or suffer from accidental injury .....	98
5.1.9	Disability and drug abuse affect more men than women .....	98
5.2	Government Policies and Strategies .....	98
<b>Chapter 6: Gender and HIV/AIDs .....</b>		<b>101</b>
Cambodia at a glance .....		103
6.1	Status, trends and issues .....	103
6.1.1	New infections decreasing among men, leveling off among women .....	104
6.1.2	Prevalence among sex workers has decreased as condom use has increased .....	105
6.1.3	Prevalence is decreasing among women seeking antenatal care .....	106
6.1.4	The routes of HIV transmission are changing .....	108
6.1.5	Women in direct and indirect sex work are still at risk of HIV transmission .....	108
6.1.6	Married women are more at risk .....	109
6.1.7	Strong gender stereotypes influence male sexual behavior .....	109
6.1.8	Women shoulder the burden of care and support for people with AIDS .....	109
6.1.9	Access to treatment is limited .....	109
6.2	Government Policies and Strategies .....	110
<b>Chapter 7: Violence Against Women .....</b>		<b>111</b>
Cambodia at a glance .....		113
7.1	Status, trends and issues .....	113
7.1.1	The acceptance of domestic violence .....	114
7.1.2	Women who experience abuse have no way out .....	114
7.1.3	Rape: an act of violence in an environment of impunity .....	115

7.1.4	Victims of trafficking absorb the blame .....	116
7.1.5	Poverty and social upheaval contribute to sex industry growth .....	117
7.1.6	Demand for commercial sex has increased .....	118
7.1.7	Changing nature of sex work .....	118
7.2	Government Policies and Strategies .....	119
<b>Chapter 8: Women's Voice in Politics and Decision Making .....</b>		<b>121</b>
Cambodia at a glance .....		123
8.1	Status, trends and issues .....	123
8.1.1	Government structure and decentralization .....	123
8.1.2	Average representation of women in the Parliament is lower than average for the region .....	124
8.1.3	Women's participation in the National Assembly is rising slowly .....	125
8.1.4	Party lists and election results .....	126
8.1.5	Once elected, women are active participants in Parliament .....	128
8.1.6	Very few women fill politically appointed positions at national and provincial levels ...	128
8.1.7	Women are under-represented in the judiciary .....	129
8.1.8	Women experience discrimination in the civil service .....	130
8.1.9	Public administration reform: Opportunity or risk? .....	131
8.1.10	Women civil servants lack access to training .....	131
8.1.11	The first commune councils reflect disappointing participation .....	135
8.1.12	The greatest participation of women is at the village level .....	136
8.2	Government policies and strategies .....	137
8.2.1	Governance Action Plan .....	137
8.2.2	Cambodian Millennium Development Goals .....	138
8.2.3	Seila Gender Mainstreaming Strategy .....	139
Annex: Women Candidates in Party Lists – National Assembly Election July 2003 .....		140
<b>Chapter 9 Gender Mainstreaming – Institutional and Policy Context .....</b>		<b>145</b>
9.1	Legal Framework .....	147
9.2	Institutional framework .....	148
9.2.1	The Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs .....	148
9.2.2	The Cambodian National Council for Women .....	151
9.2.3	The experience of line ministries in mainstreaming gender .....	152
9.2.4	Donors and NGOs .....	152
9.3	National Policies and Strategic Planning Processes .....	153
9.3.1	Socio-Economic Development Plan II (SEDPII) .....	153
9.3.2	National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) .....	154
9.3.3	The integrated framework – pro-poor trade strategy .....	155
9.3.4	Cambodian Millennium Development Goals .....	155
9.3.5	Budget planning and allocation .....	156
9.3.6	National statistical systems .....	156
<b>Chapter 10 - Conclusions and Recommendations .....</b>		<b>161</b>
10.1	The challenge of economic empowerment increases as the adult population expands .....	164
10.1.1	Formal paid employment opportunities need to expand rapidly to absorb the growing labor force .....	164
10.1.2	A broader range of formal employment choices is needed for both men and women .	164
10.1.3	Employment opportunities in rural areas are limited and unreliable .....	164
10.1.4	Emerging opportunities, but women have limited capacity to compete .....	164
10.1.5	Recommendations .....	165
10.2	Rural women do not have the access to resources and services that would help them reduce poverty and ensure food security .....	166
10.2.1	Most of Cambodia's women farmers do not have access to the resources they need .....	166

10.2.2	Basic services such as roads and water supply are a priority for poor women as well as poor men .....	166
10.2.3	Recommendations .....	166
10.3	<b>Gender inequality in access to health and education services is most severe among the poor, and in rural areas .....</b>	<b>167</b>
10.3.1	Gender inequalities in education are worst in rural areas, and among poor people who are predominantly concentrated in these areas .....	167
10.3.2	Current health services are not reaching rural areas, and especially rural women and girls .....	167
10.3.3	Recommendations .....	168
10.4	<b>Those that are especially vulnerable have little support and nowhere to turn to .....</b>	<b>169</b>
10.4.1	Transmission of HIV/AIDS is declining, but moving into the broader population .....	169
10.4.2	Violence against women takes many forms and few services are available for victims of violence .....	169
10.4.3	Recommendations .....	170
10.5	<b>Social, legal, and political institutions perpetuate gender discrimination and vulnerability .....</b>	<b>171</b>
10.5.1	Gender-related social norms and behaviors can have negative impacts on both men and women .....	171
10.5.2	Participation of women in decision-making is essential at all levels in order to bring about improvements .....	171
10.5.3	Judicial systems and law enforcement agencies need to be held accountable through improved monitoring and reporting of their activities .....	171
10.5.4	Recommendations .....	171
10.6	<b>Institutions still struggle to mainstream gender effectively .....</b>	<b>172</b>
10.6.1	Weak governance and poor financial management are a major constraint to improving gender equality .....	172
10.6.2	The mechanisms in place to integrate gender into the budgeting and planning process are limited in their effectiveness .....	172
10.6.3	Mechanisms to mainstream gender in line agencies are weak and only partly effective .....	173
10.6.4	MoWVA's capacity to sustainably mainstream gender issues in the policy process remains weak .....	173
10.6.3	Recommendations .....	173
	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>175</b>

# LIST OF FIGURES

---

Figure 1.1:	Women and girls work longer hours than men and boys .....	24
Figure 1.2:	Human Poverty Index, by sex and per capita expenditure quintile, 1999 .....	27
Figure 1.3:	Incidence of child labor among children aged 14-17 years, by household head, 1999 .....	28
Figure 2.1:	Growth in labor force by age group, 1997 to 2001 .....	35
Figure 2.2:	Urban-rural distribution of employment, 1997 and 2001 .....	35
Figure 2.3:	Labor force participation rates in the region .....	36
Figure 2.4:	Number of persons in the labor force by age group and sex .....	36
Figure 2.5:	Children and youth in the labor force in urban and rural areas .....	37
Figure 2.6:	Employment status, by sex and major industry group .....	39
Figure 2.7:	Unpaid family workers, 1998 to 2001 .....	39
Figure 2.8:	Status in employment in non-agriculture sectors by location and sex, 2001 .....	40
Figure 2.9:	Percent of labor force in waged employment .....	40
Figure 2.10:	Female share of waged employment .....	41
Figure 2.11:	Number of persons in waged employment, 1998 to 2001 .....	41
Figure 2.12:	Employment by occupation group .....	43
Figure 2.13:	More education leads to more opportunities .....	45
Figure 3.1:	Women in the agricultural sector: Many in the fields, few in the office .....	65
Figure 4.1:	Gender equality at all levels of education .....	72
Figure 4.2:	Net enrollment rates, 1996 to 2001 .....	73
Figure 4.3:	Male/female cohort survival rates, grades .....	75
Figure 4.4:	Student drop-outs for lower secondary school .....	75
Figure 4.5:	Numbers of students enrolled in upper secondary school .....	77
Figure 4.6:	Ratio of boys to girls, by geographic area .....	77
Figure 4.7:	Net enrollment in upper secondary schools .....	78
Figure 4.8:	Proportion of female students in higher education .....	81
Figure 4.9:	Literacy rates, by age group .....	82
Figure 5.1:	Access to health care by women, by income .....	91
Figure 5.2:	Access to health services, by education of women .....	92
Figure 5.3:	Maternal mortality rates and infant mortality rates, regional comparison .....	93
Figure 5.4:	Nutritional status of women for select indicators .....	94
Figure 5.5:	Total fertility rate, by province .....	95
Figure 5.6:	Contraceptive use, by province .....	95
Figure 5.7:	Deliveries attended by a skilled birth attendant .....	97
Figure 6.1:	Adult prevalence of HIV .....	104
Figure 6.2:	HIV infections among women .....	104
Figure 6.3:	HIV infections among men .....	105
Figure 6.4:	HIV prevalence and condom use among direct sex workers .....	106
Figure 6.5:	HIV prevalence among women seeking antenatal care .....	106
Figure 6.6:	Regional HIV prevalence among pregnant women seeking antenatal care .....	107
Figure 6.7:	HIV prevalence among pregnant women .....	107
Figure 6.8:	Route of HIV transmission over time .....	108

Figure 8.1: Percentage of women in national parliaments in the region, 2002 ..... 125

Figure 8.2: Women in national elections since 1993 ..... 125

Figure 8.3: Percentage of women candidates for the July 2003 National Assembly elections, by province (CPP, SRP and Funcinpec) ..... 126

Figure 8.4: Women candidates by position in party lists, June 2003 ..... 127

Figure 8.5: Women in politically appointed positions at the national level ..... 129

Figure 8.6: Rapid assessment of women in senior civil service positions, 2003 ..... 130

Figure 8.7: Comparison of men to women with higher education in the labor force ..... 131

Figures 8.8: Total number of women and men participating in initial training at the RSA ..... 134

Figures 8.9: Total number of women and men participating in continuing training of the RSA ... 134

# LIST OF TABLES

---

Table 2.1:	Labor force by age group, 1997 to 2001 .....	34
Table 2.2:	Unemployment rates, 2001 (% of labor force) .....	38
Table 2.3:	Working hours and wages in the garment industry in selected Asian countries .....	48
Table 3.1:	Gender division of labor .....	59
Table 4.1:	Distribution of recurrent public funding, by subsector (billion <i>riels</i> ) .....	83
Table 5.1:	Ministry of Health workforce, 1996-2001 .....	97
Table 8.1:	Women candidates in party lists and percentage of women candidates, by province .....	127
Table 8.2:	Inclusion of women MPs on Parliament commissions, June 2003 .....	128
Table 8.3:	Status of progress in reaching GAP gender-equity benchmarks .....	138
Table 9.1:	Donor-Financed Projects Implemented by MOWVA 2003-04 .....	157



# LIST OF ACRONYMS

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ADB	Asian Development Bank
ART	Antiretroviral Therapy
ASDP	Agriculture Sector Development Program
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BMC	Budget Management Centre
BMI	Body Mass Index
BSS	Behavior Sentinel Survey
CAMBOW	Cambodian Committee for Women
CAR	Council for Administrative Reform
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (see NIS 2001a in the bibliography)
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CENAT	National Centre for Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control
CFR	Case Fatality Rate
CG	Consultative Group
CHDR	Cambodia Human Development Report
CMDGs	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals
CNCW	Cambodian National Council for Women
CNIP	Cambodia Nutrition Investment Plan
CNM	National Malaria Center
CPA	Complimentary Package of Activities
CSD	Council for Social Development
CSES	Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey
CSWs	Commercial sex workers
DFID/UK	Department For International Development/United Kingdom
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPZs	Export Processing Zones
ESI	Education Statistics & Indicators
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESSP	Education Sector Support Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FFW	Food for Work
FPL	Food Poverty Line
GAD/C	Gender and Development, Cambodia
GAP	Government Action Plan
GDI	Gender-related Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
GNP	Gross National Product
GS-CSD	General Secretary of Council for Social Development

GSNA	General Secretariat of National Assembly
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HC	Health Centre
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency virus/Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HP	Health Post
HPI	Human Poverty Index
IDA	Iron Deficiency Anemia
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IPRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
ISIC	International Standard of Industry Classification
ITN	Insecticide Treated-bed Nets
KAPE	Khmer Action Primary Education
LFS	Labour Force Survey (see NIS 2001b and NIS 2002 in the bibliography)
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIME	Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy
MLMUPC	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MoC	Ministry of Commerce
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MoSALY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Youth and Rehabilitation
MoWVA	Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs
MPA	Minimum Package of Activities
MTCT	Mother-to-Child Transmission
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
MTEP	Medium-Term Expenditure Plan
NAA	National AIDS Authority
NCHADS	National Centre for HIV/AIDS Dermatology and STDs
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
NHS	National Health Survey
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NMC	National Malaria Centre
NPF	National Poverty Forum
NPRS	National Poverty Reduction Strategy
OD	Operational Districts
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OSE	Office of Special Education
PAPs	Priority Action Programmes
PC6-14OS	Proportion of Children 6-14 years old out of School
PDWVA	Provincial Department of Women's and Veterans' Affairs
PER	Public Expenditure Review
PGER	Primary Gross Enrolment Rate
PLWHA	People Living with HIV/AIDS

PMATU	Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Technical Unit
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessment
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTR	Pupil-teacher ratio
PVI	Poverty and Vulnerable Indicator
RAU	Royal University of Agriculture
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RLFM	Ratio of Literate Females to Males
RSA	Royal School of Administration
RWSS	Rural Water and Sanitation Strategy
SEDPII	Second Socio-Economic Development Plan
SPQ	Share of Poorest Quintile
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
TB	Tuberculosis
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
TTC	Teacher Training College
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
VDCs	Village Development Committees
WATSAN	Water and Sanitation
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WID	Women in development
WTO	World Trade Organization

# CHAPTER 1

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF GENDER RELATIONS

<b>Cambodia at a Glance .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>1.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>22</b>
1.1.1 Strong traditions assign women a lower status than men .....	23
1.1.2 The division of labor is changing .....	23
1.1.3 Women still have heavier work burdens .....	24
1.1.4 Men still make most household decisions .....	24
1.1.5 Gender relations between women and men are shifting .....	25
1.1.6 HDI, GEM and GDI are among the lowest in Asia .....	26
1.1.7 The Human Poverty Index is greater for women than men .....	26
1.1.8 Women-headed households are among the poorest in a community .	27

# SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF GENDER RELATIONS

## Cambodia at a Glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Value
Gross domestic product (GDP per capita in US\$), 2001	259
GDP annual percentage growth rate, 1990-2000	5
Percentage share of GDP by sector	
Agriculture	38
Industry	23.5
Services	35
Percentage employment by sector, 2000	
Agriculture	74
Industry	8
Services	18
1998 Population Census	11,437,656
Percentage of women in the population	52
Annual population percentage growth rate, 1998 census	2.5
Fertility rate, 2002	4
Projected population in 2006	16 million
Percentage of population in rural areas, 1998	84
Percentage of population younger than 20	55
Rank in the Human Development Index, 2000	130 out of 174
Human Development Index, 2000	0.543
Life expectancy in years, 1998	54
Percentage of population under the poverty line, 1997 & 1999	36
Gender Development Index, 1998	0.537

<sup>1</sup> Sources: CSD 2002: National Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003-2005  
 MoH, DPHI 1999: Consultative Group Position Paper  
 CDHS 2000  
 Census 1998  
 RGC 2002: Second Five-Year Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2001-2005  
 UNDP 2001: Human Development Report

## 1.1 Status, trends and issues

The tragic events between 1970 and 1979 and the protracted civil violence that continued into the early 1990s had a severe long-term impact on the lives of Cambodian women and men. There has been some analysis by Cambodian and international scholars (see Pok, 1993; Ledgerwood, 1996 and Kumar et al., 2000) on the particular effects on women. Common conclusions include:

- Three decades of violence left Cambodia with a population in which adult women (older than 18) accounted for 60-65 percent of the population. This created a decrease in the value of women as there was a surplus of women of marriageable age during the 1980s and early 1990s. This led to a decline of women's status in the family as men found themselves in a better bargaining position (Ledgerwood, 1996). Women without husbands are looked down upon and marginalized in Cambodian society.
- The Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) undermined the institution of the family by separating children from their families. The Khmer Rouge promoted mass weddings in which young women and men were randomly selected for marriage.
- After the onset of Vietnamese-backed socialist rule (1979-1989), the official policy stated that women and men are equal. The communist party promoted some women into decision-making positions. However, this changed during the transition to democracy, which saw women's political participation decline (Ledgerwood, 1996).
- Although the civil conflict created hardships for women, it also created new opportunities to participate in the public sphere (Kumar, 2000). Because of mass mobilization of men into the military, mass killings and increased demand for labor for war and rehabilitation work, women performed economic roles that had been previously restricted to men. In refugee camps set up in Thailand, women were encouraged to take part in income-generation and other skills training courses. The administrative structure of the camps, which were run by international agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs), also encouraged the participation of women, which added to a sense of empowerment when women returned to Cambodia after the camps were closed. These developments all contributed to changes in traditional gender roles and the division of labor.
- The arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) and development agencies in the early 1990s symbolized peace, the return of the concept of gender equality and the creation (with new funding) of a wide array of "women's" NGOs. The arrival of 22,000 United Nations peacekeepers also exacerbated an existing problem of prostitution. The soldiers not only created new demands for sex workers, but also legitimized the industry that had been hidden in the past.

Gender relations in Cambodia continue to undergo uneven change: The cultural norms still firmly place women at a lower status than men. This continues despite the fact that women play an equally important and increasingly visible role as income providers for families and are a driving force for economic development.

### 1.1.1 Strong traditions assign women a lower status than men

Underlying the gender inequalities outlined in this report are cultural and traditional norms that limit girls' and women's choices and options. Cambodia is a hierarchically ordered society with strong notions of power and status that condition social relations. Women are considered to be of lower status than men, although the status of an individual is also determined by age and other characteristics, including wealth (Gorman, 1999).

Gender discrimination is deeply embedded in, and reinforced by, social attitudes. The moral codes that describe the proper behavior of women, known as the *Chba'p*, are a part of the primary school curriculum that states in part: "The woman is to be silent and walk so softly that one cannot hear the sound of her silk skirt rustling. She is shy and naïve and must be protected. Before her marriage, she has ideally never left the company of family members" (Ledgerwood, 1996).

It is socially unacceptable for a Cambodian woman to marry someone with a lower level of education, which is an added disincentive to girls pursuing higher levels of education. It is also difficult for a woman to have a higher position than her husband. Thus, it is acceptable for a woman to engage in trade to support the family in order to allow her husband to maintain a low salary but high status position in the Government. However, the reverse would not be accepted. The assumed lower status of wives *vis-a-vis* their husbands was illustrated by examples given in consultations with women's groups. Under Council for Administrative Reform (CAR) regulations, male civil servants are entitled to a "dependency allowance" if their wives are at home, while women in the civil service are not entitled to such benefits, presumably based on the assumption that women would never have a "higher" profession than their husbands. Another example is of women who gained seats on local councils (one was even appointed as deputy governor) but stepped down because their husbands were not supportive.

### 1.1.2 The division of labor is changing

Traditional norms see Cambodian men as the providers for their families while women's responsibilities lie in child care and household management. Prevailing ideas about the jobs that should be done by a woman and by a man hold that men are responsible for heavy work and work requiring "technical ability". However, in practice, the household division of labor is changing, with an increased tendency for women to engage in a broader range of tasks, including those normally associated with men.

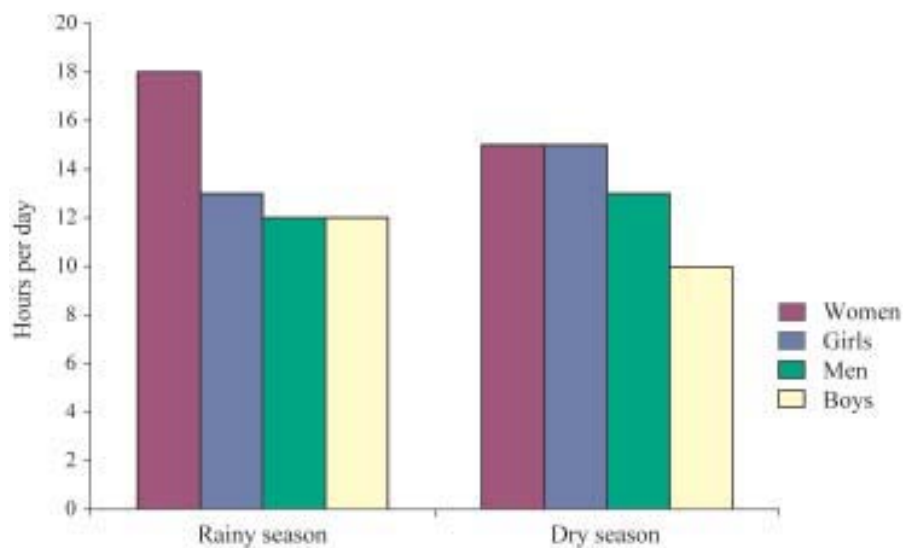
In reality, Cambodian women are equally responsible for earning a living and providing for their families, especially in poor households, as can be seen by their equal participation in the labor force (see Chapter 2). Prevailing cultural norms encourage young men to find paid work, but discourage women. Yet, although it is increasingly recognized that there might be more paid employment opportunities for women than for men, people still feel that young women who seek garment factory jobs would be better off if they remained in their villages. Families fear that girls who move to urban areas will be corrupted and lose their virginity before marriage (ADB, 2001).

### 1.1.3 Women still have heavier work burdens

All these factors contribute to an increased work burden for women. Respondents in a participatory poverty assessment (ADB, 2001) reported that women have a wider range of domestic and non-domestic roles than men. Women also wake before men and go to sleep after men do. Women take charge of 90 percent of the household work, including care of dependents and the sick. Due to the high fertility rate and population boom in the 1980s, the populace in Cambodia is very young: 43 percent were younger than 15 years in 1998, resulting in a high dependency ratio that also increases women's work burden. People in households, mostly women and girls, spend from one to two hours each day collecting water for the family's needs. Women and girls work longer hours than men and boys (Figure 1.1). There is also a growing link between a shrinking natural resource base across the country and an increase in the amount of daily work that women have to take on to meet basic needs. This also affects men, but men are inclined to contribute to subsistence needs on an ad hoc, irregular or seasonal basis.

Women would like their burden to be eased by having men share in housework: 89 percent of women surveyed believed their husbands should help more with household chores (CDHS, 2000). This sentiment was echoed in consultations with women in the civil service.

**Figure 1.1: Women and girls work longer hours than men and boys**



Source: CDHS, 2000

### 1.1.4 Men still make most household decisions

Also in that same survey, many women believed that important decisions should be made by men (52 percent), that it is better to educate a son than a daughter (59 percent) and that married women should not be allowed to work outside the home (33 percent) (CDHS, 2000).



Female control over resources and decision-making remains limited (CDHS, 2000). The decision to work or not work was rarely made by women alone (9 percent); few women owned at least one asset that they could sell without permission (28 percent); awareness of credit programs was limited (37 percent); and knowledge of how to borrow to start or expand a business was very low (10 percent).

Women do not necessarily control land transactions even when the titles are in both names. A gender assessment carried out in Svay Rieng and Prey Veng, (IFAD, 2003) revealed that men still make decisions on major purchases and sales, including those related to land. However, women who earn their own income are more likely to make the decision about how it should be spent. Among currently married women who earned cash for their work in 2000, 47 percent reported that they alone made decisions about how their earnings would be used, and 50 percent reported that they and their husbands made decisions jointly (CDHS, 2000).

More household expenditures are covered with women's than men's earnings – with women contributing more than half of household income (IFAD, 2003). This has important implications for how policy recommendations target women in the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

It is commonly said that women manage the household finances and make the day-to-day domestic expenditure decisions. However, in the majority of poor households, the responsibility for ensuring that the small household budget meets the family's needs does not amount to “economic empowerment”. It is often a source of family conflict leading to violence, as well as a burden on women who have to compensate for the inadequate earnings of men in order to cover necessary expenses.

### ***1.1.5 Gender relations between women and men are shifting***

There is little information or analysis of male gender issues in Cambodia. What, for example, are the changing roles and identities for men? How are changes in the labor market and social structures affecting men? How do risky behavior, crime and violence, occupational injury, HIV and AIDS and substance abuse affect men's human capital? Is the rate of domestic and public sexual violence (including gang rape) increasing in incidence and intensity, and if so, why?

While there is little understanding of how economic and social conditions affect men and their roles and responsibilities, there are signs of an impact on the relationship between women and men. Women's comments during consultations for this assessment, for instance, suggested that men's under-employment and loss of economic power accompanied by a perceived relative increase in women's economic power is seen by some men as a violation of gender norms. This emerging frustration is revealed by increased reports of domestic violence. However, increasing women's economic autonomy may allow them to leave violent or abusive relations and avoid exploitative and high-risk forms of employment, such as commercial sex work.

In a demographic and health survey, 86 percent of female respondents believed that women should not tolerate beatings to keep their family together. Eighty-nine percent also believed that it is unacceptable for a man to have extramarital sex, yet men having multiple partners is not only widely practiced but apparently is tolerated (CDHS, 2000). While not considered socially acceptable, the issue of men's multiple partners is not being addressed as a gender issue. However, it has important implications for the spread of HIV, as well as the involuntary sex trade that is affecting a large number of women and increasingly younger girls.

### **1.1.6 HDI, GEM and GDI are among the lowest in Asia**

The Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) have been devised to measure human development within a country (UNDP, 1990). The HDI is a composite measure of longevity, education and standard of living. GEM measures the relative participation of women and men in political and economic spheres of activity, while gender disparities are reflected in the Gender Development Index (GDI).

At 0.427, Cambodia's GDI is among the lowest in Asia. It is similar to the HDI (0.421) because women's longer life expectancy counterbalances the significant gender inequities in educational attainment and levels of literacy. The GEM (0.283) is also among the lowest in Asia, due to women's low representation in national decision-making institutions and professional positions.

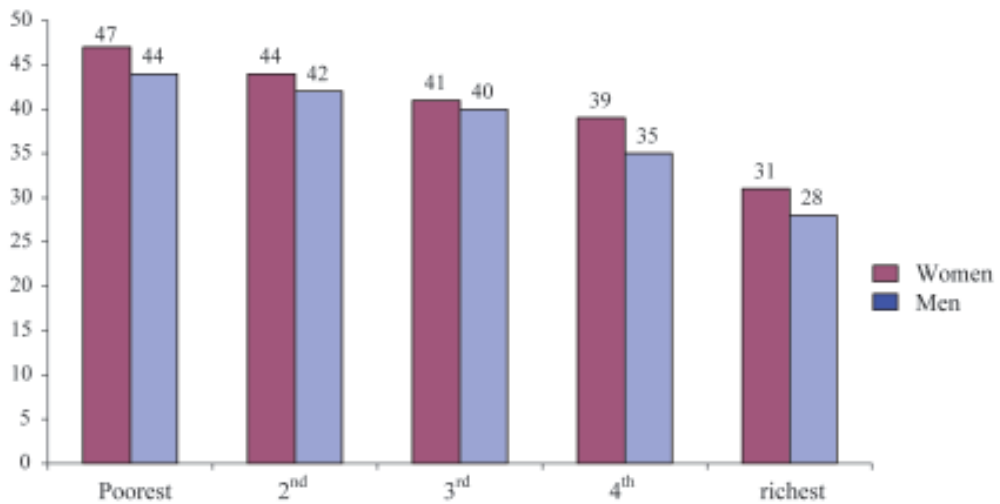
### **1.1.7 The Human Poverty Index is greater for women than men**

The Human Poverty Index (HPI) measures deprivation, longevity, knowledge and standard of living. It is a composite measure of the percentages of people who are not expected to survive to age 40, are illiterate and have no access to safe water and health services, as well as the percentage of moderately and severely underweight children younger than five years of age. As expected, given the high rate of infant and child mortality and malnutrition and the lack of public services (indicators used in construction of the HPI), Cambodia has a high HPI in relation to other Asian countries. Only Bangladesh and Pakistan have a higher HPI than Cambodia. Human poverty is greater among Cambodian women than among men across all economic groups. Gender disparity in human poverty persists even among the richest 20 percent, suggesting that gender disparities will not automatically be reduced with economic growth and rising living standards, and that specific policy interventions will be needed to narrow these disparities (CHDR, 2000).

One of the main hypotheses of a gender analysis of poverty is that gender biases influence strategies of coping with poverty, and thus women's experiences are affected by poverty in different ways than men. It cannot be assumed that all resources are pooled and consumed equally within households and families. The report, *Women's Contribution to Development*, states that "while there is little discrimination against female infants and children in the intra-household allocation of staple food (such as rice), adult males aged 15 years and over receive larger allocations of staple food than adult women ... and that there is a distinct pattern of males receiving significantly larger allocations of discretionary food items, such as meat and eggs." (CHDR, 1998) Thus, there is a very real possibility that women are at a higher risk of hunger and malnutrition.

The first global MDG does not include indicators on women's malnutrition, nor is malnutrition included in the fifth global MDG on maternal health. However, the fifth Cambodian MDG does include indicators on body mass index and iron deficiency anemia in non-pregnant women. These indicators are being monitored by the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS), and the Ministry of Health has a target for both (see Chapter 5). It is important that women's health and well-being – including nutrition – be addressed in the context of women's rights and not limited to maternal health issues, which sees women as beneficiaries because of their child-bearing role and not by virtue of their own entitlement.

**Figure 1.2: Human Poverty Index, by sex and per capita expenditure quintile, 1999**



**Source:** UNDP, from CSES 1999

Another example of gendered impacts of poverty is the higher rate of child labor among girls than boys (see Chapter 2): 50 percent of girls and 36 percent of boys in the 14-17 age group have the highest incidence of child labor of all age groups (CHDR 2000). Poverty is one of the main contributing factors to child labor.

### **1.1.8 Women-headed households are among the poorest in a community**

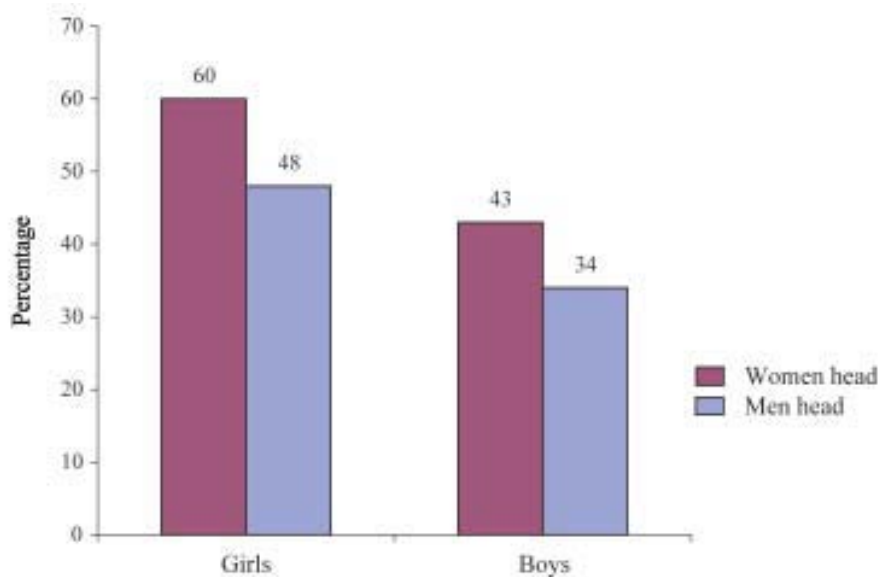
As poverty data are collected only at the household level, some gender analysis has focused on disaggregating household data based on the sex of the household head. The 1999 *Poverty Profile of Cambodia* (MoP, 1999) showed that although the poverty headcount index for women-headed households (34 percent) was slightly lower than that of male-headed households (36 percent), the difference was not statistically significant. The poverty profile concluded that “there is no difference in poverty rates between male-and female-headed households”.

Household headship as a proxy for the gendered impact of poverty suffers from several weaknesses. Most female heads of household are widows and in the older age groups. These households often include other income-earning adults but, in the Cambodian context, the oldest and most respected member of the household is reported as the head of household. This may be why the average income of female-headed households is higher than for male-headed households.

Women head a quarter of all households in Cambodia. Some are widows, a result of decades of civil violence. Others are divorced or have been abandoned by their husbands. While in aggregate female-headed households are not necessarily poorer, they do have specific needs, constraints and vulnerabilities that are different from male-headed households. And they are generally identified by communities as among the poorest households in a community. The participatory poverty assessment revealed that the group considered most vulnerable to poverty in rural areas was widows with young children and no adult labor in the family. Such women have to generate income for the family without assistance or substitute care from within the household for their young children (ADB, 2001).

Women who head households are more likely to work in agriculture than men heading households. Yet they tend to have smaller land holdings, are more vulnerable to losing their land in the event of economic shocks and have higher rates of child labor than male-headed households. Children of both sexes from female-headed households are more likely to work than children from male-headed households: 60 percent of girls and 48 percent of boys from women-headed households worked, compared with 43 percent of girls and 34 percent of boys from male-headed households (CHRD on Child Labor, UNDP, 2000). The higher incidence of child labor suggests that, although not worse off on average than male-headed households, female-headed households rely on gender-based coping mechanisms, such as child labor and especially that of girls.

**Figure 1.3: Incidence of child labor among children aged 14-17 years, by household head, 1999**



*Source:* UNDP, CHDR, 2000

Female-headed households also may not benefit equally from development interventions. Gender analysis of the World Food Program's Food for Work (FFW) found that women heads of households were often excluded from participation in the FFW programs and from decision-making (WFP, 2001). The reasons for their exclusion included practical constraints on women's mobility and time, as well as structural obstacles: management of the FFW program is linked to official government hierarchies, which are in turn linked to male-dominated status hierarchies. The report concluded that the constraints confronting poor women were more associated with practical issues rather than any culturally inherent obstacle to women's participation. Female heads of households were also isolated from community networks, such as "male friendship circles" and thus from information about local development activities, including the FFW programs.

Female-headed households are identified as a vulnerable segment of the population in the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) and the second five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2001-2005 (SEDPII). However, no strategic response or action was identified to address their particular needs, and there is little indication that donor-financed or NGO projects systematically target those households.

While female-headed households do exhibit certain social and economic characteristics that affect their development prospects, limiting the focus to those households might obscure the gender and poverty issues faced by women living in male-headed households. Women comprise 50 percent of the population below the food poverty line, and 51 percent of the population between the food poverty line and the poverty line. An estimated 82 percent of poor women live in male-headed households. It is especially difficult to identify, monitor and address intra-household poverty issues. National poverty indicators are based on households and do not include gender-responsive indicators, (except for female-headed households). Women in poor households headed by men also have gender-specific and equally important needs, constraints and vulnerabilities related to their role and status in the family and society. Poverty-alleviation efforts need to take into account the specific needs and vulnerabilities of both poor female-headed households and women and girls in poor male-headed households.

# CHAPTER 2

## GENDER OUTLOOK ON THE LABOR MARKET

<b>Cambodia at a Glance .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>2.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1.1 Labor force is growing rapidly .....	34
2.1.2 Labor force participation rates are increasing, female rates are exceptionally high by regional standards .....	36
2.1.3 Young people account for the majority of the unemployed .....	38
2.1.4 Women are over-represented in unpaid family labor, but the rate of unpaid family labor for men is on the rise .....	38
2.1.5 Female share of waged employment is rising but gender imbalances persist .....	40
2.1.6 Occupation and industry groups highly segregated by sex .....	42
2.1.7 Little support for the development of small and micro enterprises – a “hidden sector” of critical importance to women .....	43
2.1.8 Women are under-represented in professions and decision-making positions .....	44
2.1.9 Level of education affects wages and job opportunities .....	44
2.1.10 Women earn less than men .....	46
2.1.11 More young people are migrating to find employment .....	46
2.1.12 The garment industry has a profound impact on women’s lives .....	47
2.1.13 Trade and employment policies have different implications for men and women .....	49
2.1.14 Will the proposed export processing zones benefit women? .....	50
<b>2.2 Government policies and strategies .....</b>	<b>51</b>

# GENDER OUTLOOK ON THE LABOR MARKET

## Cambodia at a glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Value
Women as a percentage of the economically active population	52
Total labor force participation rate of women 15+	82
Labor force participation rate of women/men 15-19 years old	72/62
Percentage of women/men in waged employment	14/19
Women's percentage share of total waged employment	43
Women's percentage share of waged employment in agriculture	51
Women's percentage share of waged employment in the garment industry	84
Women's percentage share of waged employment in other industries	31
Women's percentage share of waged employment in the public service sector	22
Women's share of waged employment in other services	29
Percentage share of the garment industry in growth of the industrial sector	94
Percentage difference in men's and women's wages	33

## 2.1 Status, trends and issues

Gender inequalities are endemic in Cambodia's labor market. Traditional attitudes toward girls' education and "appropriate" occupations for women and men have shaped existing inequalities and continue to perpetuate disparities in employment. Achieving greater equality is made extremely difficult within the context of the shift to a market-oriented economy, a rapidly growing labor force, and limited new employment opportunities. Although women with higher levels of education are able to attain higher-level employment positions, the generally low level of female literacy and educational attainment in the existing labor force greatly constrain opportunities for most women. Even women with higher levels of education are under-represented in management and senior decision-making positions. Pro-active measures are needed to promote the economic empowerment of women and strengthen the role and status of women in Cambodia.

The rapid increase in the total labor force and young people entering the labor force is putting enormous pressure on the Government to generate productive employment opportunities. The success by which this is achieved will determine Cambodia's economic prospects. There is, however, a heightened risk that overall economic growth and employment creation efforts will overlook the already disadvantaged position of women in the labor force and thus contribute to perpetuating, if not increasing, gender inequalities.

**Sources<sup>1</sup>** Census 1998  
LFS 2000

Beresford, et al. 2003: The Macroeconomics of Poverty Reduction in Cambodia, calculated from NIS 2002  
Godfrey et al. 2001: A Study of the Cambodian Labour Market: Reference to Poverty Reduction, Growth and Adjustment to Crisis

The vast majority of the work force remains in rural areas. The limited capacity of the agriculture sector to absorb the growing work force is pushing more young people into urban areas – where new employment opportunities also remain limited. The social impact of urban migration is a growing concern, with important differences in the effects on young women and young men. More emphasis needs to be placed on expanding employment prospects in rural areas.

Recent increases in paid employment have been mostly in the garment sector. However, the future of the garment industry is in doubt. As Cambodia joins the World Trade Organization (WTO), the expiration of the Multi-Fiber Agreement at the end of 2004 will eliminate quotas for garment exports from Cambodia to the United States. The expiration of the Agreement applying to all WTO members removes quotas that previously restricted the quantity of textiles and garments exported from developing countries to developed country markets, potentially allowing some lower cost producers to expand production and pull business away from Cambodia. There is much speculation on the impact of these changes on Cambodia's garment industry. Nevertheless, the potential closure of garment factories is a fundamental gender issue as these factories are the primary source of waged employment for young women at this time.

Prior to the recent and rapid emergence of the garment sector, men out-numbered women in waged employment by more than two to one. Outside of agriculture and waged employment, women continue to be primarily self-employed in small, informal sector enterprises or as unpaid workers in family businesses. Despite the importance of small enterprise to women (and many men) in all parts of the country, very little attention has been paid to developing this sector.

### 2.1.1 Labor force is growing rapidly

One of the greatest challenges facing the country is the entry into the labor force of an increasing number of new workers born during the 1980s baby boom (Figure 2.1 and Table 2.1). The labor force in the 20-24 age group grew an estimated 66 percent between 1997 and 2001, and the number of youth aged 15-19 in the labor force increased by 58 percent. The proportion of the labor force under the age of 25 increased from 27 to 36 percent over this four-year period.

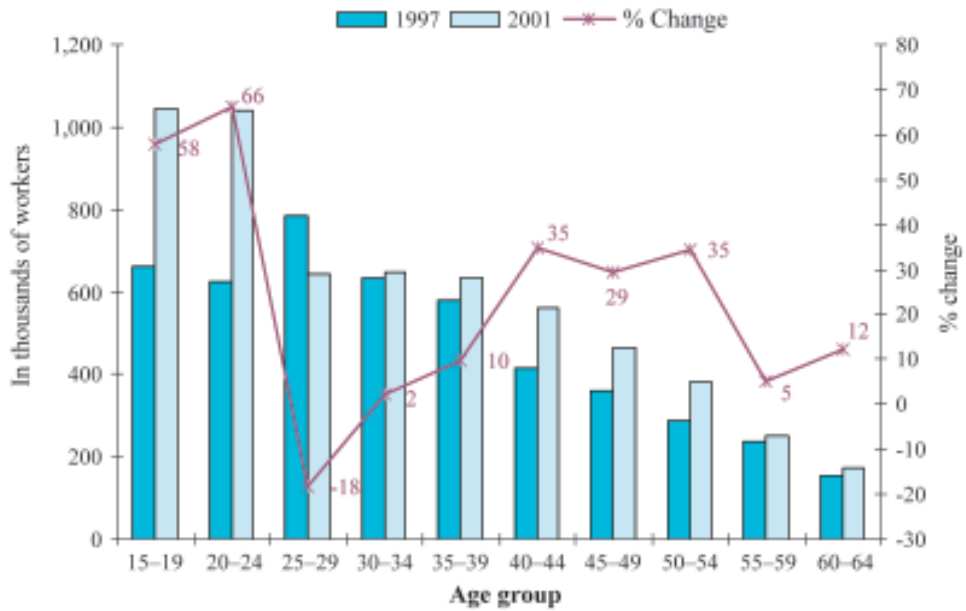
**Table 2.1: Labor force by age group, 1997 to 2001**

Age group	Labor force, 1997	Labor force, 2001	Growth (%)
15–19	661,422	1,043,163	58
20–24	626,565	1,042,364	66
25–29	783,999	641,633	-18
30–34	635,265	649,513	2
35–39	579,875	636,499	10
40–44	415,995	560,277	35
45–49	360,301	466,246	29
50–54	286,337	385,369	35
55–59	237,141	249,580	5
60–64	153,888	172,535	12
All groups	4,740,788	5,847,179	23

Sources: CSES 1997, LFS 2001

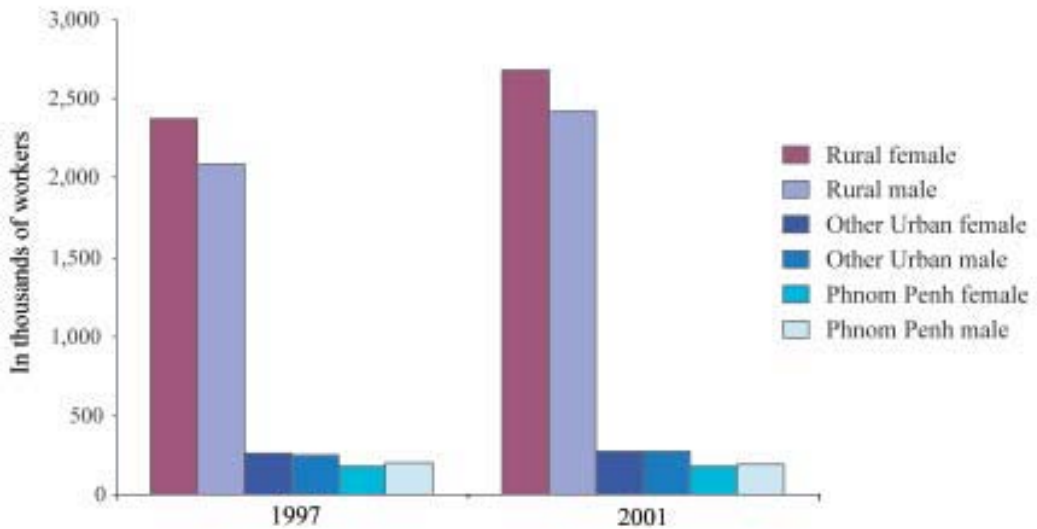


**Figure 2.1: Growth in labor force by age group, 1997 to 2001**



Sources: CSES 1997, LFS 2001

**Figure 2.2: Urban-rural distribution of employment, 1997 and 2001**



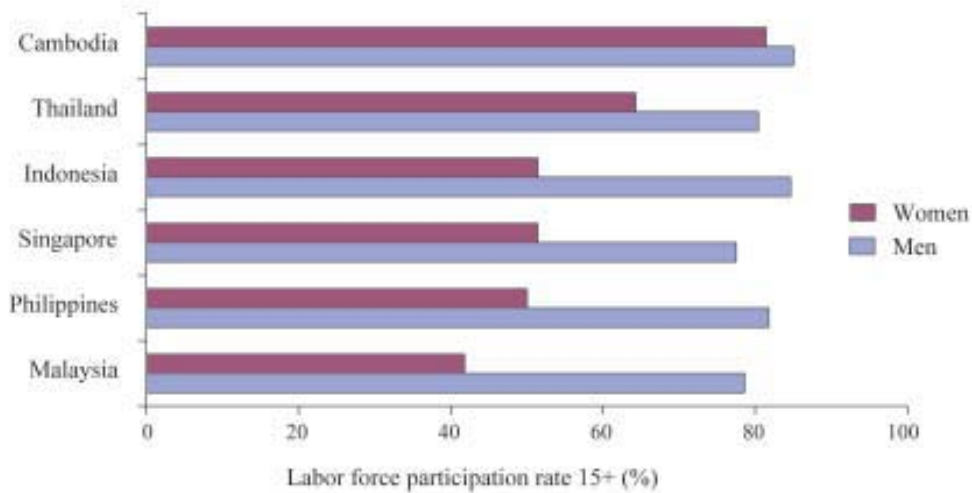
Sources: CSES 1997, LFS 2001

The labor force remains predominately in rural areas: 85 percent of the total labor force lived in rural areas in 2001; and 53 percent of the work force in rural areas is female (Figure 2.2).

**2.1.2 Labor force participation rates are increasing, female rates are exceptionally high by regional standards**

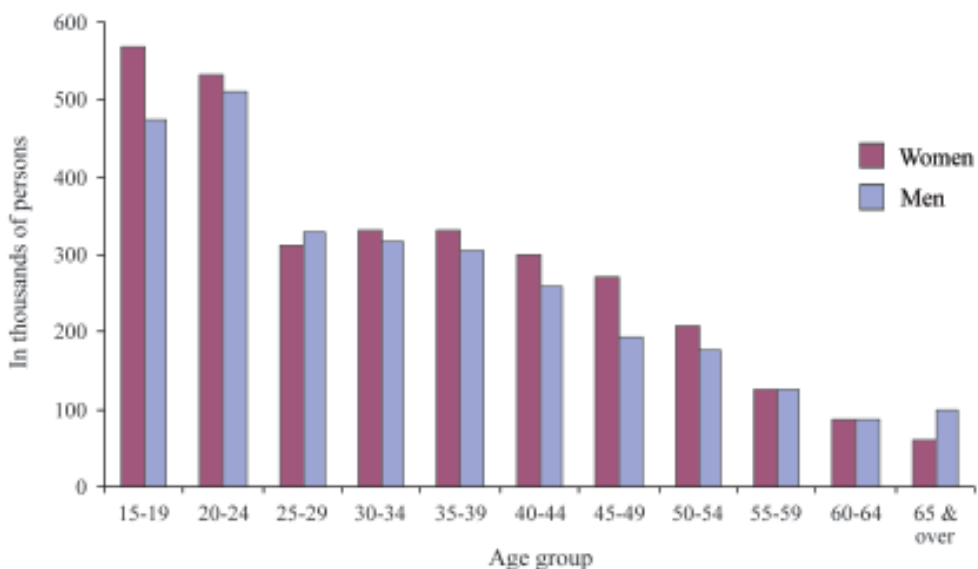
Cambodia has the highest female labor force participation rate in the region at 82 percent, compared to 64 percent in Thailand and 52 percent in Indonesia (Figure 2.3). These rates have been increasing since the early 1990s. Among the population aged 10 years or older, the percentage of females in the labor force increased from 55 percent in 1993/1994 to 71 percent in 2001. Over the same time period, the percentage of men in the labor force increased from 58 to 72 percent. Labor force statistics also show that participation rates are higher in rural areas than in urban areas, particularly for women.

**Figure 2.3: Labor force participation rates in the region**



Source: World Employment Report (ILO 2001); LFS 2001

**Figure 2.4: Number of persons in the labor force by age group and sex**



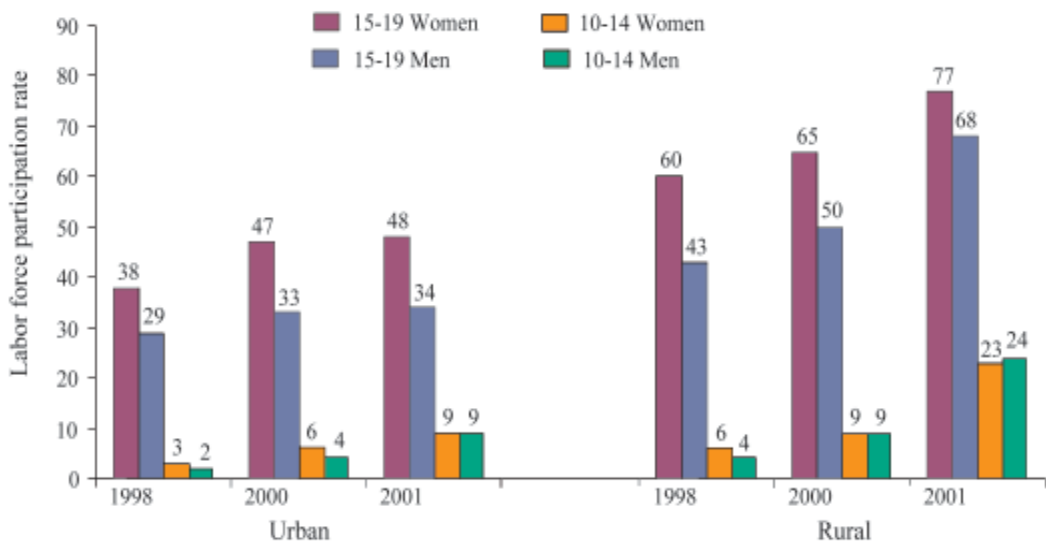
Source: LFS 2001

Women comprise 52 percent of the total population of Cambodia (Census, 1998) and 52 percent of the economically active population (LFS, 2001). Although labor force participation rates are higher for men than women in all age groups older than 25, the greater number of women in the total population aged 15 and older results in women out-numbering men in the labor force in all age groups from 15-54, except for the 25-29 age group.

Women tend to join the labor force earlier than men. The labor force-participation rate for young women aged 15-19 is noticeably higher at 72 percent than for young men at 62 percent (LFS, 2001). This is attributed to the higher proportion of boys staying in school while the girls have dropped out and started working.

A somewhat disturbing trend is the apparent increase in the participation of children and youth in the labor force, particularly in rural areas (Figure 2.5). Labor force participation remains consistently higher for young women in the 15-19 age group in both urban and rural areas. However, in the 10-14 age group, young boys are entering the labor force at a slightly higher rate than girls. This would seem to be consistent with secondary school enrollment rates up to 2001 (see Chapter 4).

**Figure 2.5: Children and youth in the labor force in urban and rural areas**



*Source:* LFS 2001

### 2.1.3 Young people account for the majority of the unemployed

Total unemployment for persons 15 years and older was reported as 1.7 percent in 2001 – 2.2 percent for females, 1.5 percent for males (Table 2.2) in the Labor Force Survey. Definitions of unemployment tend to vary between sources, making it difficult to track trends. The 1998 census reported total unemployment at 5.3 percent, and the 2000 Labor Force Survey reported it at 2.5 percent, suggesting an overall decline in the incidence of unemployment. Despite the various definitions, all sources show higher rates of unemployment in urban areas than rural areas, and higher unemployment for women than men. Unemployment rates are also higher among young people. Young people accounted for the majority of the unemployed in 2001, with 60 percent of all unemployed persons and 73 percent of unemployed males falling in the 15-24 age group. Female unemployment is spread over a broader range of age groups and is particularly high in the 15-19 and 35-39 age groups (LFS, 2001).

**Table 2.2: Unemployment rates, 2001 (% of labor force)**

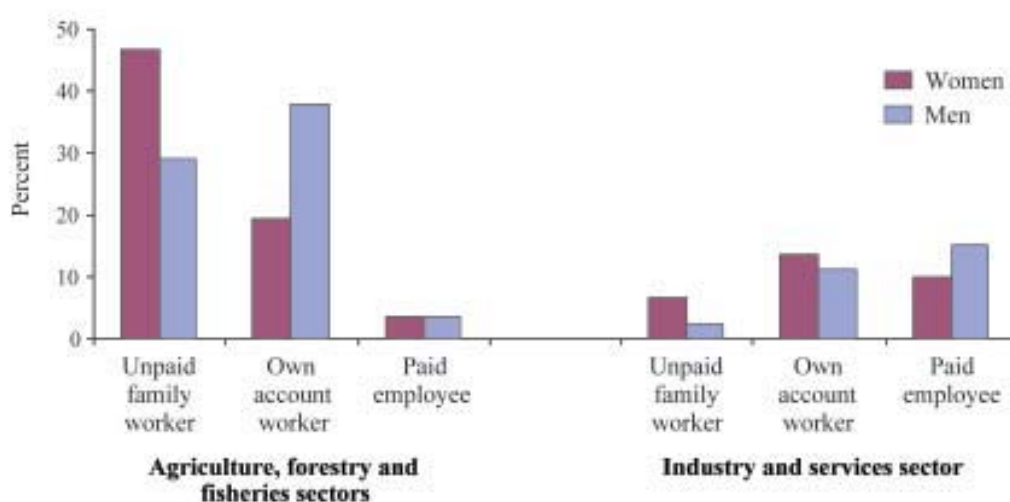
	Total labor force 15+			15- to 24-year-olds		
	T	F	M	T	F	M
Rural	1.7	2.0	1.4	2.7	2.7	2.8
Phnom Penh	1.8	2.2	1.4	4.6	4.2	4.8
Other urban	1.7	2.1	1.9	4.5	4.5	4.8
Cambodia	1.7	2.2	1.5	3.0	3.0	3.0

Source: LFS 2001

Total unemployment does not appear to be significant in Cambodia's labor market as the majority of people simply cannot afford to be *without* work. Unemployment among young people and under-employment are significant concerns, although little information exists on the latter issue. One possible indicator of the extent of under-employment would be the proportion of the employed population that is available for additional work. In 2001, 30 percent of all working persons reported that they were available for additional work; 9 percent were available and seeking additional work. Rates for males were higher in both categories (36 percent available and 12 percent seeking additional work), and rates in rural and other urban areas significantly higher than in Phnom Penh (8 percent and 3 percent, respectively) (LFS, 2001). Another possible proxy indicator of the extent of under-employment is the change in the proportion of the workforce employed as unpaid family labor, as discussed in the following section.

### 2.1.4 Women are over-represented in unpaid family labor, but the rate of unpaid family labor for men is on the rise

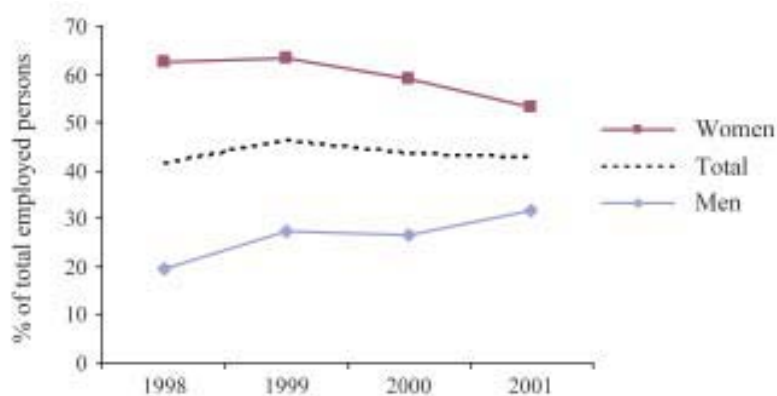
The 2001 Labor Force Survey reported that 53 percent of economically active women and 32 percent of economically active men were employed as unpaid family labor. The majority of unpaid family labor is in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors, with 47 percent of economically active women and 29 percent of economically active men classified as unpaid family workers (Figure 2.6).

**Figure 2.6: Employment status, by sex and major industry group**

Source: LFS 2001

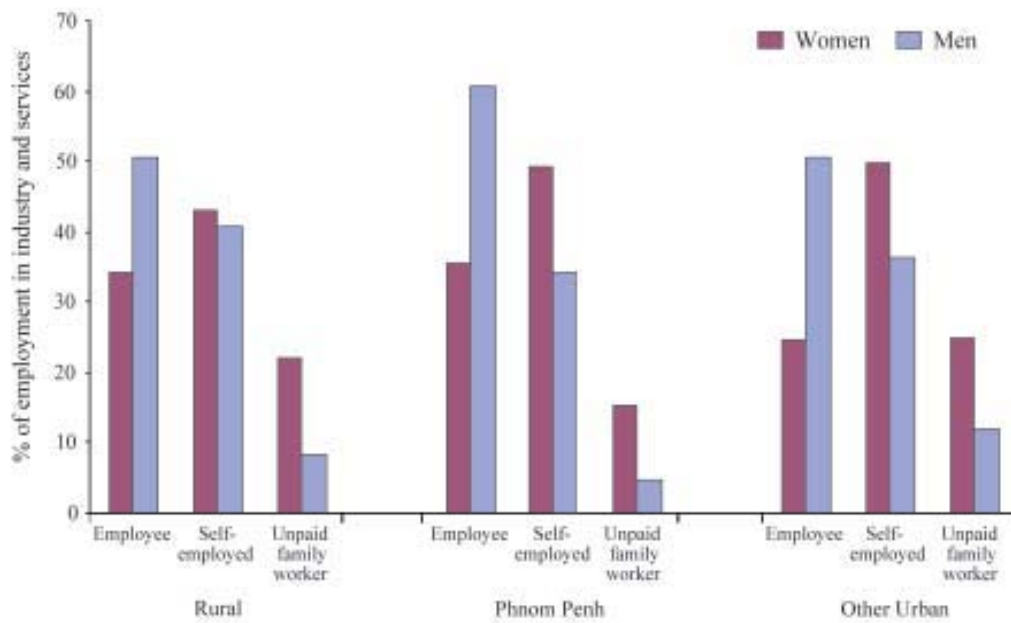
Although the majority of those categorized as unpaid family workers are female, the proportion of the female workforce in this category has declined in recent years (Figure 2.7), probably due to the increase in waged employment opportunities for women in the garment sector. At the same time, the proportion of the male workforce categorized as unpaid family workers has increased, reflecting a possible shortage of employment opportunities for males outside of the family.

Differences in the status of employment of women and men remain fairly constant in both rural and urban areas, as shown in Figure 2.8. Outside of the agriculture sector, males are more likely to be engaged in waged employment (52 percent of non-agricultural employment), particularly in Phnom Penh (60 percent). Females are more likely to be self-employed (45 percent) in all locations, although the proportion of females engaged in self-employment tends to be higher in urban areas (50 percent). Employment status as an unpaid family worker remains higher for females in all locations (22 percent).

**Figure 2.7: Unpaid family workers, 1998 to 2001**

Source: Census 1998, CSES 1999, LFS 2000, LFS 2001

**Figure 2.8: Employment status in non-agriculture sectors by location and sex, 2001**

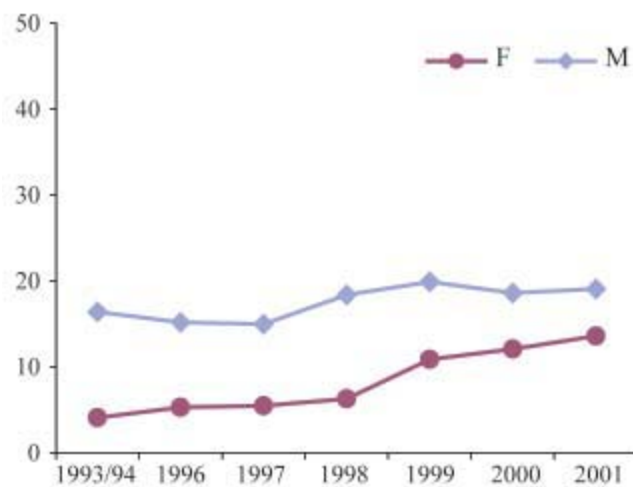


Source: LFS 2001

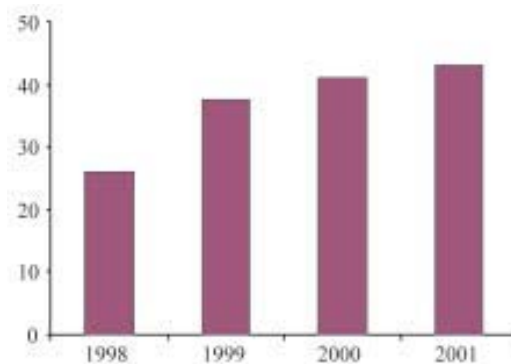
**2.1.5 Female share of waged employment is rising but gender imbalances persist**

Although increasing, the wage labor market remains small in Cambodia with few paid work opportunities for either men or women. Only 16 percent of employed Cambodians are paid employees – 19 percent of men, 14 percent of women (LFS, 2001).

**Figure 2.9: Percent of labor force in waged employment**

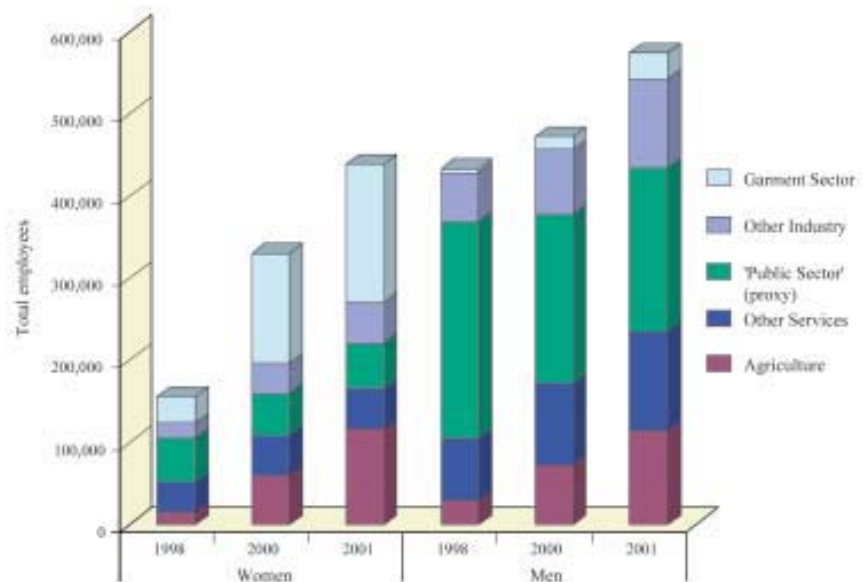


Sources: CSES (93/94, 1996, 1997, 1999), Census 1998, LFS (2000, 2001)

**Figure 2.10: Female share of waged employment**

**Sources:** CSES (93/94, 1996, 1997, 1999), Census 1998, LFS (2000, 2001)

Although more women are now entering the paid labor market (Figure 2.9) and the female share of waged employment has increased considerably (Figure 2.10), the growth in waged employment opportunities for women is mostly accounted for by the garment industry (Figure 2.11). Waged employment in the agriculture sector has increased for both women and men. This may be linked to a shift to larger-scale, market-oriented agricultural production and/or increasing landlessness. There has been relatively little change in total waged employment in the service industries. The public administration/defense, education and health/social work industries account for 60 percent of the waged employment in service industries; men hold 78 percent of the total jobs in these three industry groups. As there has been very little growth in this sector in recent years, new employment opportunities in this traditionally male sector of the economy have been few.

**Figure 2.11: Number of persons in waged employment, 1998 to 2001**

**Note:** As statistics are unavailable for government employment, the administration and defense, education and health and social work groups are used as a proxy for the “public sector”, although it is recognized that the education and health sectors are becoming increasingly privatized.

**Sources:** Census, 1998; LFS, 2000 and 2001

The participatory poverty assessment (ADB, 2001) in Cambodia provides some qualitative data on the gender differences in the formal employment market. The poverty assessment focus group participants believed there were few opportunities for paid employment for people who are poor, in general, but even fewer opportunities for poor women. Traditionally, young men are encouraged to find paid work, which usually requires migration, while women are discouraged; opportunities for young women to work in garment factories clearly challenge that tradition.

Consistent with national statistics, the participants in the poverty assessment believed there might now be more paid employment opportunities for women than for men, referring to the then-growing garment industry. At the same time, participants voiced opinions that, ultimately, young garment workers would be better off if they remained in their villages. This is attributed to a fear that if young girls move to urban areas they will be “led astray” and will lose their virginity before “properly” marrying (ADB, 2001).

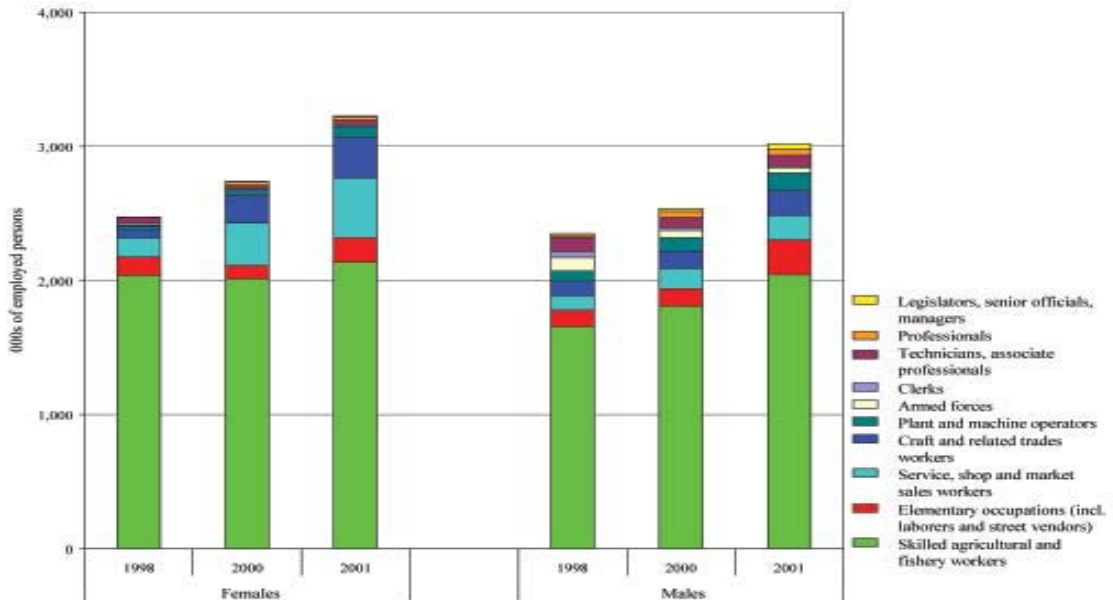
In 2001, slightly more than one million people were engaged in waged employment. With the labor force projected to grow by 225,000–250,000 workers per year over the next several years (Sok et al., 2001), the uncertain future of the garment industry (which represents 20 percent of total waged employment), military demobilization efforts, as well as administrative reforms, it will be difficult for the formal employment market to absorb much of the growing workforce without substantial new investment. Employment creation efforts will need to look beyond the formal sector if they are to provide sustainable livelihoods for the majority of the Cambodian workforce.

### **2.1.6 Occupation and industry groups highly segregated by sex**

Nearly 70 percent of the labor force are engaged in agriculture as their primary occupation. Outside of the agriculture sector, there is a pronounced segregation of occupations by sex, with women in a narrow range of traditional “female” occupations, including trade, crafts, sewing and the entertainment industry. There has been an expansion of employment in non-agricultural occupations for both men and women since 1998 (Figure 2.12). However, most of the growth for women has been in the traditional “female” jobs. Few women are found in “white-collar” occupations (e.g. professionals, technicians, clerks) or in senior decision-making positions. The 1998 census provided extensive detail on employment by occupation that allows for a more in-depth analysis of gender differences in employment. For instance, outside of agriculture:

- Thirty-three percent of women in non-agricultural occupations were engaged in waged employment.
- Forty-nine percent of non-agricultural employment for women was in trade; 22 percent of women were self-employed in retail trade and 17 percent were self-employed as street vendors. An additional 6 percent of women were unpaid family workers in the retail trade and 4 percent were unpaid family members working as street vendors.
- Other occupations important to women included dressmaking (3 percent), food processing (3 percent), weaving (3 percent) and other crafts (1 percent). While these occupations account for a relatively small proportion of primary employment outside of agriculture, they are generally recognized as important sources of secondary income for women, particularly in rural areas.



**Figure 2.12: Employment by occupation group**

**Sources:** Census 1998; LFS 2000 and 2001

In contrast, for men working primarily outside of agriculture, 61 percent were paid employees in the 1998 Census. Other important occupations for men include driver and mobile-machine operator (7 percent of all non-agriculture employment), shop and market sellers (7 percent), street vendor (3 percent), metal and machinery tradesman (3 percent) and laborer (3 percent).

Although barely visible in official labor statistics, the flourishing sex industry is an issue that warrants special attention. It is estimated that there are up to 100,000 women working in the sex industry in Cambodia. As with other women in the informal sector, these women are open to a range of abuses varying from harassment to exploitation and violence.<sup>2</sup> The informal labor sector, which includes the sex industry, is not covered by the labor law or provided with any form of social protection. Sex workers, often forced or sold into the occupation due to poverty, are commonly ostracized by their families and communities (see Chapter 7).

### **2.1.7 Little support for the development of small and micro enterprises – a “hidden sector” of critical importance to women**

Discussions on employment creation and economic growth tend to focus on the formal labor market (waged employment) and the agriculture sector. Own-account workers, primarily in micro-enterprises and the informal sector of the economy tend to be overlooked. As noted earlier, outside of the agriculture sector, men tend to seek waged employment (52 percent of men in non-agriculture employment) while women are more likely to be engaged in self-employment (45 percent of women in non-agriculture employment) or as unpaid family labor in a family business (22 percent). Informal sector businesses are an important source of secondary income for many households. Within this context, the lack of support for micro-enterprise development is an important gender concern.

<sup>2</sup> Based on comments provided by the International Labor Organization in Bangkok, January 2002.

All small and micro-enterprises in the informal sector face similar problems:

- They are essentially invisible – while there are few attempts to regulate these businesses, there is also little support available.
- Limited access to credit – particularly working capital needed to establish and grow a business.
- Limited access to markets or market information.

Globally, there is a wide range of experience in developing services to address these types of problems. However, while much of the international micro-enterprise development profession is engaged in discussions on how to make existing business development services more sustainable and building markets for these services, a recent survey conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) found there was little supply of such services in Cambodia.

### **2.1.8 Women are under-represented in professions and decision-making positions**

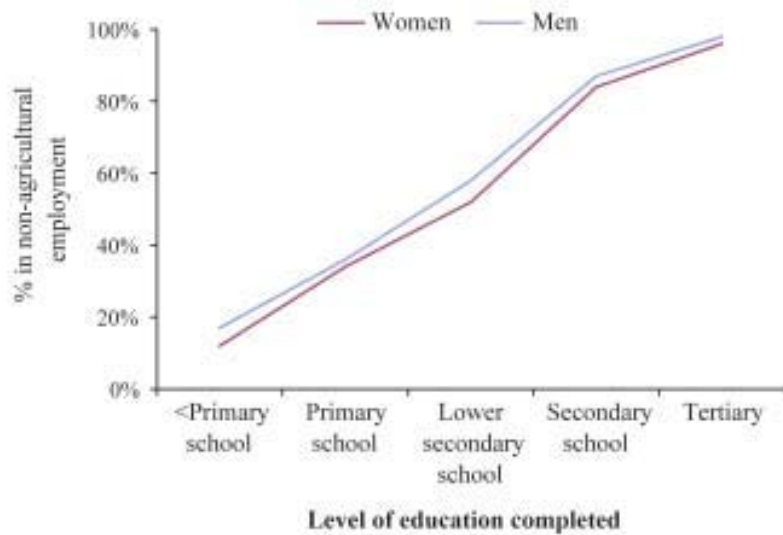
Women with higher levels of education are able to secure employment in white-collar occupations. However, they remain few in number and generally do not hold decision-making positions. Women are under-represented in occupations that carry status, such as professional, decision-making or management positions. Approximately one-third of professionals are women, and only 14 percent of legislators, senior officials and managers are women. Less than 2 percent of all economically active women are employed in the predominately public sector industry groups of public administration/defense, education, and health/social work, compared to 8 percent of men (LFS, 2001) (see also Chapter 8).

### **2.1.9 Level of education affects wages and job opportunities**

Options in employment for both men and women are shaped by their level of education (Urashima, 2002). This includes both formal education – primary through post-secondary school – and non-formal education.

People who are illiterate or have less than an elementary school level of education are overwhelmingly engaged in agriculture or fishing as their primary occupation. As the level of education increases, opportunities open up for other types of employment (Figure 2.13). This is apparent in the garment sector, which tends to employ women with relatively higher levels of education (Sok et al., 2001).

Even at the same level of education, occupational choices are different for women and men. For example, for women who have never attended school or dropped out before completing elementary school, the typical occupations that are available to them outside of agriculture, are as shop and market sales workers, street vendors or as handicrafts producers. Men at that same level of education are engaged as drivers, construction workers, laborers or as soldiers.

**Figure 2.13: More education leads to more opportunities**

**Source:** census 1998

With at least a primary school education, employment opportunities expand for both women and men, and the proportion primarily engaged in agriculture and fishing declines. For women, employment alternatives outside of agriculture continue to be primarily in sales and crafts, but factory jobs such as those in the garment industry open up to them. Men at this level of education are engaged in a more diverse range of occupations in sales or the police force, in addition to work as drivers, laborers or in construction.

At higher levels of education, employment opportunities for both women and men expand into white-collar occupations. The proportion of better-educated workers in white-collar professions is higher for women (40 percent) than for men (34 percent), although men still outnumber women three to one in this education group (Census, 1998). Among senior officials and managers, however, the proportions are nearly equal, with 6 percent of women with a higher level of education compared to 7 percent for men. Outside of white-collar occupations, the options for women with a higher level of education remain the same as for those with lower levels of education. The alternatives for men also remain similar to those for men with lower education: drivers, construction workers, laborers, shop and market sales, the police or armed forces.

The gender gap in educational attainment has immediate ramifications for the employment opportunities open to women. With a higher level of education, women can compete with men for employment opportunities. However, as so few women are educated, there are few who are in a position to compete. Achieving gender equity in the formal education system is clearly important to attaining greater equality in employment opportunities in the long term. More immediately, increasing employment opportunities for women already in the workforce will require greater attention being paid to addressing existing disparities in levels of literacy and levels of education. This in turn will affect occupational choices.

### 2.1.10 Women earn less than men

On average and after controlling for experience as represented by an individual's age and education, men's wages are 33 percent higher than women's wages. The largest wage differences between males and females occur among young workers aged 15-29 with no schooling (75 percent), while the smallest differences occur among workers aged 30-39 years with lower secondary schooling (MoP, 1999), indicating there is substantial wage discrimination against women, and young women in particular, in the Cambodian labor markets. The average daily wage for men in fishing is about 5,000 *riels* (\$1.25), while women earn only 83 percent of that amount; in fish processing men earn about 4,150 *riels* (\$1.13) per day and women earn 63 percent of that wage (CDRI, 2003).

The participatory poverty assessment (ADB, 2001) in Cambodia found that where there is limited waged employment locally it is common practice for women to be paid less than men, even when doing the same work. Men can earn up to 5,000 *riels* (US\$1.25) per day working as casual laborers while women will receive only up to 2,500 *riels* for the same work. In the poverty assessment, male participants from all regions thought that this disparity was justifiable:

- “There are some jobs that women cannot do well.”
- “Women take more time off during the day.”
- “It didn't matter anyway because it all went back into the household finances.”

Wage differentials for increasing levels of education are less for men than for women: While men with an elementary school education earn 10 percent more in annual wages than men with no schooling, women who complete grade school earn 32 percent more than women with no schooling. Wage premiums are even higher at the upper secondary and post-secondary levels, reaching 42 percent for men and 80 percent for women, compared to the wages earned by those with no schooling (MoP, 1999).

### 2.1.11 More young people are migrating to find employment

The rural labor market in Cambodia is fragile and rapidly changing. According to a Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) report (Chan et al., 1999), people who are poor increasingly are forced to depend on the labor market for their livelihoods rather than subsistence agriculture. When local conditions for employment are adequate, out-migration is low. When local demand for labor is small, out-migration is the only answer for unemployed workers.

According to the 1998 Census, more than 80 percent of migrants are of working age (15-64). There are more female than male migrants in the 15-19 age group. However, the number of women who migrate declines as they move into the 20-39 age bracket. According to recent Oxfam Hong Kong research (Oxfam H.K/WAC, 2003), these figures indicate a high demand for and supply of young unmarried women, and at the same time they underscore the social and economic restrictions confronting married and child-bearing women.

The most recent statistics on the number of people migrating from their village to towns or other rural areas date to 1998. It is believed generally that migration is increasing (Oxfam H.K/WAC, 2003). And, it is now more common for women to migrate to find work, though their options are primarily limited to the garment and sex industries. Based on surveys of women in those industries, it is estimated that more than 250,000 women have migrated from their village in search of paid employment over the past few years.

The trend for the poor to enter the formal wage-labor market has begun to alter the traditional gender division of labor and has ushered in more formal wage contracts in the labor market, replacing older forms of labor sharing and mutual exchange practices within villages. Labor exchange (usually done as a form of repayment for credit) was predominately performed by women. The increase in waged employment also increases the importance of effective enforcement of the labor code for workers in all sectors of the economy.

*“We had to leave our villages because there was no work. But this was very sad as we could not maintain contact with our families. . . . We knew nothing of the big city and were easily fooled by some bad people, including young men who took advantage of our love for them to rob us of our honor. . . . We have to work long hours and dare not complain if we are feeling faint and sick; we know this is our duty.”* – A garment worker, cited in the participatory poverty assessment report (ADB, 2001)

### **2.1.12 The garment industry has a profound impact on women’s lives**

As previously discussed, there has been a shift in women’s participation in the formal labor market with the rapid growth of the garment industry. There are currently about 180,000 young women employed in more than 200 garment factories in Cambodia. This has created significant economic opportunities for young women that did not exist before the mid-1990s. A CDRI survey (Sok, et al., 2001) indicates that garment workers are relatively well educated, with 61 percent having completed elementary school, 31 percent finishing lower secondary and 8 percent having a high school certificate.

The garment industry accounted for 94 percent of the growth in industry since 1998. The garment industry grew due to agreements with the European Union and the US granting Most Favored Nation Status to Cambodia in 1997. In 1999, Cambodia and the US entered into a quota agreement on garment exports, primarily motivated by a desire on the part of the US to protect its own garment industry. This agreement included an unprecedented linking of quotas to enforcement of labor standards and was extended until the end of 2004. Starting from scratch, the factories quickly grew into a US\$1.2 billion industry in five years, employing close to 200,000 people, with an average monthly payroll of US\$12 million.

At the end of 2004, the Multi-Fiber Agreement for WTO members will eliminate all quotas in the garment sector. China’s membership in the WTO and the normalization of trade relations between the US and Vietnam are a serious potential threat to Cambodia’s garment industry. The Royal Government of Cambodia is hoping to compete for new investment on the basis of respect for the basic rights of workers and is working on building its reputation. Workers in the garment sector are relatively highly paid compared to most other workers in both the formal and informal sectors and the civil service (MoC, 2001). And Cambodia’s minimum wage of US\$45 per month (for garment workers), based on a 48-hour working week, is higher than wages found in most other competing countries in the region, including Bangladesh, India and Indonesia. But, it is below rates prevailing in more developed neighboring countries, such as Thailand (see Table 2.3).

As in other developing countries, the employment of women in the garment manufacturing industry is much debated in Cambodia largely because of the social impact. While these factories offer women new employment opportunities and are required to be “ethically” run in terms of compliance with labor standards, there is some indication of negative impacts. Although a recent ILO survey (Reed, 2001) of Cambodia’s garment factories found no evidence of child labor, forced labor or sexual harassment, it did find some instances of forced overtime work, anti-union discrimination and non-correct payment of wages.

**Table 2.3: Working hours and wages in the garment industry in selected Asian countries**

Country	Year	Legal hours of work	Minimum wage set by law US\$	Average salary per month US\$	Hourly wage rate US\$	Minimum wage to average wage US\$
Malaysia	1995	48	none	296	1.42	na
China	1997	40	12-39	191	1.14	6-20
Philippines	1999	48	130	182	0.88	71
Thailand	1999	48	93-109	106	0.51	88-103
Sri Lanka	1998	45	29-37	63	0.31	46-59
Cambodia	2000	48	50 <sup>a</sup>	61	0.29	82
Vietnam	2000	48	45	60	0.29	75
India	1999	48	6-54	57	0.27	11-95
Indonesia	2000	40	43 <sup>b</sup>	46	0.25	94
Bangladesh	1996	48	12-76	40	0.19	30-90

**Note:** **a** For purposes of this table, the US\$5 full attendance bonus is included in the minimum wage rate.  
**b** Minimum wage in Jakarta.

**Sources:** CDRI; US DoL, Bureau of International Labor Affairs; the Indonesian DoM, 2001

A CARE study undertaken in 1999 identified similar issues and noted that garment factory workers of both sexes were reluctant to say anything about these issues. More recent research conducted by Oxfam Hong Kong/Womyn's Agenda for Change<sup>3</sup> found that while the garment industry did indeed provide access to paid work outside of villages, the workers are stigmatized and work in very difficult conditions:

- Fifty percent of the workers earn less than US\$45 per month (the minimum wage). On average, they receive \$35.
- All the workers interviewed said they were forced to do overtime.
- At first the women were excited to leave their village and to be out of the control of their family, but eventually they grew to feeling sick and tired. But they couldn't easily go back to their village because people there were likely to think they are now "bad girls for having gone to Phnom Penh to have sex with boys".
- There was enormous pressure to support their families; 60 percent of the money they earn was sent back to their village, leaving them very little for their own food, shelter, entertainment and other needs.
- There has been an increase in the number of robberies among workers by "gangsters" who wait outside the factories on pay day.

With the growth of the garment industry, the trade union movement has also expanded. There are now more than 100 unions associated with the garment industry, and approximately 10 percent of workers are union members. The majority of the members are garment workers, mostly young women who have come from the provinces to work in and around Phnom Penh. And yet, while more than 90 percent of union members are women, only two women fill national leadership positions (ILO, 2001a). And none of the people serving as president, vice-president or general-secretary of a major trade union actually work in a garment factory. For women working well over

<sup>3</sup> In-depth interviews with 150 garment workers in 2001.

50 hours a week and collecting less than \$50 per month, spare time for union activities is scarce. Taking time off is rarely an option as they are often denied time for union activities. It also has been reported that in some cases, attendance at union education workshops has resulted in workers being fired (Oxfam H.K/WAC, 2001).

### **2.1.13 Trade and employment policies have different implications for men and women**

Discussions on trade and exports in Cambodia have focused on the garment industry because, as previously noted, this industry has accounted for 94 percent of the growth in industry since 1998, more than half of the overall growth from 1999-2001, and has provided waged employment for approximately 180,000 women. However, this achievement needs to be qualified: The growth and employment generation has been narrowly based; the industry – with its high import content – has no backward linkages into the domestic economy; and the development has been concentrated around urban growth poles, leading to rural-urban migration. Pro-poor, gender-responsive trade strategies need to provide employment opportunities to women and men in rural areas, in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors.

The Government is working with a consortium of multilateral organizations (World Trade Organization, World Bank, UN Conference on Trade and Development, International Monetary Fund, International Trade Center and United Nations Development Program) to develop an integrated framework. The objectives of the integrated framework are to mainstream trade into national development plans, including the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS), and assist in coordinated delivery of trade-related technical assistance linked to Cambodia's application for membership in the WTO. Studies and pilot projects are being undertaken on diversified agriculture and agro-processing, handicrafts, freshwater fisheries, the garment industry, tourism and labor services. Although it is assumed that increasing trade will result in increased employment opportunities, little attention is being paid to the implications for employment in the proposed investment projects, much less the quality or gender distribution of this employment.

Although gender analysis has not been integrated into the design of the integrated framework, there are gender concerns that need to be taken into consideration within each of the sectors noted above. Concerns relating to the garment sector were mentioned previously and the following focuses on issues related to handicraft production, agro-processing, tourism and labor services.

Agro-processing and handicraft production are traditional female domains. Women comprise more than half of the work force in food processing. As this industry is scaled-up and mechanized to meet the demands of export markets and compete for a greater share of domestic markets, questions remain about the implications for employment creation, particularly employment for women. How many new jobs will be created? Where will these jobs be located? Will these new job opportunities be in the form of contract labor, waged employment or as managers and entrepreneurs? Work with machines is traditionally a “male” occupation; therefore, what will be the impact on women in the traditional food processing industry? What measures are needed to enable the current workforce in these sectors to upgrade their skills and products to benefit from trade development efforts?

Women also comprise an estimated 75 percent of the workforce in handicrafts. In addition to those who are engaged in craft production as their primary occupation, this is also an important source of secondary income for women in rural areas. Questions similar to those related to agro-processing also need to be addressed in the handicraft sector: How many new jobs? Where will

they be? What will be the employment status? What will be the implications for workers in the traditional industry? As it is already known that handicraft production is dominated by women and that men are active agents in facilitating access to raw materials and markets, how will gender roles and benefits be distributed as this sector is scaled up?

In terms of tourism development, there are links to many different industries. The more visible jobs are found in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, transportation services and tour guide services. In addition, there are a number of potential backward linkages that could benefit from increased tourism, including agriculture, fisheries and handicrafts. Within the hotel and restaurant industries there is a fairly equitable balance between the numbers of male and female workers. However, relatively few women have the educational qualifications or foreign language skills to compete for “front office” positions in the hotel industry, as tour guides or in travel agencies, and are more likely to be employed as housekeepers, waitresses, “beer girls” and similar low-level positions. Transportation service is an overwhelmingly male industry.

While the Government is promoting cultural and eco-tourism, at least part of the recent growth in the industry is linked to sex tourism. There are also increasing concerns related to Cambodia as a destination for pedophiles. Thus, while tourism development will open up new job opportunities, there are also new risks. Persistent inequalities in access to new opportunities due to lower levels of education and socially proscribed occupational choices will constrain the position of women in this industry.

The potential for official export of labor services is greatly constrained by education and skills, with women being at a distinct disadvantage. Official export of workers with low levels of education and foreign language abilities would leave workers in a highly vulnerable position, subject to exploitation and abuse. Unofficial labor exports are already quite common, particularly into Thailand. This is the “dark side of trade” and includes both the trafficking of persons across borders and the “tricking” of workers, who voluntarily move into a new country to seek employment, into indentured servitude or the sex industry. As with tourism, export of labor services provides new opportunities, but also new risks.

As technical assistance in developing these industries moves forward, it will be necessary to look more closely at the gender aspects of trade-sector development. Ensuring equitable access to new job opportunities emerging out of trade development efforts is likely to require ensuring access to appropriate training to enable women to compete for new employment opportunities, greater attention to higher education for women and perhaps a re-thinking of how traditional attitudes related to “male” and “female” occupations would or should apply in emerging industries.

#### **2.1.14 Will the proposed export processing zones benefit women?**

The Royal Government of Cambodia is currently in the process of negotiating with Thailand to develop export processing zones (EPZs). Also called free trade zones and special economic zones, EPZs are an international phenomena that have been developed to attract foreign investment into areas that would otherwise have little or no industry. The host country offers special incentives such as tax breaks and often the suspension, officially or unofficially, of local labor laws to attract foreign investors into these industrial zones. This is potentially a significant gender issue, given that the majority of workers in these zones, upwards of 80 percent in other countries, are usually women (AMRC, 1998 and Daeren, 1997).



The most critical and controversial elements of the EPZs are labor standards and relations. Countries that host industrial zones, including Bangladesh, Panama and Zimbabwe, have replaced local labor laws with special (lower) standards that apply only within the zone (ILO, 1998). The consequent effect on women can be great as they often provide the bulk of the workforce in these zones and low labor standards can cause greater hardships.

EPZs do not necessarily have to operate with lowered standards to attract investors. A report prepared by the ILO in 1998 noted that it is possible to create an EPZ that will attract foreign investment while protecting workers' rights (AMRC, 1998); in the example cited in the report, the maintenance of good working conditions was combined with a clear industrial policy, targeted incentives, appropriate infrastructure and human resources. UNDP is conducting a social impact assessment of the EPZ in Koh Kong, and NGOs are monitoring the development of other EPZ proposals in Cambodia.

## 2.2 Government policies and strategies

The focus of the Government's macro-economic framework for the past few years has been on maintaining stability, strengthening the banking and financial institutions, implementing fiscal reform measures, ensuring sound management of public property and increasing public investment to develop physical and social infrastructure and human resources. The national development objectives as presented in the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) and the second five-year Socio-Economic Development Plan, 2001-2005 (SEDPII) focus on economic growth that is broad enough to include sectors where the poor derive a livelihood, social and cultural development, and the sustainable use of natural resources and sound environmental management.

Poverty reduction in Cambodia is dependent on the growth of the economy. As the NPRS states: *"While growth can take place without poverty reduction, poverty reduction cannot take place without growth. Growth is the most powerful weapon in combating poverty."* The Government is committed to the implementation of policies that build macro-economic stability, allocate resources to the more efficient sectors and promote the integration of Cambodia into the global economy.

The Government is pursuing a pro-poor trade strategy and has been preparing to join the WTO. The Government has also signed the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement, requiring a gradual lowering of tariffs to zero in all 10 ASEAN countries. The pro-poor trade strategy is based on three key concepts: 1) shifting the balance of policy emphasis from issues of market access and macro-reforms for trade to micro-level issues of supply capacity; 2) focusing strongly on the delivery of capacity-building support at the export enterprise and export sector levels (private sector development for trade); and 3) stressing the rationalization and geographical decentralization of export business within Cambodia. Encouraging and attracting investment and entrepreneurship in rural-based sectors is considered particularly important.

# CHAPTER 3

## WOMEN, AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RESOURCES

<b>Cambodia at a glance .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>3.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>55</b>
3.1.1 Women have a major role in agricultural production .....	57
3.1.2 Women have a potentially more important role in reducing food insecurity .....	57
3.1.3 Extension services are minimal and women receive fewer extension services than men .....	58
3.1.4 Diminishing access to natural resources is threatening livelihoods .....	60
3.1.5 Despite a new gender-responsive land law, women are vulnerable to having their land rights ignored .....	60
3.1.6 Access to financial and non-financial services is very limited .....	62
3.1.7 Rural roads and transport is a priority for women, as well as men .....	63
3.1.8 Women also prioritize clean water supply .....	63
3.1.9 Women are under-represented in agriculture sector decision-making and the civil service .....	64
<b>3.2 Government policies and strategies .....</b>	<b>65</b>

# WOMEN, AGRICULTURE AND RURAL RESOURCES

## Cambodia at a glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Value
Percentage of population living under the food poverty line	11.5
Dependency ratio in rural areas	90
Percentage of rural women classified as unpaid family workers	46
Percentage of rural women who work in agriculture	89
Percentage of subsistence agricultural workers who are women	56
Percentage of market-oriented agricultural workers who are women	54
Percentage of agricultural extension beneficiaries who are women	10
Percentage of agricultural extension workers who are women	5-10
Percentage of Royal University of Agriculture students who are women	17
Percentage of landless women-headed households	21
Percentage of landless “war widows”	50
Percentage of land titles in both men’s and women’s names since 2001	78
Percentage of household expenditures covered by women’s income	over 50
Women’s wages compared to men in fish processing	63
Percentage of borrowers of micro-credit who are women	70-85
Percentage of rural population with access to clean water	25
Average number of hours per day women spend collecting water	1-2
Percentage of village water committee members who are women	60
Percentage of rural population with access to sanitation	10
Percentage of ODA earmarked for agriculture and rural development, 2001	21
Percentage of national budget earmarked for agriculture and rural development, 2002	4
Share of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in GDP	33

### 3.1 Status, trends and issues

Most of the recent economic growth has been confined to urban areas while rural growth has been slow. Approximately 90 percent of the poor live in rural areas where the highest poverty rates are found among farmers and households whose heads have little or no formal education. The poorest households in Cambodia tend to have no assets but have high fertility rates, leading to a high dependency

<sup>1</sup> **Sources:** Biddulph 2000: Landlessness and Development Research Report  
 Beresford et al. 2003: The Macroeconomics of Poverty Reduction in Cambodia  
 CSD 2002: National Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2003-2005  
 IFAPER 2002: Gender Issues in Planning and Budgeting  
 MoEYS 2002a: The Five-Year Gender Mainstreaming Strategy of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2002-2006  
 MAFF 2002: Women and Training for Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
 Harding, S. 2000. Widows Assistance Programme; Needs and Resource Survey, Report and Analysis.  
 RGC 2002: Cambodia National Accounts  
 Walter, A. 2000. Learning from Integrated Savings and Credit Programmes in Cambodia  
 WFP 2001. WFP study on girls and school

ratio (number of young children relative to income earners per household), which then depresses income per head. The dependency ratio in rural areas is 90 percent (Beresford et al., 2003). Food security is a serious problem for the poorest: 36 percent of the population is living under the poverty line of \$0.46 per day and 11 percent under the food poverty line (PMATU, 2003).

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Cambodian economy. The majority of the population continues to depend on agriculture for their livelihood, and most farmers are small landholders with less than two hectares of land. Agriculture accounts for 33 percent of the gross domestic product and is the primary source of employment for 73 percent of the labor force. Although agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the vast majority of the population, this sector has been growing at an average annual rate of only 3.6 percent – half the total GDP growth rate in recent years.

Agricultural productivity is extremely low, both in terms of labor (about US\$166 per worker) and land (US\$480 per hectare) and is highly susceptible to disease and weather variations. Some of the causes for low productivity in the agriculture sector include:

- *Low levels of production* due to weak research and extension systems; weak irrigation and water control systems; pests and livestock disease; poor seed quality; lack of diversification of agriculture and livestock production and processing; and lack of sustainable fisheries.
- *Weak post-production and marketing* due to high post-harvest losses (related to poor storage, wastage and pests); little orientation to processing and markets; scarcity of business and farmer associations; lack of supporting institutions; and lack of access to market information.
- *Low investment* due to lack of secure land rights and shrinking plot sizes; lack of access to capital; corrupt and rent-seeking behavior; and lack of information about legal and policy environment.
- *Vulnerability* of rural households due to a lack of information on markets, policies and programs; weak financial systems and lack of financial services; limited access to community forestry and fisheries and other communal resources; presence of landmines; and weak early warning systems of natural disasters.

Women make up more than half of the agricultural workforce; hence, efforts to increase productivity will need to be both gender-sensitive and gender-responsive. In rural areas only 4 percent of women and 10 percent of men are in waged employment. The formal sector is only able to absorb approximately 5 percent of the total workforce. Of the 250,000 new workers joining the labor force each year, 94 percent must rely on the informal sector, primarily subsistence agriculture, where productivity and earnings are low (Chan, 2003). Given the high fertility rates in rural areas and the future exponential growth of the population, there is a concern about the limited availability and productivity of land and the implications for the livelihoods of future generations.

The improvement of rural livelihoods is hampered by inadequate provision of infrastructure (roads, water supply), social (education, health) and economic services (agricultural extension, technical support, financial and non-financial enterprise development). Women are even more constrained by unequal access to these services, which prevents them from being able to maximize the level of productivity and subsequent returns to their labor.

When examining rural livelihoods, it is important to look beyond the traditional area of rice production. The cultivation of rice and other crops employs rural people for an average of four to five months, less than half the year, and provides only about one-third of their total income. Farmers sell their produce to traders or millers. The small scale and fragmented family production system leads to low bargaining power and thus low farm gate prices. They supplement their subsistence and incomes by fishing, gathering a range of food and non-food items, entrepreneurial activity and seasonal waged labor (Acharya et al., 2002; Beresford et al. 2003).

However, increasing landlessness and near-landlessness, combined with diminishing access to common property resources, implies that an increasing number of people, especially women, in rural households will remain without any productive resources except their own labor and will be unable to address poverty unless significant improvements are made in generating more rural non-farm employment (Beresford et al, 2003.)

Researchers studying gender roles in natural resources management in the Tonle Sap region found that women and girls in rural areas were engaged more and in a wider range of income-generating activities than men and boys, both in agriculture and forestry as well as other activities, but men had greater control over the benefits of productive resources (GAD/C and FAO, 1999).

This chapter of the gender assessment examines gender issues related to land and agricultural services, as well as infrastructure and financial and non-financial services that affect women's access to viable agricultural and off-farm and market activities that lead to poverty reduction and food security in general.

### ***What are the concerns of women and men in rural areas?***

A series of local consultations on “Poverty Reduction for Women” was organized by the NGO Women for Prosperity as part of Cambodia’s NPRS formulation process. The results of extensive consultations in six provinces showed that women shared similar concerns to men; the top five priority issues included: food insecurity; poor rural roads and transport; poor water supply; land access and security (no land title); and landmines. Further consultations with women at the commune and village level in Kampong Cham revealed that women prioritized roads, which are a public good, and men prioritized wells, which are usually constructed on private property (MoWVA, 2003b).

#### ***3.1.1 Women have a major role in agricultural production***

Seventy-three percent of the labor force is primarily engaged in agriculture. Nearly 80 percent of these workers are primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture with women comprising 56 percent of the primary workforce in subsistence agriculture and 54 percent of the workforce in market-oriented agriculture; the majority of these women are unpaid family workers (LFS, 2001). Women heads of household are more likely to work in agriculture than male heads of household and yet are also more likely to be landless or have significantly smaller plots of land. Despite the important role women play in the agriculture sector, they also have considerably lower access to the resources and assets that would increase their potential to contribute to improved productivity, greater food security and reduced poverty.

#### ***3.1.2 Women have a potentially more important role in reducing food insecurity***

Gender, food security and poverty are closely linked. The participatory poverty assessment (ADB, 2001) defined poverty as not having enough rice and other food to eat all 12 months of the year and thus persistent hunger, a chronic condition from which poor people could not escape except perhaps on a temporary basis. Because of hunger, poor people are unable to satisfy their other basic needs, such as being able to send all their children to school, pay for necessary health care and meet cultural obligations (ADB, 2001). People who are affected by chronic food insecurity include

subsistence farmers, the landless or marginal land holders, the urban poor and other vulnerable groups. Transitory food insecurity affects people facing natural disasters, such as flood and drought. A gender analysis of food security includes two angles: the differential impact of food insecurity on women and men and the roles played by women and men that affect household food security. Eleven percent of Cambodia's total population is living under the food poverty line (PMATU, 2003). However, these measurements do not tell us whether women and men are affected differently. As mentioned in Chapter 1, women consume less staple (rice) and discretionary (meat and eggs) food items than men, and the health ministry is monitoring women's low body mass index and high iron-deficiency anemia levels. This would suggest that there is a possibility that women are more vulnerable to hunger and differently affected by food insecurity than men (see Chapter 5).

Discussions about food security make a distinction between access and availability of food. A recent study shows that nearly half of the 24 provinces are food-deficit areas. Even within large rice-producing provinces, 30 percent of communes face chronic food shortages (NPRS, 2002a). Given that Cambodia has recorded a rice production surplus every year since 1995 and is even exporting rice, availability is not in question. The issue then is individual households' ability to access what food is available by increasing their purchasing power, which obviously needs to be strengthened. Improving this situation relies more on strategies to increase family productivity (through access to land and inputs), or household incomes. As previously stated, women's incomes cover over half their household expenditures, and women and girls are more engaged in income-generating activities than men. This suggests that strategies to reduce hunger and food insecurity must prioritize women's economic empowerment, as well as their health and nutrition awareness, as they clearly play a pivotal role in the provision of food and adequate nutrition in the household.

Rural households in 1997 spent up to 71 percent of total monthly consumption expenditure on food. Rice purchases represent 20-30 percent of expenditures for the poorest half of the population. Thus, any policy that has a favorable impact on rice prices will increase poor households' consumption (Beresford et al, 2003).

### **3.1.3 Extension services are minimal and women receive fewer extension services than men**

Women are a minority among beneficiaries of agricultural and rural livelihood-related services and assets although they make up the majority of farmers and informal sector workers. Overall, agricultural extension service levels remain very low. In 2002, only 20,000 farmers (0.7 percent of all farmers) participated in extension activities. At this rate, it would take 65 years to reach only half of the 2.6 million farmers in Cambodia (World Bank, 2003b). Access to quality extension services is a serious issue for both men and women farmers, and women have significantly less access to what little extension services and training are available. It is estimated that women are only 10 percent of extension beneficiaries. Information on access to extension services is very limited. However, based on the available information and discussion with government and donor agency representatives working in the field, the following are some of the reasons for women's low access to extension service:

- Agricultural research and extension are not focused on the activities of women farmers. Men and women tend to specialize in different tasks (Table 3.1). Generally, male tasks are those involving considerable physical effort or use of technology and machinery. For example, in rice farming, women are responsible for seed preparation and planting (soaking, cleaning, storing, broadcasting), weeding and low-tech pest control. Men are responsible for land preparation, irrigation, pesticide spraying and mechanical threshing (Norris et al., 2001).

**Table 3.1: Gender division of labor**

Task	Female	Male
<b>Productive activities</b>		
<i>Rice operations</i>		
Land preparation	+	++
Soaking seeds for germination	+	-
Cleaning	+	-
Storing seeds	++	-
Weeding	++	+
Broadcasting seeds	++	+
Transplanting	++	+
Irrigating	+	++
Managing fields	+	++
Applying fertilizer	+	+
Harvesting rice	++	+
Threshing	+	+
<i>Animal raising</i>		
Pig and chicken raising	++	+
Cattle raising	+	++
Cutting grass for livestock	+	+
<i>Vegetable and fruit cultivation</i>		
	++	+
<b>Reproductive activities</b>		
Collecting fuel wood	++	+
Carrying water	+	++
Sewing, mending, washing clothes	+	-
Preparing and cooking food	++	+
Cleaning house and yard	+	-
Taking care of children	++	+
<b>Total activities</b>		
++ More inputs	10	5
+ Average inputs	12	12
- Little labor inputs	0	5

**Note:** This analysis does not include non-farm productive activities in which both men and women are actively engaged – although most likely in different ways (see Chapter 2).

**Source:** Based on discussions in villages in Svay Rieng and Prey Veng conducted as part of IFAD Rural Poverty Reduction Project formulation mission, Working Paper 2, Gender Analysis and Gender Mainstreaming, 2003.

- Access to extension services often requires travel to the district center, which is an average of 9 km from a village. For the poorest of farmers, the district center is an average of 13 km from their village. Only 3 percent of villages have agricultural extension workers and 7 percent have credit facilities. Concerns about safety make women hesitant to travel, while their responsibilities for cooking and childcare make it difficult for them to be absent from home for more than a few hours.
- The mostly male extension service staff find it culturally difficult to engage in face-to-face communication with women farmers. Typically, men are offered training and extension activities even when their wives are responsible for the tasks being studied, and new knowledge is rarely passed on effectively from husband to wife. Women extension agents can more easily

communicate with women farmers. Globally, it is estimated that women make up only 5-10 percent of agricultural extension agents, and Cambodia is no exception (World Bank, 2002). The small proportion of women extension agents relative to the proportion of women engaged in agriculture (over 50 percent) is likely to hinder reaching women farmers with the information they need to achieve improvements in those aspects of agricultural production for which they have primary responsibility. And this then leaves women out of any future innovations in this field (ADB, 2003).

- Information dissemination tends to be geared toward a literate population.<sup>2</sup> Yet, 71 percent of women and 50 percent of men in Cambodia are functionally illiterate (UNDP/UNESCO, 2000). This has important implications for the design and delivery of extension services: Training and information dissemination has to be designed to be accessible to farmers with little or no education and for women who are less mobile than men, suggesting the need to explore alternative outlets for information about agricultural production, processing and marketing, and to look at bringing the information closer to where women are situated rather than assuming that the women will be able to travel to the meetings, trainings and other relevant events (ADB, 2003).

*“Just because I cannot read and write does not mean I cannot learn by watching what needs to be done. I can then take what I have learned out into my own field and see if it works... It is not necessary to have some local village man being trained and then teaching me because he might not even do this.”* – A woman from Svay Reng province, cited in the participatory poverty assessment report (ADB, 2001)

### **3.1.4 Diminishing access to natural resources is threatening livelihoods**

Women and children from poor landless families, and especially women-headed households, collect snails, shellfish, firewood, weeds and other plants for consumption and selling. These activities are critical for food security but are threatened by natural-resource degradation and limited community control over natural resources (Kim et al., 2003). A recent study on gender and agriculture in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng, revealed that women-headed households in remote areas were almost completely reliant on the collection of wild resources to exchange for rice. Their increasingly difficult access to communal natural resources, combined with increasing landlessness, will have significant implications for their food security (IFAD, 2003).

### **3.1.5 Despite a new gender-responsive land law, women are vulnerable to having their land rights ignored**

Rural livelihoods are principally based on land and other natural resources. Thus, the increasingly limited access to both of these resources contributes to chronic or seasonal poverty and food insecurity (Kim et al., 2003). An Oxfam land study found that when communities were asked to define poverty, landlessness or having small plots of land was the main criteria and that landlessness and near landlessness is an indicator of poverty in rural areas.

There are significant inequalities in land distribution: 20-30 percent of landowners hold 70 percent of the land, while the poorest 40 percent occupy only 10 percent (Beresford et al, 2003). Approximately 20 percent of rural households are landless, and 25 percent of rural households own land plots that are less than 0.5 ha – anything less than one hectare is considered insufficient to

<sup>2</sup> Over the previous year, 57,889 documents were distributed. Radio-based messages were used 10 times and television-based messages 11 times (MAFF, 2002). In rural areas, 41 percent of households have radios and 20 percent have televisions (CSSES, 1999).



sustain livelihoods. Thus 45 percent of rural households are considered landless or near landless and are the most vulnerable to food insecurity. It is estimated that landlessness is increasing by about 2 percent annually (Kim et al., 2003).

Small land size, landlessness and unfavorable input-to-output price ratios contribute to rice shortages at the household level. Small plot sizes are a deterrent to investment and productivity. Farmers with small plot sizes do not have the means, nor is it technically and financially efficient, to invest in and obtain adequate returns. Thus, productivity and profitability is low (Kim et al., 2002).

Land reform is very complex, given the impact of three decades of upheaval and internal displacement. The history of land management and administration in Cambodia is characterized by dramatic shifts and changes with few attempts at private-property registration, except during the colonial period. Land titles and cadastral maps were systematically destroyed in the 1970s. Land was redistributed in the early 1980s, though this was limited to rights to use land but not to own it. The right of individuals to own land was re-established in 1989 and a land law put into place in 1992. But a dual system developed with customary land rights competing with the official system involves high costs – mostly unofficial payments – for formal certificates of ownership. The ambiguity of rules and multiplicity of practices in land transactions contribute to significant corruption, according to a social assessment undertaken in 1999 in preparation of the Land Management and Administration Project (LMAP) that the World Bank, German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the government of Finland supported. Those with least access to titling benefits are people who are poor and who are least able to fight for their rights, such as women. The LMAP social assessment found that women, especially women-headed households, are vulnerable to having their rights ignored, partly due to a lack of knowledge of land rights and land titling procedures (World Bank, 2002h).

Land liberalization in 1989 and the ensuing confusion due to the unclear legislation process, resulted in negative impacts on women's land rights, especially for female heads of household (Kusakabe et al., 1995). Land reform is often criticized for having an unintended adverse affect on women-headed households (which tend to have fewer adult laborers) because the distribution of agricultural land was based on family size. This often resulted in the women-headed households having too small a parcel to produce enough food, consequently going into debt, selling the land and becoming landless. "War widows" own less land than the general population: Of those that own land, 84 percent own less than 0.5 hectare. Nearly half of all war widows do not have access to any land (Harding, 2000). The Oxfam GB land study found that landlessness was significantly higher for women-headed households. In their survey sample, one in eight families was landless, but the figure for women-headed households was 21 percent, or one in five. WFP surveys conducted in 1997 showed that female heads of households were twice as likely to have sold their land as male-heads of households. The majority of these were "distress sales" where families were forced to sell their land – illness being the largest single cause (Biddulph, 2000).

Women in male-headed households face a different set of constraints with respect to land. Women's rights to land may be weakened by their subordinate status within a household where land rights are vested in the name of the male head of household. In cases of divorce, death or family break-up, women may lose their land rights, which generally leads to the impoverishment of women and children.

Since 1993, 620,000 land titles have been issued, the majority in the name of the male head of household. The new land law passed in 2001 includes a progressive measure to ensure that both women and men are identified as owners of the land. Since then, 80,000 new titles have been issued based on the new procedures, and a recent survey of 20,000 titles estimated that 78 percent of the new titles have been issued in the names of both women and men in the households (LMAP, 2003).

Despite joint titles that confer legal rights to wives, customary practices and enforcement regimes may not fully recognize these rights. Even where women have rights to land, these may be denied in practice due to gender-biased cultural and social factors. One study, for example, found that women often needed their husbands' permission to include their names on land titles. In principle, when land is jointly registered, both parties must sign to transfer land titles; in practice, however, this is not enforced, and women are vulnerable to losing control over such decisions and deferring to their husbands (IFAD, 2003). Men usually have more decision-making power in the household, which makes it easier for them to sell land without consent from the wives. In such cases there is also a risk that women will not have access to the proceeds of a unilateral decision to sell the family land, thus not only losing their form of livelihood but also any benefits from the transaction. Women's low literacy limits their access to information about land issues, sales and rights.

Women and women's land interests still are vastly under-represented in the institutional structures related to land, such as the Land Policy Council, the Cadastral Commission for the Resolution of Land Disputes and the commune chiefs. However, LMAP has recently recommended that in order to encourage the participation of women in the provincial and district Cadastral Commissions and their secretariats, the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction should prioritize support to those commissions that include at least 30 percent women.

Social land concessions are currently being discussed at the policy level in order to address landlessness and land atomization. There is enough land in Cambodia to meet the needs of the landless on a one-off basis (So et al, 2002). But it cannot be assumed that women will benefit equally from such reforms in the absence of targeted measures to ensure that their interests are considered. Nor is it clear whether the land available for distribution to the landless will support sustainable agriculture or that poor families will choose to stay in the areas where land is available.

Land is an important resource, but poverty reduction in rural areas also depends on other complementary inputs and services to maximize the productivity of available land and to provide sources of income to the increasing number of landless people.

### **3.1.6 Access to financial and non-financial services is very limited**

Credit in Cambodia is well regulated, but it is not widely accessible. Formal institutions do not serve rural populations, and semi-formal micro-finance providers are the *de facto* providers of financial services (mainly credit) in rural areas. A new regulatory framework has been introduced for micro-finance operators in Cambodia, but access to financial services by the rural poor is still very limited. Five providers are now formal micro-finance institutions and account for approximately 85 percent of credit provision. Another 48 are registered providers. These providers cover approximately 20 percent of households, but the coverage is uneven – some districts are not served by any of the providers, while several may serve other districts. Studies by CDRI and Oxfam GB and HK found that badly targeted credit schemes often do more harm than good by putting poor borrowers further into unmanageable debt, which was leading to landlessness. Interest rates, particularly from informal lenders, are notoriously high, but borrowers often have little choice.

In most credit programs, an estimated 70-85 percent of members are women (Walter, 2000). Because women are said to be in charge of household finances, and also believed to be more credit worthy, they tend to be the major borrowers. While women are estimated to make up a high proportion of credit schemes' members, they tend not to be involved in the schemes' decision-making processes and receive smaller loans (Catalla, 2001).

Women-only credit programs are preferable for women because they empower them to make their own decisions rather than deferring to other household members' opinion. When women heads-of-households are included in credit schemes, they benefit from belonging to the group both financially and socially. In mixed-sex programs where access to funds depends on individual self-confidence and negotiating skills, women members tend to receive considerably smaller and less frequent loans than men. Also, families typically send only men to meetings when the important decisions are made, making it difficult for women, and in particular women heads-of-households, to participate. In poorly managed programs, the benefits are at risk of being concentrated in the hands of better-off people or the more powerful men who will sometimes exclude both women and poor men (Walter, 2000).

Equally, if not more important to poor women are other financial services, such as savings schemes, that enable them to maintain some control over their incomes at a personal and household level, which can be used as a safety net in times of crisis. Non-financial services such as micro-enterprise development skills training are also necessary to improve off-farm incomes and market access. The participatory poverty assessment found that women were interested in credit and savings schemes and had specific plans about how they would use the money, but only about a third of the respondents had access to any opportunities (ADB, 2001).

### ***3.1.7 Rural roads and transport is a priority for women, as well as men***

Poor roads and transport systems are commonly cited as a priority concern for both poor men and women (ADB, 2001; Women for Prosperity 2002). Poor infrastructure makes it difficult to access markets, schools and health clinics and contributes to lower incomes, higher food prices, lower levels of girls' school enrollment and high maternal mortality rates. Poor infrastructure also contributes to the high cost of transport in Cambodia, which also reduces access to goods and markets and distorts prices, further aggravating food insecurity.

The travel and transport burden seems to be equally divided between men and women, though it differs in nature: Women make more trips, carry more weight and spend significantly more time collecting water and traveling to the market, usually with less access to modern transport. Although men make fewer trips, they travel longer distances and spend much of their travel time for fishing, cultivating rice and non-agricultural activities (MRD/ILO, 2000). Proximity is a critical factor for women's access to markets and services, given their restricted mobility due to concerns about security and family responsibility.

### ***3.1.8 Women also prioritize clean water supply***

Only 29 percent of the Cambodian population has access to a clean water supply – 53 percent of urban dwellers and 25 percent of the rural population (World Bank, 2003). It is estimated that Cambodians spend one to two hours a day collecting water, and this is done primarily by women (MRD, consultation). All women participants in the participatory poverty assessment complained that they spent much of each day in the dry season retrieving water for cooking, washing and bathing purposes – nearly twice the time they spent in the wet season (ADB, 2001). The poverty assessment also found distinct gender differences relating to the priority in the delivery of water services at the community level. Women want more convenient access to safe water for drinking, cooking and bathing purposes, and they do not want to spend much time accessing it for their daily needs. Time spent retrieving water did not seem to be a major concern for men. Instead, men

asked for irrigation systems for crops but not for household farming systems, which would benefit women as well. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) is implementing a rural water supply program that ensures that three women and two men are on the Village Water Committees and that there will be a water source every 100-150 meters.

Access to water can be affected not just by distance to a water source but also by the cost of it. Concerns have been raised that if users have to pay for the more convenient access of private sector water supply, poor families without the income will choose not to use the system. In this case, women's water collection burden would not be alleviated. It would be useful to explore innovative schemes to cross-subsidize water provision for the poor with revenues raised from charging private sector enterprises for water provision.

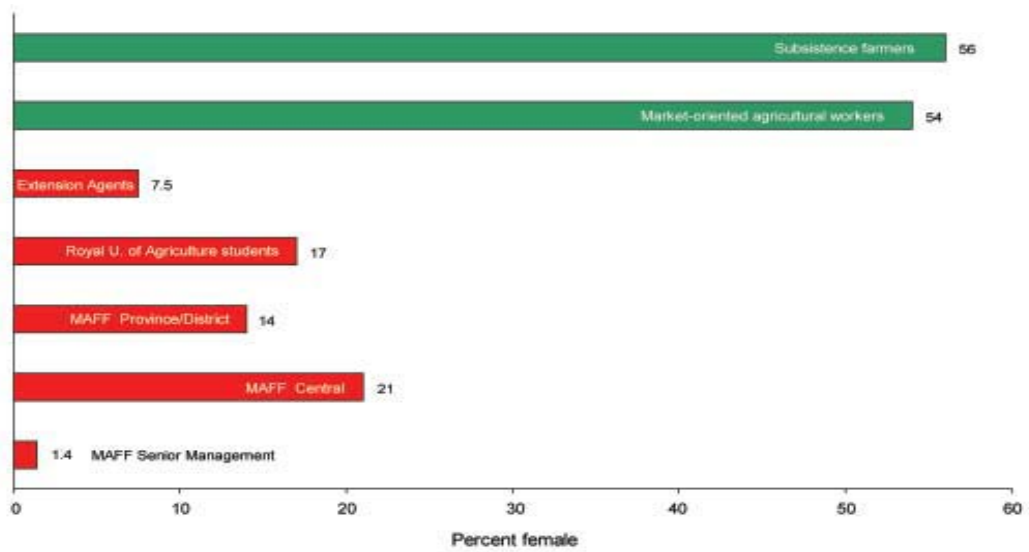
Only 18 per cent of the population has access to sanitation facilities – 58 percent of the urban population and only 10 percent of the rural population. A WFP study showed a high correlation between the presence of separate sanitation facilities in schools and girls' attendance (WFP, 2001) (see also Chapter 4). Women's access to safe water and sanitation has enormous implications for their and their families' health.

### **3.1.9 Women are under-represented in agriculture sector decision-making and the civil service**

Although women make up the majority of farmers, they are a minority among the beneficiaries and providers of agricultural services. Women's significant contributions to the agriculture and rural development sector are not mirrored in their participation in decision-making and the civil service. While women represent more than 50 percent of all subsistence and market-oriented agricultural workers, they make up 20 percent of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) staff – and most of those positions are administrative. Very few are found in decision-making positions or have direct contact with farmers. As mentioned previously, it is estimated that only 5-10 percent of the agricultural extension agents are women (World Bank, 2002). In 2002/2003, only 17 percent of all students at the Royal University of Agriculture (RAU) were women, although this is a significant increase from 6 percent in 2001/2002 (MoEYS, 2003). The change is a result of RUA officials adopting a policy to raise the proportion of women students to at least 30 percent (LMAP, 2003).

A recent survey found there was a high level of unmet demand for training opportunities among women staff within MAFF. Only 2 percent of the women surveyed from provincial offices had a bachelor's degree and 19 percent never completed primary school. When these women had access to training opportunities, 19 percent were able to take on higher-level duties and received more professional respect and responsibility (MAFF 2002a).

**Figure 3.1: Women in the agricultural sector: Many in the fields, few in the office**



*Source:* Census 1998, World Bank 2003b, ADB 2003b, MoEYS 2003

## 3.2 Government policies and strategies

Despite the importance of agriculture and rural development for poverty reduction and broad-based growth, government allocations to these sectors remain relatively small. Agriculture and rural development are two of the four priority sectors in the NPRS and SEDPII, but their shares of the total current expenditure for 2003 are 2.3 and 1.1 percent, respectively, compared to defense and security, which commands 22 percent (Beresford et al, 2003). The national budget allocation in 2002 for agriculture and rural development was 4 percent, while education and health were allocated 18 and 11 percent, respectively (NPRS, p. 134). Overseas development assistance during the past ten years has been allocated as follows: 9.5 percent for education, 14 percent for health, 7.5 percent for agriculture and 13 percent for rural development (CDC, 2002).

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (MAFF) and the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) are the ministries that are most directly involved in the development of agriculture and the rural economy. But several other ministries also play a major role: the Ministry of Commerce (MoC), the Ministry of the Environment (MoE), the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MoWRM), the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs (MoWVA) and the Ministry of Land Management (MLM). The MoC plays a critical role as the driver of the **Pro-Poor Trade Sector Strategy**, which is focusing on agri-business and agro-processing as potential growth areas. The institutions and mechanisms that support the agricultural sector, such as extension programs, face severe financial constraints, including very low staff salaries and weak accountability mechanisms (similar to all departments of the civil service). As a result, they lack skilled staff and experience high rates of absenteeism, especially in rural areas – precisely where they are most needed. Implementation activities are limited to those supported by specific development projects.

A number of projects within MAFF have integrated a gender component – with many successes. Examples include:

- *National Rice Integrated Pest Management Project*: Forty-four percent of the 4,137 farmers trained were women. This high rate of success was due to the scheduling of training at times that were convenient for female farmers, recruiting female trainers, providing gender awareness training to all trainers and making special efforts to encourage women to participate.
- *Agriculture Quality Improvement Project (AQIP-AusAID)*: This project developed a gender and development policy and strategies which require that gender be taken into consideration in all phases of the project cycle, and that attention be paid to ensuring that both men and women are involved at all levels in the planning, implementation and evaluation of project activities as well as in decision-making bodies, associations and working groups.
- *Cambodia-Australia Agricultural Extension Project (CAAEP-AusAID)*: The percentage of female extension workers increased to 18 percent in target districts and special initiatives were introduced to accommodate the low literacy levels of female farmers. Fifteen percent of farmers contacted by extension workers were women.
- *Agriculture Productivity Improvement Project (APIP-World Bank)*: Approximately 41 percent of participants in on- and off-farm farmer trials, farmer training and demonstrations have been women. Ninety percent of the female staff have received some training.
- *Women in Irrigation, Nutrition and Health Project (WIN-FAO)*: Training was provided to 239 farmers in homestead production (home gardening, cash crop production, livestock raising and water management); 187 of these farmers were women (78 percent); 188 farmers (80 percent women) were trained in integrated pest management (IPM) in vegetable growing and 150 farmers (59 percent women) in IPM in rice cultivation. WIN also facilitated the formation of 10 farmer groups headed by women; 15 farmer water-user communities (5 headed by women); and 16 farmer water-user groups (15 headed by women). Project participants at all levels participated in gender training.

MAFF project counterparts have been trained in gender within the context of individual projects (including two gender focal points trained by MoWVA). MAFF's growing awareness of and commitment to gender mainstreaming is reflected in the targets set in the NPRS. In addition, MAFF has recently established a gender working group which has the potential to play a lead role in coordinating gender-related activities within MAFF, organizing opportunities for sharing experiences between projects and supporting institutional learning on gender in agricultural development. However, the members presently have limited understanding of gender concepts or skills in gender analysis. ADB's forthcoming loan for the Agriculture Sector Development Program (ASDP) will include support for strengthening the capacity of the MAFF gender working group and the development and implementation of a gender mainstreaming strategy. The ASDP will also include several measures to promote gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector:

- The five-year loan will require the Government to establish a formal career track for agricultural graduates who are accepted into the MAFF civil service. The career track will start with a minimum of three years' employment at the district level. As an incentive to graduates, the loan will provide a supplement to the government salary for 60 positions, half of which must be filled with women.

- The project will provide extension and credit to farmers' groups in four provinces, requiring that these groups include equal numbers of men and women farmers. Gender training will be provided for staff and farmers.
- MoWVA will be a member of the secretariat; the Provincial Departments of Women's and Veterans' Affairs (PDWVA), where this program will be implemented, will be part of the task force for agro-enterprise development, and agro-enterprise support services will be established within Women in Development Centers.

In parallel, MRD has also adopted several initiatives to integrate gender into their programs. MRD is responsible for supporting Village Development Councils (VDCs) and requires that at least 40 percent of council members be women (see Chapter 8). Also, the Ministry's draft Water and Sanitation Policy and Strategy emphasizes the importance of addressing women's as well as men's needs, and ensures that women are the majority members on the village water committee.

The underlying assumption related to the low public investment in agriculture is that the private sector will invest in developing the agriculture and rural sectors for the purposes of boosting exports. However, it is doubtful that the private sector is able or willing to provide the economic public goods necessary for sustainable and broad-based rural development. It is even more doubtful that the private sector would place primacy on the mutually reinforcing goals of poverty reduction and gender equality, which will not automatically follow any market-driven economic structure. Thus, there is arguably a need for the state to provide incentives to private investors to ensure that these objectives are at the center of any economic development strategy involving the private sector.

As well, increases in the supply of social services may not have the desired results if people are still too poor to be able to take advantage of them. A shortfall in investments in rural livelihoods will affect the returns to investments in social sectors, such as health and education. However, efforts to increase rural incomes will result in increasing demand for social services, which will result in more positive health and educational outcomes for the poor. This is particularly true for women and girls whose demand for social services is more price sensitive (inelastic) than for men and boys (Beresford et al., 2003).

### ***Gender-responsive targets and indicators for agriculture and rural development included in the National Poverty Reduction Strategy 2003-2005***

- The NPRS section on Promoting Agricultural Development sets out specific quantitative targets regarding women's participation in agricultural services. These provide for the inclusion of 30-50 percent women in training of agricultural extension and animal health workers, and in training courses on agricultural mechanization, soil fertility management and conservation, safe pesticide use, IPM, agricultural production and agri-businesses, vegetable production and home gardening, and agro-food processing.
- The section on Private Sector Development recommends that agricultural extension targeting farm production workers and market vendors should include gender-specific extension programs focusing on women as the dominant players in traditional rice farming, fishing (i.e. post-catch production and marketing) and market vendors.

- The section on Decentralization and Improving Local Governance recommends the establishment of pilot agricultural cooperatives to promote stable food stocks and pricing in VDCs, and that 45 percent of the members should be women.
- The section on Ensuring Food Security has the strategic objective to enhance food security for all, especially poor women and children, and that the Special Program on Food Security ensure that women should constitute 50 percent of the beneficiaries from these programs, constitute 40 percent of the farmers trained in the farmer field schools, and 50 percent of the farmers benefiting from the small livestock raising program.
- The section on Road and Transport Development targets 45 percent women as beneficiaries in employment generated from road construction.
- The sections on Improving Access to Land, Water Resource Management and Irrigation Development and Safe Water and Sanitation do not include any reference to women or gender.

The section on Promoting Gender Equity includes the following: Ensure equal access rights of women and veterans to economic resources and opportunities and their equitable participation in national decision-making, development planning and poverty reduction processes. Create alternative livelihood opportunities and enhance capacity of women entrepreneurs and workers. Increase women's access to land. Provide training programs for micro and small-scale enterprises. Organize farmers' associations with women as 50 percent of the membership. Support mechanisms for women in trade unions and business.



# CHAPTER 4

## GENDER DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

<b>Cambodia at a glance .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>4.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>71</b>
4.1.1 The gender gap in education increases with levels of schooling .....	72
4.1.2 Enrollments are increasing in primary and lower secondary school ....	72
4.1.3 The fastest increase of school enrollment is for girls from poorest communes .....	73
4.1.4 Survival and completion rates are lower for girls than boys .....	74
4.1.5 Shortages of teachers, especially female teachers, are greatest in rural areas .....	76
4.1.6 Gender and income disparities remain largely unchanged at upper secondary level .....	76
4.1.7 Net enrollment rates have fallen, especially for boys .....	78
4.1.8 Reasons for gender disparities in secondary school .....	78
4.1.9 Gender disparities are greatest in higher education .....	80
4.1.10 Gender gaps in literacy rates increase with age .....	81
4.1.11 Vocational training options are limited – especially for women .....	82
<b>4.2 Government policies and strategies .....</b>	<b>83</b>

# GENDER DISPARITIES IN EDUCATION

## Cambodia at a glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Value
Primary girls' enrollment, 2002 (percentage of population 6-11 years old)	84
Lower secondary girls' enrollment, 2002 (percentage of population 12-17 years old)	16
Female adult literacy rate, 1998	41
Number of primary schools	5,741
Number of secondary schools	534
Number of upper secondary schools	163
Total number of teaching staff	70,608
Percentage of female teaching staff	38
Number of pupils for every one teacher	46
Percent of national budget for education	18.2

### 4.1 Status, trends and issues

Gender issues in education are relatively well documented. By regional standards, the general education level in Cambodia remains very low for both men and women and is a fundamental development issue for the country. Despite the obvious progress that has been made in the past few years, Cambodia, together with Lao People's Democratic Republic, has the lowest net enrollment rates in East Asia.

Access to education is a significant gender issue – many more men than women benefit from education. Gender disparities in education are greater among the poor and in rural areas.

The gender gap in educational participation has immediate ramifications for employment opportunities for women (see Chapter 2). When educated, women can compete with men for employment opportunities. Available statistics underscore many high returns when girls are educated. In addition to an increase in the economic productivity of women, infant and maternal mortality and family size decrease, and family nutrition and health improve – including prevention of HIV transmission. Also, the educating of the next generation becomes more guaranteed (UNDP, 2003). This chapter focuses on the gender issues in accessing general education.

Cambodia aims to achieve universal primary and lower secondary education by 2010, in keeping with the commitments under the Education for All (EFA) program. The EFA covers the nine-year basic education cycle, which includes primary schooling from grades one to six and lower secondary schooling from grades seven to nine. Considerable attention and allocation of resources have been targeted to achieving the EFA goals.

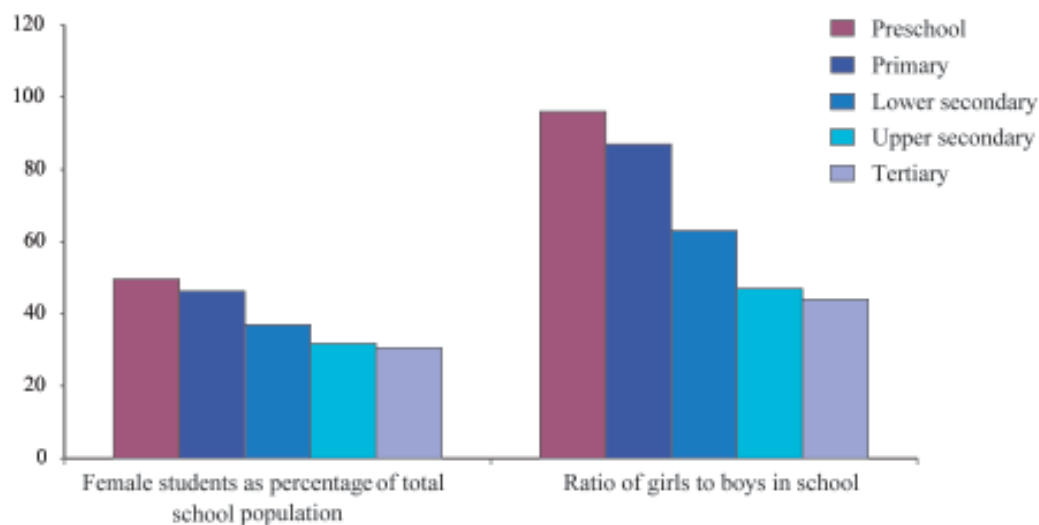
<sup>1</sup> **Sources:** MoEYS.2002. Educational Management Information System  
Census 1998  
MoEYS.2002. ESSP Review 2002 Education Sector Performance Report

Education in Cambodia is primarily in the public sector, with the exception of tertiary education (ESSP Review, 2002). Education is supposed to be free to all citizens, but in practice there is an unavoidable series of formal and informal fees.

#### 4.1.1 The gender gap in education increases with levels of schooling

The gap between boys and girls in Cambodia increases markedly as they progress to higher levels of education. While almost equal numbers of boys and girls are enrolled in preschool and primary school, only 63 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys in lower secondary school<sup>2</sup> (see Figure 4.1). At upper secondary and tertiary-level education, less than 50 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys (EMIS, 2001/2002). Reasons for this are discussed in later sections.

**Figure 4.1: Gender equality at all levels of education**



**Note:** Tertiary education data are for 2002/2003.

**Source:** EMIS, 2001/2002 and Department of Higher Education, MoEYS

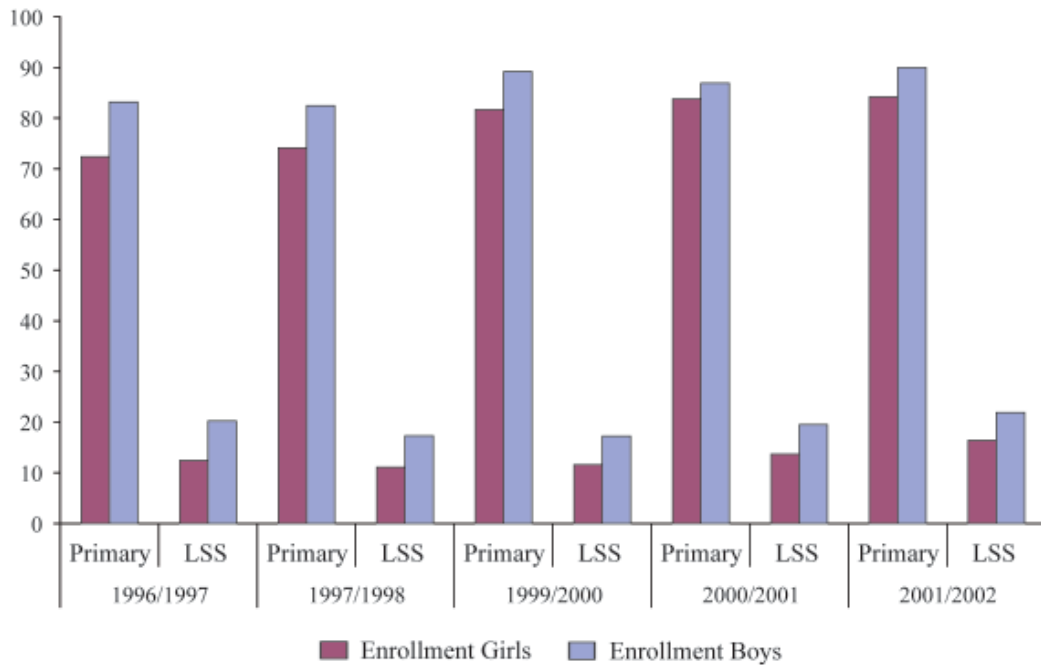
#### 4.1.2 Enrollments are increasing in primary and lower secondary school

At the primary school level, boys' and girls' net enrollments are already quite close: In 2002/2003, 90 percent of boys and 84 percent of girls were enrolled (Figure 4.2). There was no difference in net enrollment rates between urban and rural areas at this level although the total net enrollment in remote areas was much lower, at 71 percent. As girls' enrollment was only 67 percent in remote areas, the gender gap there was slightly wider. The most recent figures indicate that, in terms of net enrollment, the gender gap is narrowing as girls enroll in primary schools at a slightly higher rate than boys (MoEYS). Between 1998 and 2002, the proportion of girls attending primary school had increased by 3 percent.

<sup>2</sup> All data in this chapter are from the Education Management Information System (EMIS), prepared yearly for all levels of schooling, by MoEYS and the 2002 ESSP Review, unless otherwise indicated.

Net enrollments in lower secondary school, however, have been much smaller (Figure 4.2). Approximately one in five Cambodian children and one in six girls in the relevant age group is enrolled in lower secondary school. In remote areas, this number can be as low as one for every 100 children. In rural areas, the gender gap in net enrollment rates is larger than in urban areas, at 19 percent for boys and 13 percent for girls.

**Figure 4.2: Net enrollment rates, 1996 to 2001**



Source: MoEYS

### 4.1.3 The fastest increase of school enrollment is for girls from poorest communes

In the past two to three years, considerable progress has been made in increasing the numbers of poor children, both boys and girls, attending primary and lower secondary schools. The number of children enrolled in primary school from communes that ranked in the poorest income quintile rose from approximately 300,000 in 1999 to 423,000 in 2001. This represents an increase in enrollments of 13 percent in 2000 and 24 percent in 2001 and compares with increases of 5 percent and 7 percent, respectively, for children from communes in the richest quintile. However, while there is no significant difference in the growth of girls' enrollment compared to boys in the richest quintile, the growth rate of enrollment among girls in the poorest quintile has consistently been the highest of any group across quintiles. In 2001, enrollment growth for girls from families in the poorest income quintile was 26 percent, compared to 15 percent for girls in this quintile in the previous year (ESSP Review, 2002).

For lower secondary school, the number of children enrolled from communes in the poorest quintile rose from 11,800 in 1999 to 20,000 in 2001. Total lower secondary enrollment continued to grow across all quintiles with the poorest having the highest rate of growth of 38 percent in

2001/2002. Female lower secondary enrollment has experienced the biggest growth in all years for all quintiles, with enrollment of the poorest girls doubling from 3,302 in 1999/2000 to 6,547 in 2001/2002. This represents a growth rate of 30 percent between 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 and 50 percent between 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 (ESSP Review, 2002). While these data indicate that the ESSP is reducing gender and income group disparities in access to education, the overall and girls' net enrollment for lower secondary schooling are still very low. Only 6 percent of students in lower secondary school are from the poorest income quintile, compared to 37 percent from the richest quintile.

#### **4.1.4 Survival and completion rates are lower for girls than boys**

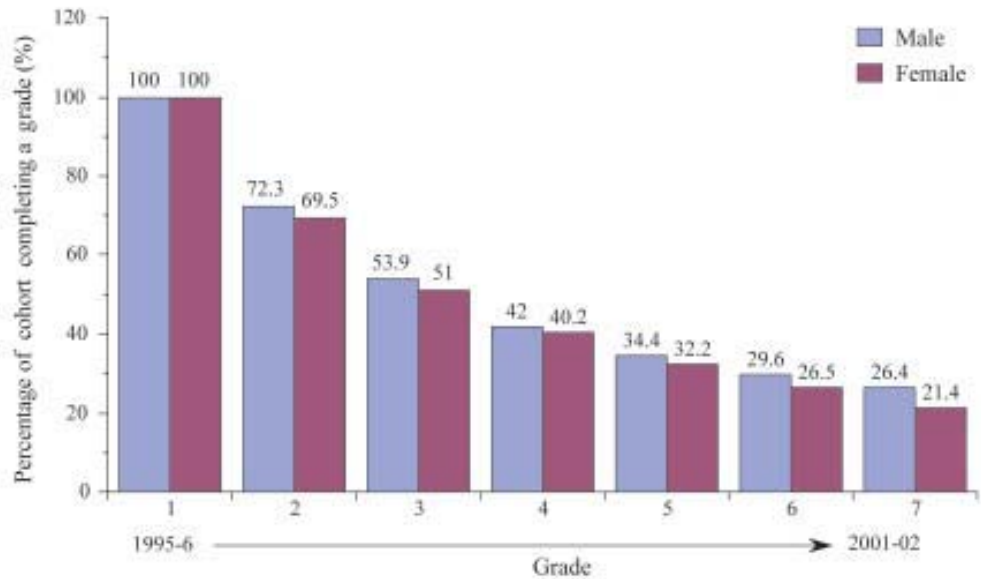
In Cambodia, net enrollment does not give a complete picture of access to education because total enrollment includes a significant proportion of overage students, particularly at the lower secondary level. Overage enrollment is influenced by students starting school late, high repetition rates and interrupted schooling. This is especially so for girl students (Bredenburg et al., 2003). In 2001/2002, 29 percent of girls and 32 percent of boys enrolled in primary school were overage, and 36 percent of girls and 46 percent of boys enrolled in lower secondary school were overage (EMIS, 2002).

While primary education enrollment rates for girls and boys are similar, higher drop-out rates and lower survival rates remain important gender issues at the primary and the lower secondary levels. Exact survival rates differ according to different departments of MoEYS. For example, in 2001/2002, MoEYS reported that 48 percent of girls and 51 percent of all children enrolled in grade one completed grade six education. Other figures from the Education for All (EFA) secretariat in 2002 (Bredenburg et al., 2003) revealed survival rates for the same year as 57 percent for girls and 61 percent for boys.

In 2002, cohort analysis by the MoEYS Gender Working Group covering a seven-year period beginning in 1995/1996 showed even lower survival rates of 34 percent for boys and 32 percent for girls at grade five, dropping to 30/27 percent, respectively, in grade six and 26/21 percent, respectively, in grade seven (Figure 4.3).

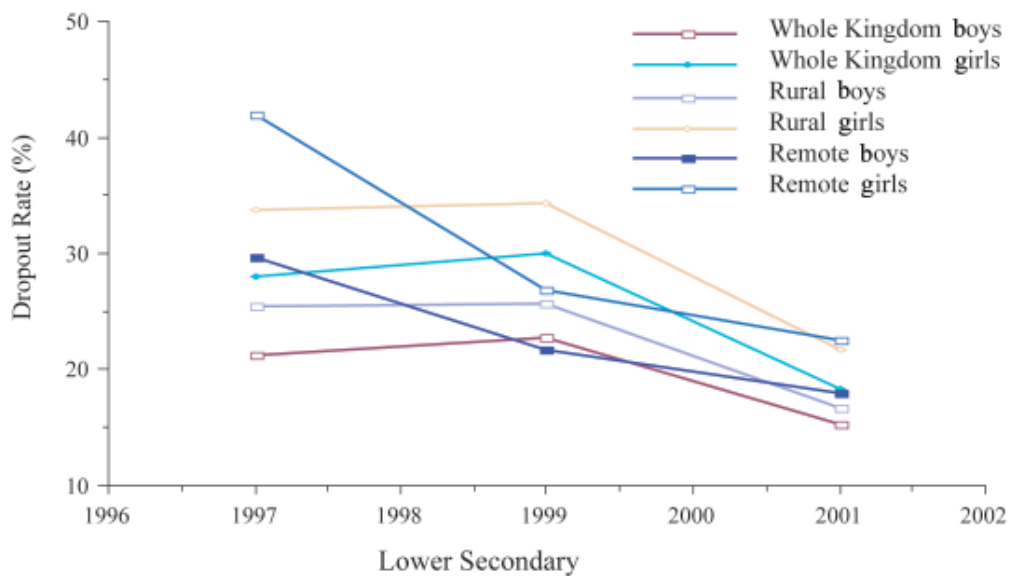
One success resulting from the new policies and programs in the education sector during the past two years is a reduction in the repetition rates across all levels and in all geographic areas. This decline is attributed to the introduction of summer vacation remedial classes for all failing students, including special payment incentives for teachers. The decline in repetition rates will increase gender equality in education. A reduction in the excess time a girl takes to complete basic education reduces schooling and opportunity costs, especially for older girls. Repetition exacerbates both those costs. Overage enrollment should also decline due to the new policies and programs in education.

Drop-out rates for primary school girls have stayed between 13 and 14 percent over the past eight years (Bredenburg et al., 2003). Boys dropped out at lower rates between 1993 and 2001 – between 8 percent and 12 percent. In lower secondary schools, drop-out rates have declined sharply (Figure 4.4). The gap between boys and girls with regard to drop-out rates has also narrowed.

**Figure 4.3: Male/female cohort survival rates, grades**

*Source:* Bredenburg et al., 2003

In spite of the impressive decline in drop-out rates at the lower secondary level, the persistence of a gender gap at both levels of schooling indicates that factors such as costs of education, distance to schools and household work responsibilities continue to restrict girls' completion of basic education.

**Figure 4.4: Student drop-outs for lower secondary school**

*Source:* Bredenburg et al., 2003

#### **4.1.5 Shortages of teachers, especially female teachers, are greatest in rural areas**

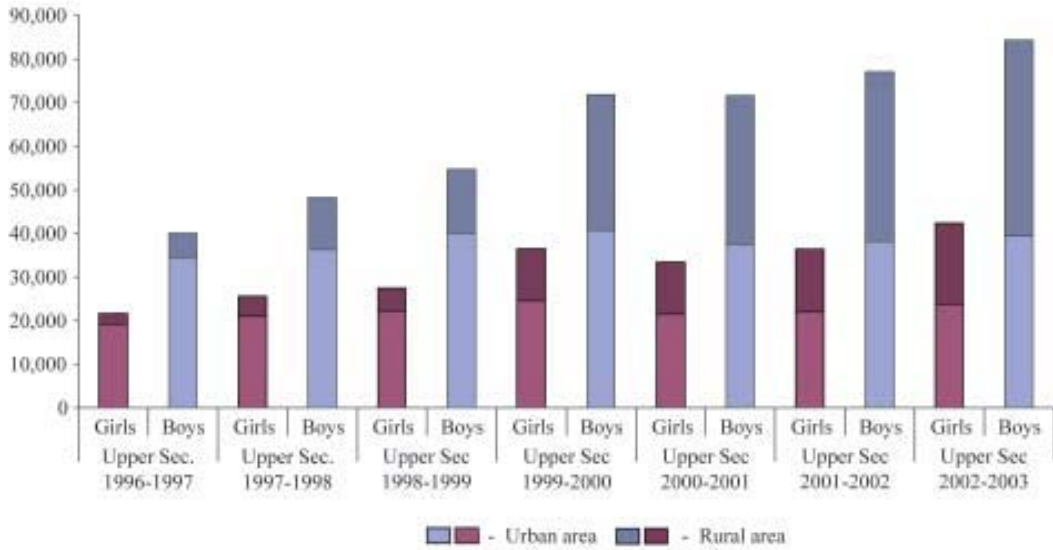
One key approach to increasing female enrollment in basic education is to increase the number of female teachers. The number of primary school teachers has increased by 7 percent since 1993 with secondary school teachers increasing by 23 percent between 1996 and 2001. This compares with increases in enrollment of 67 percent and 124 percent at the primary and secondary levels, respectively. As a result, pupil-teacher ratios (PTR) have increased significantly. For 2002, the PTR was 56:1 at the primary level, which reflects an acute shortage of teachers that is greater in rural and remote areas and improves at the secondary level with a ratio of 22:1 (Bredenburg et al., 2003).

MoEYS aims to increase gender parity among teachers, which has increased slightly at the national level since the mid-1990s. Gender parity has increased from 0.49 to 0.64 (female teachers per male teacher) among primary teachers and from 0.37 to 0.42 among secondary school teachers (Bredenburg et al., 2003). However, the national figure can be misleading: In urban areas, the ratio of female to male teachers is higher than one, while in rural and remote areas it is very low. The main reasons for the low numbers of female teachers in rural areas are that few rural women apply and qualify to become teachers, urban women who become teachers are concerned about security in rural areas, and there are few incentives offered to attract anyone to those areas. MoEYS offers some incentives to attract teachers to rural schools and has introduced multi-grade teaching (which makes more efficient use of available human resources). But these strategies are unlikely to have a significant impact because of the small-scale of implementation (Bredenburg et al., 2003).

#### **4.1.6 Gender and income disparities remain largely unchanged at upper secondary level**

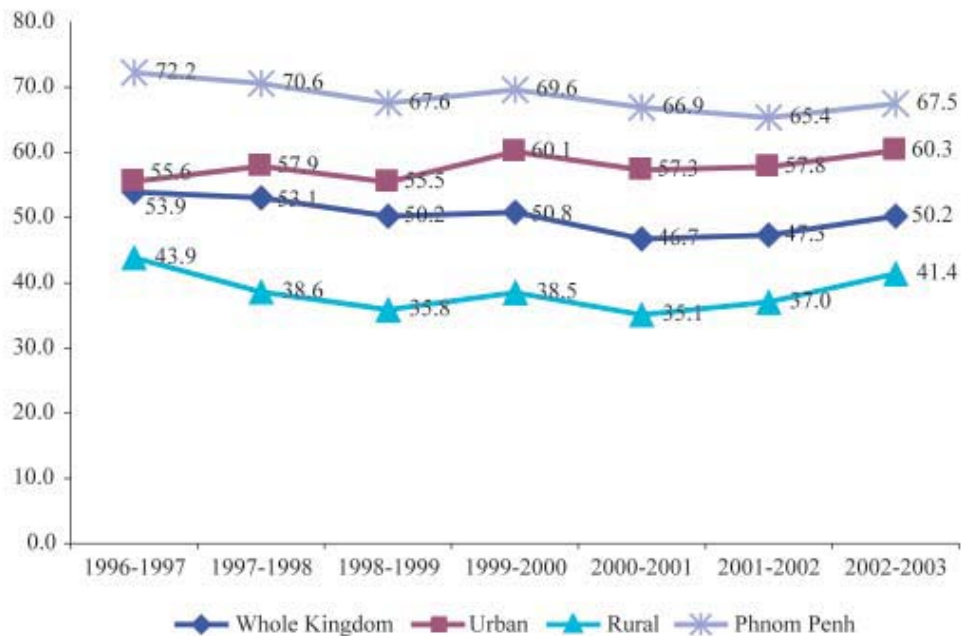
The numbers of boys and girls enrolled in upper secondary school has been increasing (Figure 4.5). However, the gains in reducing gender and income group disparity that were achieved in lower secondary education have not been matched in upper secondary education. The share of enrollment among the poorest income quintile increased from one to two percent between 1999 and 2001, while among the richest quintile it decreased slightly from 63 to 57 percent. While the numbers of girls in upper secondary school have increased, especially in rural areas, the ratio of boys to girls is still low and has remained largely unchanged for the past seven years. Preliminary data for 2002/2003 suggests that it may have initially decreased, increasing only in 2003 (Figure 4.6).

**Figure 4.5: Numbers of students enrolled in upper secondary school**



Source: MoEYS

**Figure 4.6: Ratio of boys to girls, by geographic area**



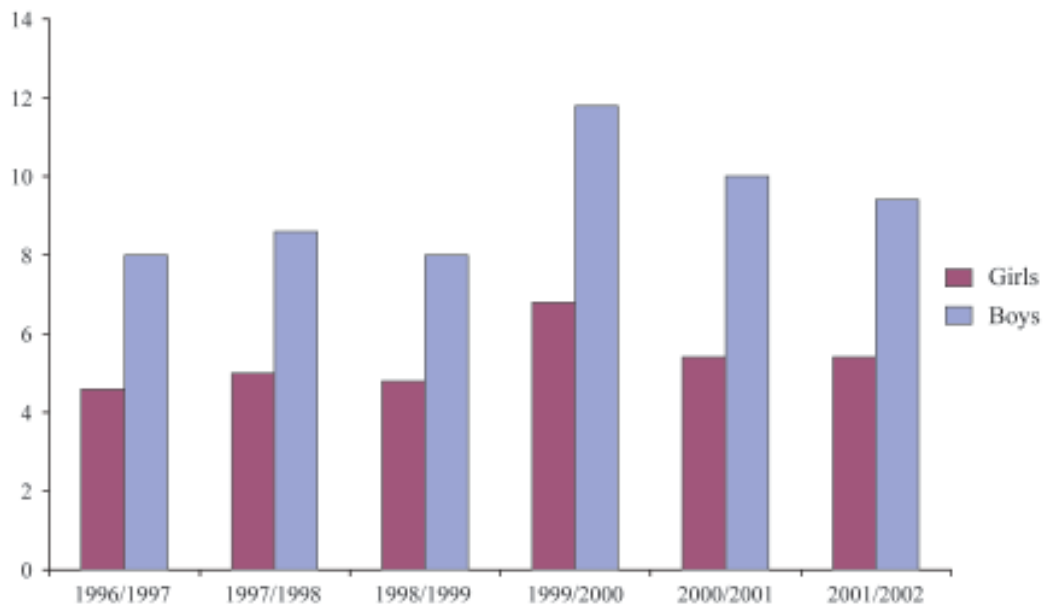
Source: MoEYS



### 4.1.7 Net enrollment rates have fallen, especially for boys

Net enrollment at upper secondary school appears to have increased in 1999 and then declined again for both boys and girls (Figure 4.7) – but at a faster rate for boys. Current levels, especially for girls where past improvements were not so great, are only slightly above the levels of 1996/1997. This poor performance at the upper secondary level has only been partially explained. Undoubtedly, MoEYS has focused most of its resources and attention on expanding basic education, with upper secondary school receiving less attention.

**Figure 4.7: Net enrollment in upper secondary schools**



Source: MoEYS

### 4.1.8 Reasons for gender disparities in secondary school

Assessments by MoEYS and donors present the following reasons for gender disparity in school enrollment:

#### Cost

Many country studies have shown that households' inability to cover the direct and indirect costs of education is the overriding reason why girls are not in school. Private recurrent expenditure on public education accounted for 64 percent of total recurrent expenditure on education. Private expenditure for one child in primary school represented 79 percent of the per capita non-food expenditure of the poorest 20 percent of the population. The per capita cost of secondary and tertiary education was between two and seven times greater than the non-food consumption expenditure of the poorest 20 percent of the population (Vinky 2002, cited in Education PER chapter).

Although direct costs of education are the same for boys and girls, parents generally perceive higher opportunity costs and lower benefits from educating daughters. Under these circumstances, poor families who cannot afford to educate all their children prefer to educate sons. In most families, the opportunity (or indirect) cost of a girl's education is the loss of her labor in the rice fields, as well as in caring for younger siblings and other household tasks. Since men tend to perform tasks requiring significant strength or use of machines, the labor of boys does not substitute for the labor of their fathers as easily as girls' labor substitutes for the labor of their mothers. Opportunity costs increase with age, especially when there are income-generating activities – such as jobs in the garment sector – that provide profitable alternatives to education.

### *Distance*

Distance to school remains a constraint on access to secondary education. Although the majority of households live within a one kilometer radius of a primary school, only 0.05 percent of villages have a lower secondary school and 0.01 percent have a functional upper secondary facility (MoP, 1997). Between 1997 and 2002, no new schools were constructed.

Thirty-nine percent of grade six students – those eligible to move to lower secondary school – live at least 3 kilometers, and 10 percent at least 10 kilometers, from the nearest lower secondary school (Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction and ADB, 2001). Given the poor quality of rural roads, such distances are significant constraints for the majority who lack even a bicycle for transportation. Boys can live in *wats* (temples) while attending secondary school, but there is no comparable system for accommodating girls. Even where lower secondary schools are within commuting distance, parents are concerned about the physical and moral safety of their daughters during the long walk to school (Velasco, 2001; Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction and ADB, 2001). A 1998 survey showed that 62 percent of caretakers said they worried about their daughters' security when traveling to school. The percentage was higher in urban areas (57 percent) than in rural area (38 percent (MoEYS and CARE).

### *Lack of toilets*

Across the country, 65 percent of all primary schools and 13 percent of upper secondary schools have no toilets (EMIS, 2002). This situation creates obvious problems of modesty, particularly for adolescent girls. Overage enrollment rates are high, and hence, enrollment in primary schooling is also affected by a lack of toilet facilities.

### *Absence of female teachers and role models*

The absence of female teachers and female role models, especially in rural areas, acts as an additional factor discouraging girls from attending school. Bredenburg et al. (2003) noted, “Underlying the economic constraints on girls' education are the prevailing social ideals and attitudes toward male status, capacity and intelligence (that it's higher among boys). These attitudes persist not only among parents but also teachers. Thus the school environment itself is likely to reinforce perceptions of gender norms.”

The role of the curriculum and textbooks and other in-school factors in reinforcing stereotypical attitudes toward gender has been insufficiently researched and warrants further attention. For example, there was no gender input into the design of most of the recently introduced basic education textbooks (MoWVA, 2001).

### *A preference for the education of sons*

In a 1998 MoEYS and CARE study, 46 percent of caretakers agreed with the statement that boys were more intelligent than girls, and 61 percent said that education was more important for boys than for girls. This finding is echoed in the CDHS and other qualitative studies, although parents in all those surveys also wanted their daughters to receive an education (MoEYS and CARE).

### *Girls are caregivers*

Girls are more likely to take on the role of surrogate caregiver if families become vulnerable (Velasco, 2001). For example, illness or deaths due to AIDS or other diseases may cause families to remove children, especially girls, from school (European Commission, 2002). Finally, girls leave school as well because they (or their parents) decide that they will marry.

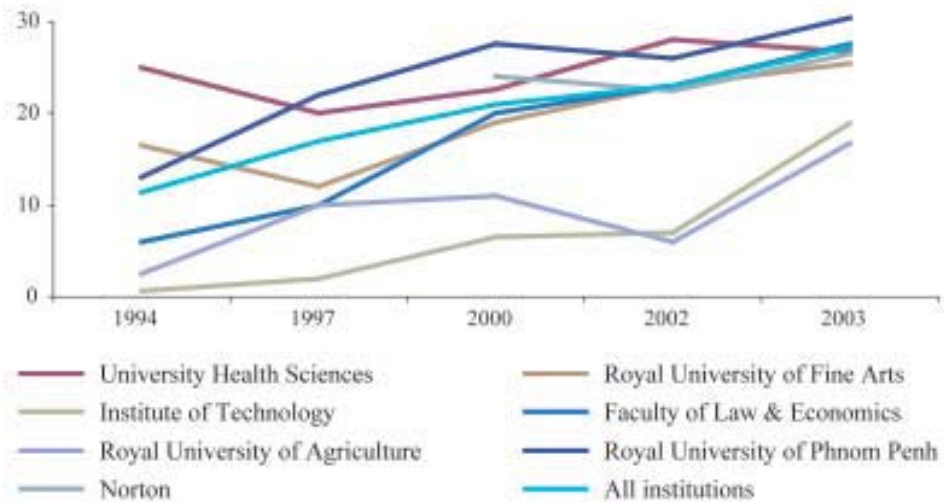
*“Send your sons away to school if you have the money... It is a good idea and they might be better off. But send your daughters away and what will happen to them? Perhaps they will return pregnant. No one in Cambodia sends their daughters away to study.”* – A man in Kandal province, cited in the participatory poverty assessment report (ADB, 2001)

### **4.1.9 Gender disparities are greatest in higher education**

Only 0.2 percent of the Cambodian population engages in study beyond the secondary school level (Census, 1998). However, university enrollment has increased since 1999, when the government allowed private universities to offer courses. Private universities have opened in both the provinces and Phnom Penh.

Since fewer girls than boys complete secondary schooling, tertiary education is also dominated by male students. Unless significantly larger numbers of girls complete lower and upper secondary schooling, gender parity is unlikely to be achieved in higher education. Nevertheless, the proliferation of private universities during the last several years both in Phnom Penh and in the provinces has helped to break the monopoly on provision of tertiary education previously held by state institutions, and only in the capital city. This should contribute to steady although small increases in female representation among higher education students by enabling females in other provinces, who are currently constrained by security and travel concerns from traveling to Phnom Penh.

Over the past few years, the proportion of female students has risen by approximately 27 percent in all institutions (Figure 4.8). An encouraging sign is the increase in two institutions of higher education that previously had shown a very low percentage of female students: the Institute of Technology and the Royal University of Agriculture.

**Figure 4.8: Proportion of female students in higher education**

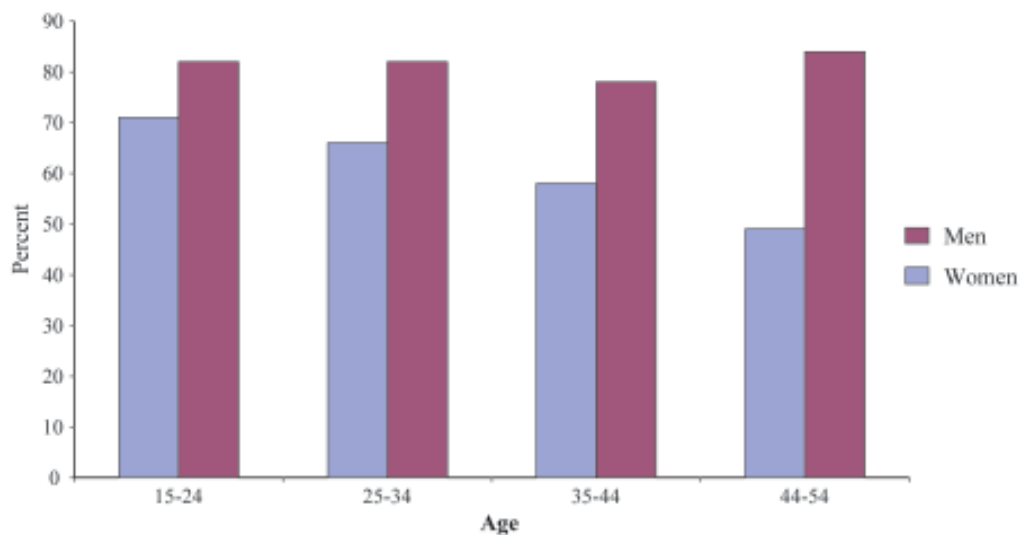
Source: MoEYS

#### 4.1.10 Gender gaps in literacy rates increase with age

Literacy is highly correlated with access to economic opportunity and poverty alleviation. For example, agricultural extension information and communication tends to be geared toward a literate population (World Bank, 2002i) and will not reach women and men in rural areas who are illiterate (CSES, 1999). The gender gap in literacy rates among 15- to 24-year-olds has been narrowing rapidly, with recent data showing 87 percent literacy for boys and 77 percent for girls. If current trends continue, the gender gap will soon be eliminated. However, Cambodia has not yet achieved 100 percent literacy among this age group, and the national figures mask provincial and regional disparities.

Among adults, women who are illiterate still significantly out-number men, and the gap is highest for older women (see Figure 4.9).

Functional literacy may be significantly lower than the numbers in Figure 4.9 show. The latest estimates show that 25 percent of males and 45 percent of females (36 percent overall) are completely illiterate, while 26 percent of males and 28 percent of females (27 percent overall) are semi-literate. Combining these two categories, 50 percent of men and 71 percent of women in Cambodia are functionally illiterate (UNDP/UNESCO, 2000). These high illiteracy rates, especially for older women, have implications for socioeconomic development in Cambodia. Women who are illiterate will not be able to participate in Cambodia's development and reap benefits in the same way as others. Currently, the government's plans for eliminating illiteracy pay inadequate attention to programs for older women.

**Figure 4.9: Literacy rates, by age group**

Source: 1999 Census

#### 4.1.11 Vocational training options are limited – especially for women

Cambodia had an active non-formal education (NFE) program during the 1980s, run by a special department within the Ministry of Education. However, during the 1990s, MoEYS focused on formal education, especially basic education, which was somewhat at the expense of the earlier NFE program. In 1994, total investment in NFE was less than 1 percent of total educational investment, compared with 54 percent for primary education and 12 percent for tertiary education (Bredenburg et al, 2003).

Although investment in non-formal education has risen since 1996, primarily due to donor funding, it was still only 3 percent of the total education investment in 1999. Public investment in non-formal education was largely stagnant during the 1990s (Bredenburg et al, 2003). During that time, the government's role in non-formal education was limited to coordination of programs paid for and operated by NGOs. Although the programs are usually open to illiterate adults of both sexes, in practice, students are primarily female and at least a quarter of them are younger than 18 (Desiree Jongasma, 2003, personal communication).

According to an ILO rapid assessment on gender and employment promotion (Urashima, 2002), the limited scale and scope of skills training nationwide affects women most severely. Although women in development (WID) centers target females for training and a number of NGOs focus on particularly vulnerable groups of women (e.g. victims of violence, homeless, vendors, etc.), these programs are also quite limited in scale. Much of the skills training available is traditional “women’s” skills (e.g. sewing, hairdressing, weaving). Also, most training is center-based and thus difficult for many women to access. Lower levels of literacy and education further constrain participation in available training programs; functional literacy is rarely integrated into skills training programs (ILO, 2001).

## 4.2 Government policies and strategies

Between 1999 and 2002, MoEYS developed several education policy and strategy frameworks, including overall sector development priorities, subsectoral targets and a medium-term education expenditure plan for 2001-2005. MoEYS has formulated an Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2001-2005 and an Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) 2002-2006 for review and appraisal by other stakeholders. Most recently, the government has also prepared the Education for All (EFA) National Plan 2003-2015, published in June 2003.

The Education Sector Support Program involves major reforms designed around 12 priority action programs (PAPs) that aim to improve access to education for all disadvantaged groups. The PAPs are considered to be pro-poor in focus and reflect the government's commitment to addressing both supply and demand issues related to access and to poverty reduction (Bredenburg et al, 2003). However, they are designed to address overall access, rather than the specific gender imbalance in access for girls. The Ministry treats gender as a cross-cutting issue in all subsectors, and it is addressed in the national EFA plan (Bredenburg et al, 2003). In 2001, MoEYS established a gender working group to collaborate closely with donors and NGO partners. This gender group has developed a gender mainstreaming strategy that includes:

- Ensuring equal access to education for girls;
- Enhancing gender equity in education management and service delivery; and
- Strengthening technical capacity to mainstream gender in education programming and policy-making.

The government recognizes education as one of four priority sectors (together with health, rural development and agriculture) and has increased the share of its recurrent budget allocated to education from 13.6 percent in 2000 to 15.7 percent in 2001 and 18.2 percent in 2002 (MoEYS, 2002b). This is projected to rise to around one-fifth of the recurrent budget in 2005.

The recurrent budget for basic education is projected to roughly double from around 180 billion *riels* in 2001 to 377 billion *riels* by 2005 (Table 4.1). Spending on basic education is designed to remain between 70 and 78 percent of total sectoral public spending, consistent with priorities in the Education Strategic Plan. The education sector's share of non-wage costs will rise from 26 percent to 42 percent between 2001 and 2005. A key feature of the financing in the Education Strategic Plan is to increase both the volume and share of non-wage recurrent spending in order to secure a sustainable improvement in the quality of education.

**Table 4.1: Distribution of recurrent public funding, by subsector (billion *riels*)**

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Administration	33.6	42.0	51.3	61.2	74.0
Pre-primary	3.5	4.2	5.0	6.0	7.1
Basic education	180.2	266.6	327.5	356.3	376.8
<i>Salary costs</i>	133.8	179.8	199.4	210.4	219.1
<i>Non-wage (including exams)</i>	46.4	86.8	128.1	146.0	157.7
Upper secondary	14.3	17.3	32.0	44.0	65.0
Post secondary	12.2	13.3	14.4	15.9	17.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>243.8</b>	<b>343.5</b>	<b>430.2</b>	<b>483.4</b>	<b>540.9</b>

Source: MoEYS, 2001b

## Strategies to improve basic education:

- Reduce parental contributions for basic education by abolishing fees charged each new school year and by providing operating budgets. This strategy has been implemented nationwide since October 2001, though as previously mentioned, in practice there is an unavoidable series of formal and informal fees.
- Encourage student progression rates across grades one to six and the transition rate from grade six to grade seven, through a combination of remedial teaching, strengthened measures for improving attendance of students and teachers, and a more flexible school calendar.
- Reduce drop-out rates across grades one through twelve through subsidies and scholarships for the poorest students and a range of complementary, targeted incentive strategies, e.g. school feeding programs and school health care, in partnership with NGOs and other stakeholders.
- Increase entry into grade one and opportunities for re-entry for out-of-school students in grades four to six, through the introduction of grade one/reception classes nationwide and expansion of re-entry programs.
- Construct new and additional classrooms and organize selective multi-grade teaching in those villages and communes without a complete primary school.
- Improve efficiency in planning and deployment of teaching and non-teaching staff through: (i) government-agreed staff planning norms for bettering the pupil/teacher ratio; (ii) related staffing guidelines for schools; and (iii) strengthening of norm-enforcement mechanisms. The target is to reduce the pupil/teacher ratio to 48 by 2003.
- Ensure equitable access to core textbooks and selected complementary/supplementary materials through adequate annual government budget provision.
- Assure an adequate supply of teachers to remote and ethnic minority areas through active recruitment from these areas, special incentives, and flexibility in entry requirements and program duration.

## Specific interventions designed to increase gender parity:

- Because distance is a greater barrier for girls, physical access to secondary schools will improve by increasing the number of facilities in rural areas. The education ministry is planning to construct 285 lower secondary schools in unserved rural areas. Those new schools will provide access to 44,000 young people per year, although they might not be within walking distance of all of the students. At least they will be within walking distance of the primary school clusters they serve.
- Scholarships are to target girls. A pilot program undertaken in 2000 on a girls' scholarship scheme was successful in both increasing enrollments and retention. The program, managed by a local NGO, Khmer Action Primary Education (KAPE), provided financial support to poor families who continue the education of their children beyond primary school. Based on the success of this pilot, the Asian Development Bank, in collaboration with the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, will assist MoEYS in funding a national expansion of the girls' scholarship program to 75 high schools. The program will be piloted in 100 lower secondary

schools and extended to all lower secondary schools in 2003. In the long term (2006 to 2010), it is anticipated that more students will qualify for post secondary education and that the program will then cover post secondary education. The bulk of the scholarship program is to be financed under a Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction that is linked to the ADB's Education Sector Program. In addition, a variety of small-scale scholarship programs are operated (outside MoEYS) by UNICEF, CARE and KAPE.

- Forty-five existing upper secondary schools will be expanded to serve students from outlying areas. This plan calls for subsidized transport costs and hostel accommodation for students, although no specific details are described and no spending is projected to cover the costs. Because distance from home is such an important constraint to girls' education, it is unlikely that the expanded schools will improve the situation for girls.

To address gender equity, in 2001, MoEYS created the Office of Special Education (OSE) within the Department of Primary and Preschools. This office is responsible for promoting equal access to education for girls, minorities, people who are poor and people with disabilities.

ESSP 2001 included two separate non-formal education programs: a traditional non-formal education class and a short-term re-entry program aimed at returning drop-outs from grades four to six to the formal education system. In addition, the Department of Non-Formal Education has plans to strengthen the capacity of the system by training teachers and to monitor the two programs. However, no budget was allocated to the program in 2001, and the ESSP 2002 has revised its targets and budget accordingly. Under the traditional non-formal education courses, MoEYS plans to expand vocational training in rural areas and establish community-learning centers that offer adult literacy (Bredenburg et al., 2003).



# CHAPTER 5

## GENDER ISSUES IN HEALTH

<b>Cambodia at a glance .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>5.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>89</b>
5.1.1 Women are disadvantaged in accessing basic health services .....	90
5.1.2 Poor access to health services is closely linked to poverty and women's education .....	90
5.1.3 Cambodia's maternal mortality is among the highest in the region .....	92
5.1.4 Women's nutritional status is poor .....	93
5.1.5 Unmet demand for family planning and birth spacing remains high .....	94
5.1.6 Women do not receive care during pregnancy and deliver in unsafe conditions .....	96
5.1.7 Shortage of skilled birth personnel and poor distribution of health service providers .....	96
5.1.8 Young men and more likely than young women to die or suffer from accidental injury .....	98
5.1.9 Disability and drug abuse affect more men than women .....	98
<b>5.2 Government Policies and Strategies .....</b>	<b>98</b>

# GENDER ISSUES IN HEALTH

## Cambodia at a glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Value
Maternal mortality ratio, 1994-2000 (per 100,000 live births)	437
Infant mortality rate, 1995-2000 (per 1000 live births)	95
Total fertility rate, 2002	4
Life expectancy for women, 1998 (years)	58
Budget allocation as percentage of GDP for healthcare, 2002	1.2
National health budget as percentage of government budget	10.9
Persons per doctor, 1998	6,808
Persons per health worker, 1998	598

### 5.1 Status, trends and issues

The provision of quality health services to Cambodian people is a fundamental development challenge for the country. Men and women have a relatively short life expectancy (54.5 years for men and 58.3 years for women), resulting from high infant and child mortality, high maternal mortality and morbidity, and high occurrence of preventable diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis. One in ten infants dies before her/his first birthday, and malnutrition and illness are common. Available health services do not meet the needs of the population, and access and affordability for people who are poor remain critical problems (World Bank, 2002a). The Cambodia Poverty Assessment (World Bank and Ministry of Planning, 1999) shows that only 12 percent of poor people received exemptions from fees for public services, compared with 26 percent of the richest income quintile. Household expenditures account for 73 percent of total health expenditures, one of the highest proportions in the world (Health Sector Strategic Plan, 2003-2007, Volumes 1-4, Volume 3, medium-term expenditure framework MOH).

Health crises can be crippling for poor families – 46 percent of people who had recently lost their land had lost it as a result of debts related to health expenditures, according to an Oxfam Cambodia/MRD survey (2000). Informal fees, transport costs and opportunity costs increase the inaccessibility of health services for poor families. Poor quality and unreliability are further disincentives to utilize services.

In 1997, the Ministry of Health introduced user fees to reduce the practice of unofficial payments, generate revenue and improve the quality of services. Patients unable to pay for health care were supposed to be exempt from paying the fees. In reality, exemptions are not uniformly applied to people who are poor, and unofficial payments have not been eliminated, even in hospitals that are carefully monitored. Moreover, concerns have been raised that the user fee system distorts staff priorities

<sup>1</sup> **Sources:** CDHS 2000  
Census 1998  
MoH 2003: Annual Joint Health Sector Review

toward interventions that make money rather than what is most effective for patients, such as preventive care (Medecins Sans Frontier, 2000). Part of the problem with the existing system seems to be that eligibility for exemptions is decided by the facility staff, which perceives each exemption as a financial loss to the facility.

Cambodian women face significant reproductive health problems, are more likely to be malnourished, and are more likely to contract HIV than men. And there is growing evidence that women are subjected to all types of violence at high rates. Evidence suggests that men have greater access to health care than women and that more of the household budget is spent on health care for men than for women, in spite of the fact that women's health needs are greater as a result of their additional reproductive health care requirements. Women's needs remain bigger even though men are at greater risk for certain health problems such as malaria and injury. The links between the different health risks to men and women have much to do with gender roles prescribed to men and women in Cambodia and the secondary status of women in the household. This section explores these gender issues in health care. It is noted that gender aspects on HIV/AIDS and domestic violence are discussed in separate chapters, as they need to be viewed from a broader perspective than health.

### **5.1.1 Women are disadvantaged in accessing basic health services**

Access to basic health services is both a poverty and a gender issue in Cambodia. The draft Public Expenditure Review (PER) of the health sector found that men benefit more than women from health spending (World Bank, 2002b). In Cambodia, medical utilization rates and spending on medical matters are more or less equal for men and women. However, women's health care needs are greater than men's when reproductive care is considered. Hence, equal utilization and spending rates indicate that women are having less of their health needs met than men.

The participatory poverty assessment found a gender bias in the way poor communities deal with women's health issues. Several respondents said that a family would be more likely to send an ailing man to hospital than a woman, as women are needed to manage the household (ADB, 2001).

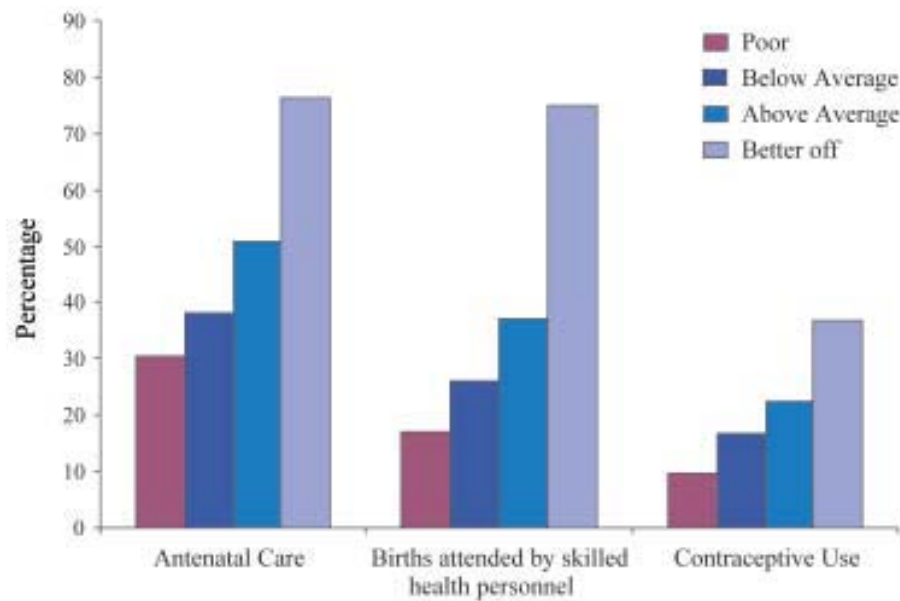
*We cannot afford to be without a woman in the household, even when a woman is seriously ill because women look after the house... Yet we really do not like taking anyone to a far away hospital because they are not much good anyway.* – A man from Rattanakiri province, cited in the participatory poverty assessment report (ADB, 2001)

### **5.1.2 Poor access to health services is closely linked to poverty and women's education**

In a Cambodia demographic and health survey (CDHS, 2000), more than 95 percent of women reported having one or more problems in accessing health care. The most common was the inability to pay for health care (88 percent of women surveyed). Costs included user fees and other indirect costs, such as transportation expenses. The distance to health facilities and transportation expenses were each identified by more than 40 percent of women surveyed as constraints. Among those who sought care, 80 percent had to use savings, borrow, or sell assets to pay the costs. A study in 2000 revealed that 46 percent of people who had recently lost their land did so as a result of debts related to health expenditures (Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Land Management Urban Planning and Construction, Oxfam and Cooperation Committee of Cambodia).

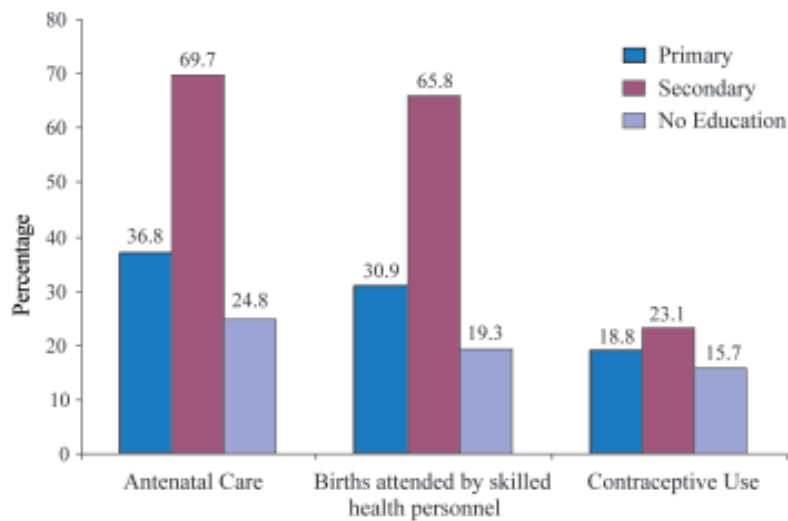
Poorer women are much less likely to access health services during pregnancy and delivery. Women from poor households are approximately four and a half times less likely to be attended by skilled health personnel during delivery, placing them at significantly higher risks for maternal death (Figure 5.1). Women from poor households consistently receive less care in both urban and rural settings (CDHS, 2000). Costs are the major barrier to seeking health care.

**Figure 5.1: Access to health care by women, by income**



**Source:** National Health Survey 1998

Women who have little education are less likely to receive health care, especially antenatal care and assistance from trained health personnel during the delivery of their babies (Figure 5.2). More women with no education reported costs as a barrier to seeking health care (CDHS, 2000). Approximately half of the surveyed women with primary education reported transport expenses as a problem, compared to a quarter of the women with secondary or more education.

**Figure 5.2: Access to health services, by education of women**

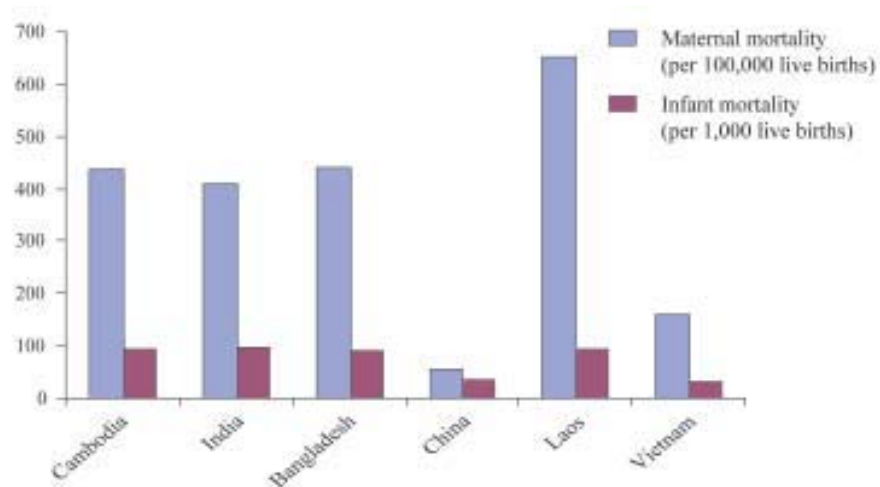
Source: CDHS 2000

### 5.1.3 Cambodia's maternal mortality is among the highest in the region

Comparison of maternal mortality in Cambodia and neighboring countries shows that Cambodian women face a relatively high risk of dying from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes (Figure 5.3). Approximately 2,000 Cambodian women die each year of pregnancy and childbirth-related causes (estimate based on the maternal mortality rate (MMR) and crude birth rate), including deaths due to abortion, hemorrhage and eclampsia. The majority of these deaths are preventable, and they have a significant impact on the family's income and well-being. In the seven years preceding the 2000 Cambodia demographic and health survey, one in five deaths among Cambodian women was due to pregnancy or childbirth-related causes. During the 1990s, the MMR in Cambodia declined. However, it is still very high at an estimated 437 per 100,000 live births. Maternal mortality is one of the most important indicators of women's health. It reflects access to and availability of health services, is correlated with the education of women, and provides a broad sense of the allocation of public and household resources for women's health care, especially preventive services. In Cambodia, high maternal mortality and morbidity is also indicative of the low level of attention given to and the low value placed on women's health.

Maternal mortality data are not available by province. However, women in remote and rural communities are at higher risk of maternal death as services in these areas are poorly established.

Cultural beliefs around pregnancy, childbirth, and infant and childcare sometimes emphasize the use of traditional practices, some of which may be harmful. Families perceive that pregnancy and childbirth are "normal", and therefore do not require special attention or care. Many women continue to work long hours during pregnancy and immediately after childbirth, often carrying heavy loads or engaging in heavy physical labor. Cultural beliefs also dissuade women from seeking antenatal care and support from skilled birth attendants during delivery. Many of these beliefs have as yet been insufficiently explored, and additional research may yield more information on reasons for preferring traditional care.

**Figure 5.3: Maternal mortality rates and infant mortality rates, regional comparison**

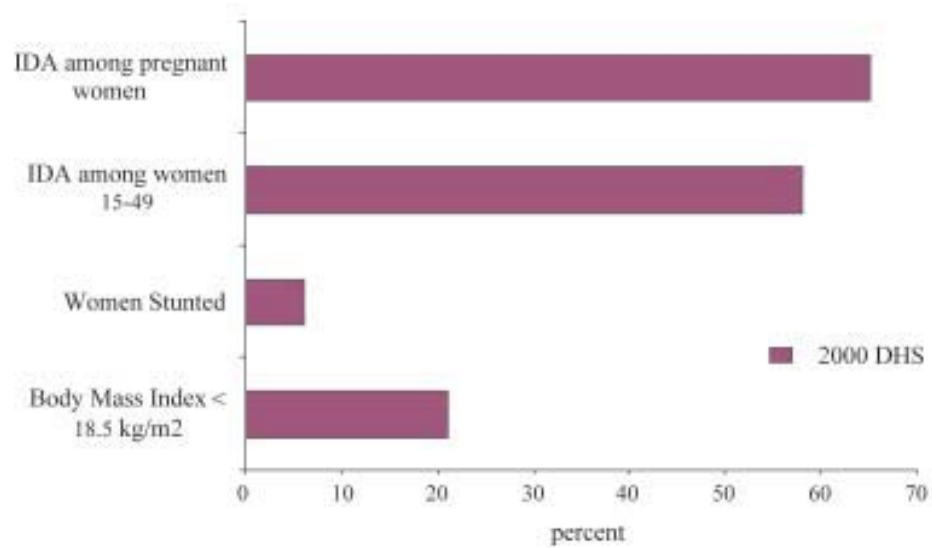
**Source:** World Bank 2002. Gender Issues in Planning and Expenditure

In addition to cultural beliefs, other factors such as the low quality of health care, the poor state of rural roads, lack of transport, and poor access to a clean water supply contribute to the high maternal mortality rates. In the following sections, more direct causes are reviewed: the poor nutritional status of women, especially during pregnancy and lactation; insufficient access to birth spacing and family planning information, supplies and services; and poor access to, and quality of, maternal health services.

#### 5.1.4 Women's nutritional status is poor

The 2000 CDHS analyzed women's nutritional status, looking at micronutrient intake and overall malnutrition (Figure 5.4). According to a measure of body mass and the percentage of women stunted and/or suffering from iron-deficiency anemia, a significant proportion of women are malnourished. A national micronutrient survey (Helen Keller International, 2001) revealed that 1-7 percent of pregnant and lactating women suffered from night blindness, the first clinical sign of vitamin A deficiency. A small study in Preah Vihear also showed that feeding practices may differ for girls and boys, leading to higher malnutrition among girls, although this result cannot be generalized for the whole country (Taylor, 2003). Poor nutrition for women and children is attributed to a mutually reinforcing interaction between poor food intake and disease (Cambodia Nutrition Investment Plan 2003-2007). Malnourishment increases the likelihood of disease, and the body's nutrients are further depleted during illness. Women have greater depletion of nutrients during pregnancy and childbirth, unless they compensate with nutrient-rich foods.

Underlying causes of malnourishment include household food insecurity (for several months a year, many households do not have enough rice to eat), no access to clean water and sanitation (food gets contaminated), and poor food intake during pregnancy and lactation. Data on household food consumption in Cambodia show that women are likely to eat less rice, eggs and fish than their husbands, especially in times of food shortage. This finding is consistent with patterns of household consumption in several other countries, where men are given more food than women due to women's lower status, and there are beliefs that men need more food or that men's work is harder so they deserve more food.

**Figure 5.4: Nutritional status of women for select indicators**

**Note:** IDA = iron deficiency anemia

**Source:** DHS 2000

In Cambodia, high fertility and the low status of women in the household contribute to the poor nutritional state of women.

### 5.1.5 Unmet demand for family planning and birth spacing remains high

Total fertility remains high, although it has been declining nationally in the past ten years. The national average of four children per woman does not reveal provincial variations. For example, the fertility rate decline in Phnom Penh has been rapid, but it may have increased in provinces such as Monduliri and Ratanakiri (Health Sector Strategic Plan, 2003-2007) (Figure 5.5). The 2000 CDHS shows that nationally about 8 percent of females aged 15-19 in the survey were already mothers or pregnant, whereas it was 20 percent in Monduliri and Ratanakiri.

Despite modest improvements in recent years, access to family planning services is still limited. Only 24 percent of women currently use any contraceptive methods, and only 19 percent use modern methods (CDHS, 2000). Unmet need for family planning is high, with 33 percent of women stating that they want to limit or space children. While there is very little discussion of contraception between spouses, contraception seems to be acceptable in principle. The health department's survey found that 68 percent of women stated that both they and their husbands approved of contraception; and 84 percent said they have sole or joint decision-making control over the use of contraception (Figure 5.6).





The poor availability of contraceptive options also means that many Cambodian women use traditional and dangerous methods to terminate an unplanned pregnancy. Approximately a third of abortions take place in private homes. Induced abortions by such methods are one of the major causes of maternal mortality in Cambodia (World Bank, 2002a).

Rumors and misperceptions about modern contraceptive methods persist among women, and those seeking contraception face various barriers, such as stigma because many people believe only prostitutes use contraceptives or because it implies lack of trust in a spouse. Some volunteer women's networks that provide community education (that often includes counseling, advice and contraceptive hand-outs) have been piloted but need to be assessed and expanded nationally.

### **5.1.6 Women do not receive care during pregnancy and deliver in unsafe conditions**

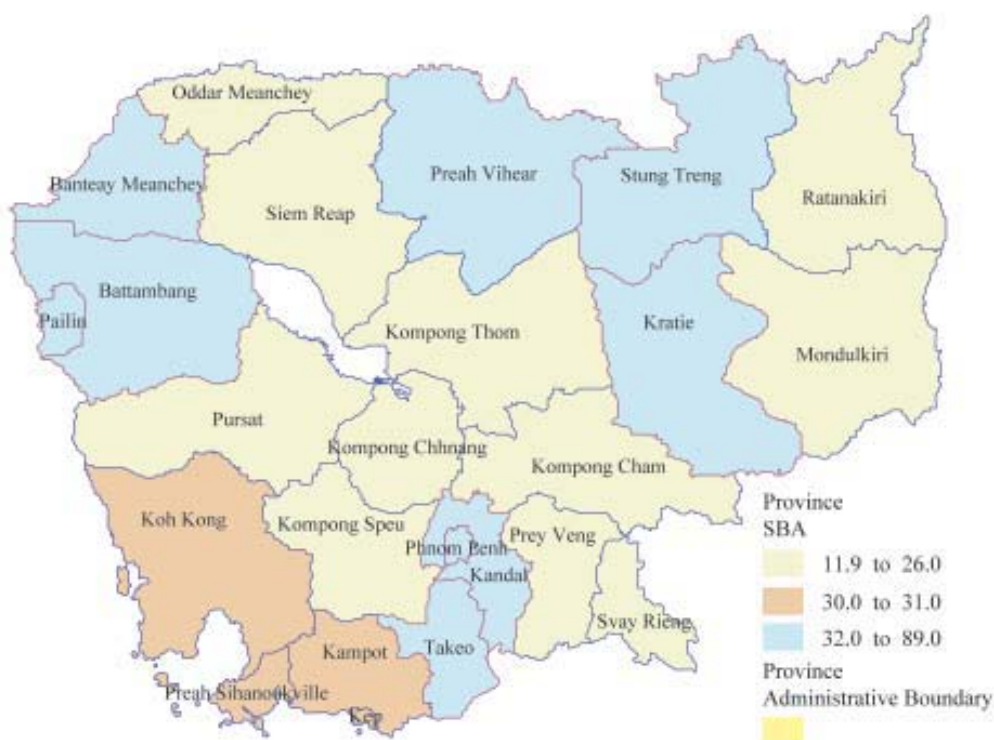
Antenatal care, safe delivery and postpartum care are important components of health services to save mothers' lives. The 2000 CDHS shows that only 38 percent of women received any antenatal care in the past five years. Access to antenatal care, especially in rural areas is poor. Rural women are half as likely to receive antenatal care as urban women. Only one in six women in remote provinces, such as Ratanakiri and Mondulakiri, are likely to receive antenatal care. Among women who had given birth in the five years before the health department's survey, 20 percent took iron tablets, 30 percent received two or more doses of tetanus toxoid and only two percent took anti-malarials.

Only 32 percent of women in the health department's survey received assistance from a skilled birth attendant during delivery, with considerable provincial variation (Figure 5.7). Around 85 percent of births in Cambodia take place at home, and many with the help of only a traditional birth attendant.

Approximately half of Cambodian women receive no postnatal care. The practice of postpartum roasting (women are wrapped in warm clothes after delivery and lie close to a fire or on a mat bed over warm coals) is frequent: 88 percent of women practice roasting (CDHS, 2000), two-thirds of them practiced it for two or three days. During this time, women are usually not allowed to take a bath, and the infant is fed sugar water or water.

### **5.1.7 Shortage of skilled birth personnel and poor distribution of health service providers**

The public health sector suffers from limited staff availability and poor skills. In its National Strategic Plan, 2003-2007, the Ministry of Health has included basic training to increase the number of midwives, and continuing education to strengthen the capacity and skills of midwives already trained. Despite this, over the past five years the number of nurses and midwives in the public health care system has declined by 8.4 percent. Training remains a challenge, and many trained midwives lack necessary skills.

**Figure 5.7: Deliveries attended by a skilled birth attendant**

Source: CDHS 2000

**Table 5.1: Ministry of Health workforce, 1996-2001**

	1996	1998	2000	2001	% Change
Medical doctor	1,247	1,711	1,878	2,055	65%
Medical assistant	1,458	1,699	1,608	1,425	-2%
Secondary nurse & midwife	5,685	6,214	6,039	6,126	8%
Primary nurse & midwife	5,945	5,475	5,149	4,979	-16%
Other	1,259	1,494	1,322	1,342	7%
Total health	15,594	16,593	15,996	15,927	2%
Other personnel	2,639	2,283	1,964	1,883	-29%
<b>Total MOH</b>	<b>18,233</b>	<b>18,876</b>	<b>17,960</b>	<b>17,810</b>	<b>-2%</b>

Source: Department of Human Resource Development, MOH

Newly graduated midwives are unlikely to accept positions in rural areas, especially remote and isolated areas, as the compensation is poor and there are security concerns. Supervision and outreach is irregular due to lack of funds and distance of villages to health centers.

### **5.1.8 Young men are more likely than young women to die or suffer from accidental injury**

There is very little data or analysis exploring the differing health issues and risks faced by men and women. In Cambodia, men die at a younger age than women: Life expectancy at birth is 58.3 years for women and 54.1 years for men (1999 Census). A man is more likely than a woman to die between the ages of 15 and 49: The mortality rate for men aged 15-49 is 4.8 deaths per 1,000, whereas for women it is 3.5 deaths per 1,000.

Men are twice as likely to be injured in an accident as women, suggesting that men are more likely to be involved in risky behavior. One percent of the male population was injured in an accident in the previous 12 months, compared to 0.5 percent of females (CDHS, 2000). The cause of accidental death and injury varied by sex:

- The most widespread cause of accidental death or injury was road accidents.
- For men, the second most common cause of accidental injury or death was falling from a tree or building.
- Men were four times more likely to be killed by landmines.
- Men were only slightly more likely to be killed or injured by gunshot.

### **5.1.9 Disability and drug abuse affect more men than women**

Almost twice as many men as women are physically impaired (in total, two percent of the population is physically impaired). The difference is mainly due to landmine injuries and gunshot accidents. Death and disability of men also has an impact on their families. The lack of an able-bodied adult male in a household marginalizes other members in terms of opportunity for income generation and participation in community life and decision making.

Data on substance abuse levels by sex are not available. However, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy cited an increased use of drugs, particularly by young men, as an issue requiring further attention.

## **5.2 Government Policies and Strategies**

The Ministry of Health prepared a sector-wide strategy for the 2003-2007 period, with emphasis on improving maternal and child health. Eight interlinked strategies have been identified in the areas of health service delivery, behavioral change, quality improvement, human resource development, health financing and institutional development. Emphasis has been placed on health equity – the right to health care and delivery of services to people who are poor. The Annual Health Sector Review 2003 tracked benchmarks and achievements, as well as areas of concern, for each of those core areas.

Starting in 1996, MOH sought to concentrate funding on two levels – health centers and district referral hospitals. The current strategy envisages strengthening the existing system so that all health centers can provide a minimum package of activities (MPA) while all district hospitals provide a complementary package of activities (CPA). Both the MPA and CPA have a strong focus on the health care needs of mothers and children. According to the 2002 budget, 40 percent of 48 provincial and district hospitals are currently able to provide the CPA, while 82 percent of 991 health centers are currently able to

provide the MPA. The minimum package of activities is focused on child health, nutrition, maternal health and communicable disease control (especially HIV transmission) and referral to hospitals for higher levels of care as needed.

In addition to the multi-purpose system of health centers and hospitals, a special program on maternal and child health exists (administered by the National Centre for Maternal and Child Health Care). This program provides oversight in four specific areas: nutrition, birth spacing, immunization and respiratory infections. The national program provides training to the staff of health centers and hospitals and coordinates the implementation of the work in the four areas. It does not provide any services directly or pay the salaries of health care providers working in the four oversight areas.

Health financing in Cambodia is dominated by private expenditures of roughly US\$24 per capita per year. Annual public health expenditures are low: Only 1 percent of the GDP is allocated for this. In 2001, the Government spent US\$98.2 million, of which external aid accounted for US\$65.3 million. There is no regular flow from central levels to provincial and operational district levels. Of the total allocation to the health sector, only 53 percent is channeled to provincial health departments. Salaries in the health sector are low. Between 1999 and 2001, salaries declined as a share of total health expenditure. In 2001 salaries accounted for less than 10 percent of spending, one of the lowest shares in the world. By comparison, in neighboring Vietnam, the share is 23 percent, while in Bangladesh the share is 45 percent (World Bank, 2001, (HEU and MAU, 2001)). Salaries remain low though user fees and a variety of bonuses (for outreach and other activities) boost take-home pay above this level. Nevertheless, there is little incentive to work and many staff do not fulfill their responsibilities. Also, as a result of low pay, many staff take advantage of the policy permitting them up to four years leave of absence from public service to pursue private sector activities. During this time, however, their positions often go unfilled.<sup>2</sup>

The National Poverty Reduction Strategy recognizes that “poverty prevention, as well as poverty alleviation, hinges crucially on a reform of the fee and exemption system and in providing access to good quality care for the poorest.” In order to reach the MDG targets, MoH will target service delivery to people who are poor, including reallocating resources in favor of poorer geographical areas. The NPRS describes activities to promote health service coverage and utilization in order to enhance accessibility and affordability of key essential services and provide information, improve participation, and empower the poor to make informed choices.

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<sup>2</sup> Personal communication, Juliet Fleischl, Technical Officer, World Health Organization, 2003.

# CHAPTER 6

## GENDER AND HIV/AIDS

<b>Cambodia at a glance .....</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>6.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>103</b>
6.1.1 New infections decreasing among men, leveling off among women ....	104
6.1.2 Prevalence among sex workers has decreased as condom use has..... increased .....	105
6.1.3 Prevalence is decreasing among women seeking antenatal care .....	106
6.1.4 The routes of HIV transmission are changing .....	108
6.1.5 Women in direct and indirect sex work are still at risk of HIV transmission .....	108
6.1.6 Married women are more at risk .....	109
6.1.7 Strong gender stereotypes influence male sexual behavior .....	109
6.1.8 Women shoulder the burden of care and support for people with AIDS..	109
6.1.9 Access to treatment is limited .....	109
<b>6.2 Government Policies and Strategies .....</b>	<b>110</b>

# GENDER AND HIV/AIDS

## Cambodia at a glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Value
National HIV prevalence (percent)	2.6
Number of people living with HIV or AIDS, 2002	157,483
Number of women living with HIV or AIDS, 2002	75,448

### 6.1 Status, trends and issues

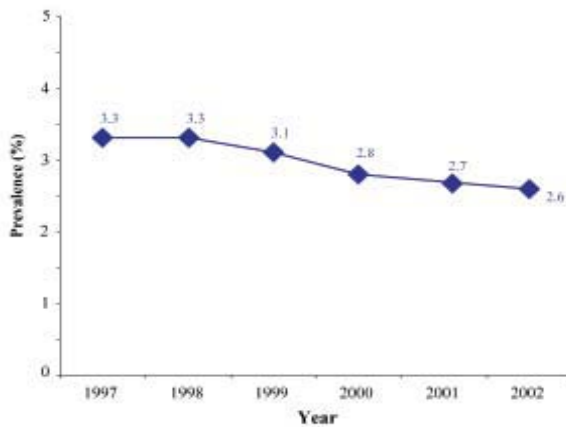
The first case of HIV infection in Cambodia was reported in 1991, and the rate of transmission rose rapidly through the decade. The estimated reporting rate of HIV in Cambodia is low, at 8 percent, indicating that the problem is likely to be much greater (Cambodia Human Development Report, 2001). Cambodia has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Southeast Asia, though the epidemic rate has decreased in the past few years. The virus is mostly spread through heterosexual contact.

Since 1997, the national prevalence rate among adults has shown a steady decline (Figure 6.1), from 3.3 percent to 2.6 percent (National AIDS Authority and the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs, 2002; Cambodia Human Development Report, 2001). The number of people living with HIV or AIDS declined from 210,000 in 1997 to 157,483 in 2002, of whom 82,037 are men and 75,448 are women (NCHADS, 2002). In particular, there has been enormous progress in curbing transmission of HIV between sex workers and clients. This has been achieved largely through programs on increasing condom awareness, access and quality, providing treatment for sexually transmitted infections, ensuring stakeholder involvement (for example brothel owners and police), and effective program management at brothels.

Notwithstanding the impressive decline in prevalence, attributed to both a decrease in new infections and due to AIDS-related deaths, the epidemic still poses a major threat to human development in Cambodia (NCHADS, 2002). There is still a possibility that the epidemic may evolve rapidly and unpredictably (UNGASS, 2003). At risk in particular are women in long-term stable relationships, within marriage or outside of it (UNGASS, 2003). A new prevention strategy is needed to continue the downward trend of the epidemic. Finally, significant numbers of people are living with HIV in Cambodia, and the need to expand access to care, support and treatment to men and women is urgent.

<sup>1</sup> **Source:** NCHADS 2002: Behaviour Sentinel Surveillance V : Trends from 1997-2001.

**Figure 6.1: Adult prevalence of HIV**

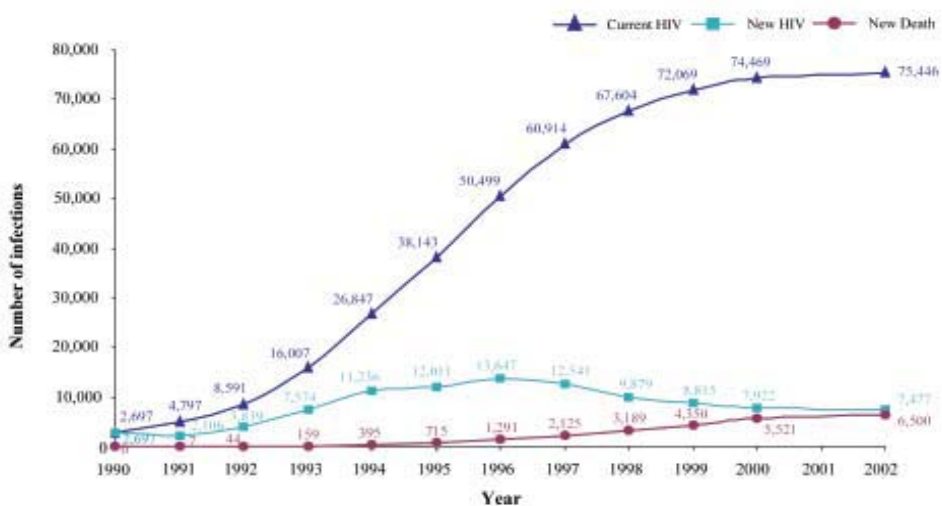


Source: NCHADS 2002

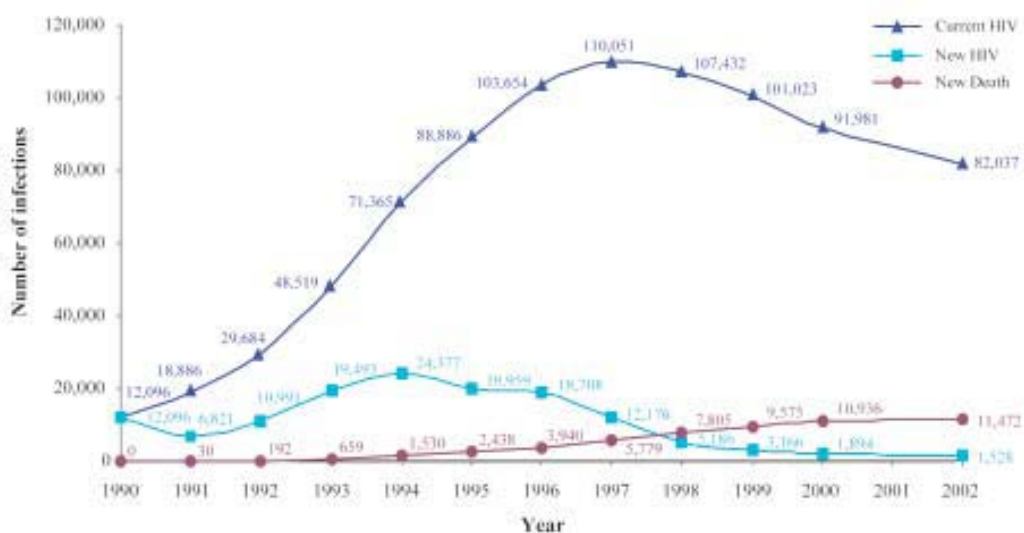
**6.1.1 New infections decreasing among men, leveling off among women**

The number of new HIV infections annually appears to be on the decline since 1994 among men, and since 1996, among women (HSS, 2002). However, the data on new infections are limited, as there is no surveillance among men who have sex with men – and a small study by Family Health International showed a 14 percent incidence rate of HIV infection in this population. The number of men currently living with HIV has been declining since 1997 and, while the number of women currently living with the virus continues to increase, it is beginning to level off (Figures 6.2 and 6.3). In Cambodia, high-risk groups include commercial sex workers and their clients. The HIV sentinel surveys have gathered data from groups such as the police, military and sex workers, as well as women seeking antenatal care services.

**Figure 6.2: HIV infections among women**



Source: HIV Sentinel Survey, 2002

**Figure 6.3: HIV infections among men**

Source: HIV Sentinel Survey, 2002

To explain the progression of the epidemic over the past ten years, the following paragraphs focus on direct sex workers and pregnant women receiving antenatal care.

### 6.1.2 Prevalence among sex workers has decreased as condom use has increased

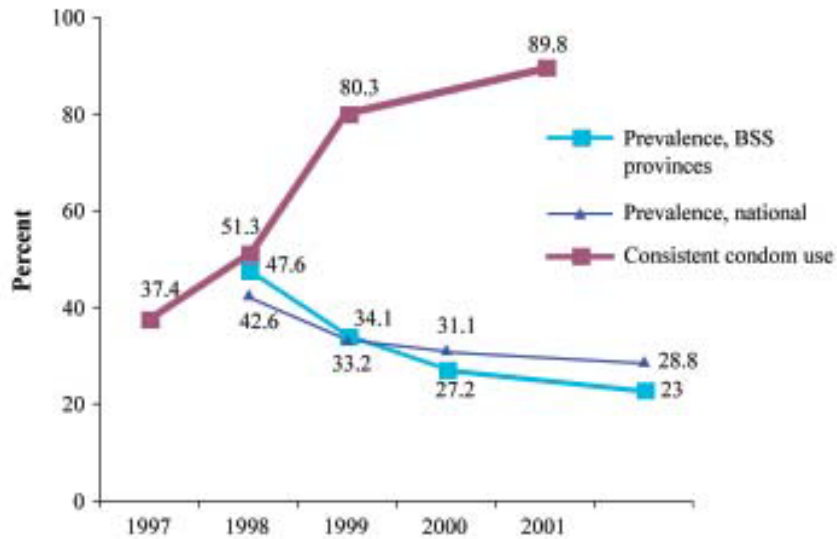
Transmission from sex workers to clients accounted for significant proportions of HIV infection in the 1990s. In 1998, slightly less than half of the commercial sex workers were living with HIV. Perhaps the most marked decline is the prevalence among sex workers, from 42.6 in 1998 to 28.8 in 2002. Some of this decline can definitely be attributed to deaths (CHDR, 2001). But condom use by customers or sex workers has increased consistently, reaching close to 90 percent in 2002 (NCHADS, 2002). In the past five years, condom use programs have aggressively promoted prophylactic acceptance in brothels, resulting in a sharp increase in reported use (Figure 6.4). There are still anecdotal reports, however, of clients beating sex workers who insist on using condoms.

There is little room for complacency as younger and newer sex workers enter the industry. Education on HIV prevention will need to continue. Further, there continues to be demand for non-brothel sex work, as fears of HIV are becoming more widespread. Condom use among indirect sex workers (young woman who work as “beer girls”, karaoke singers, etc. but are available for sexual services) is still only around 56 percent, indicating that much more needs to be done to increase condom use in these groups (NCHADS, 2002). Of greater concern are reports of violence and gang rape with direct and indirect sex workers, which obviously preclude condom use (PSI, 2002; GAD-C, 2003).

*I am a sex worker to feed my family. There is nothing else I can do, otherwise my family will suffer. I am suffering from AIDS and might die before my family can look after itself. This is a terrible situation to be in, but I can do nothing about it...I think this must be the lot of the poor.* A woman in her late 20s, cited in the participatory poverty assessment report (ADB, 2001)



**Figure 6.4: HIV prevalence and condom use among direct sex workers**

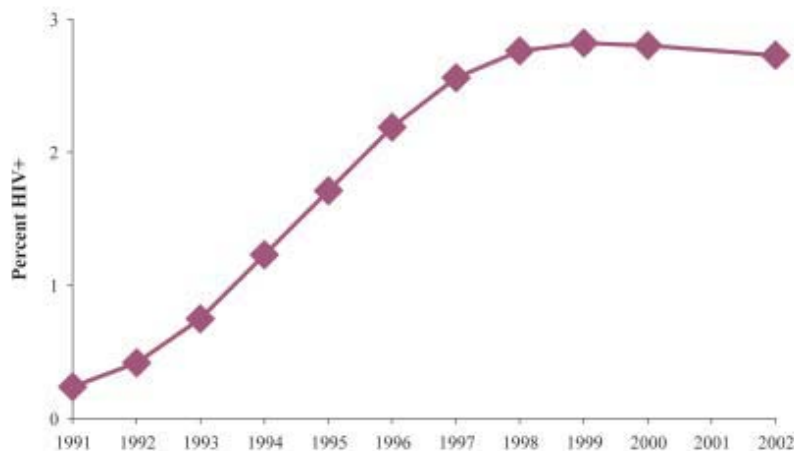


**Note:** BSS: Behavior Sentinel Survey  
**Source:** HIV Sentinel Survey, 2002

**6.1.3 Prevalence is decreasing among women seeking antenatal care**

Prevalence among pregnant females seeking antenatal care, especially in the 15-24 age group, is considered a suitable proxy for new infections and for the movement of the epidemic into the general population. The National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs (2002) estimates that approximately 45 percent of pregnant women receive antenatal care (compared with 38 percent estimated by CDHS, 2000). HIV prevalence among pregnant women receiving antenatal care appears to be leveling off, at about 2.6 percent (see Figure 6.5).

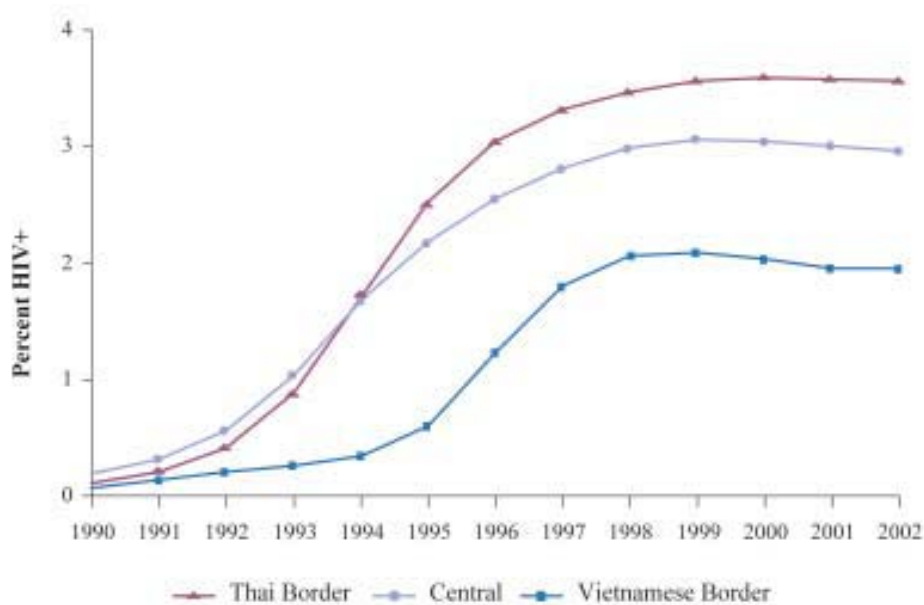
**Figure 6.5: HIV prevalence among women seeking antenatal care**



**Source:** NCHADS 2002

Prevalence among pregnant women varies by province, the highest located among provinces near the Thai border (Figure 6.6) where migrant workers and mobile populations gather. Fifty thousand Cambodians work in Thailand as construction workers, farmers or seafarers (PATH, cited in UNGASS, 2003). Prevalence is also high in Ratanakiri province, possibly due to the population's mobility.

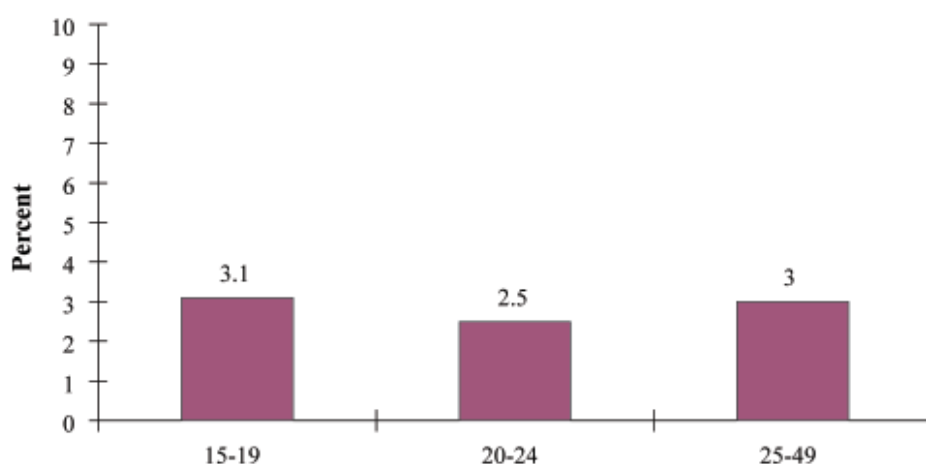
**Figure 6.6: Regional HIV prevalence among pregnant women seeking antenatal care**



*Source:* HIV sentinel survey 2002

Infection among pregnant women is highest in the 15-19 age group (Figure 6.7).

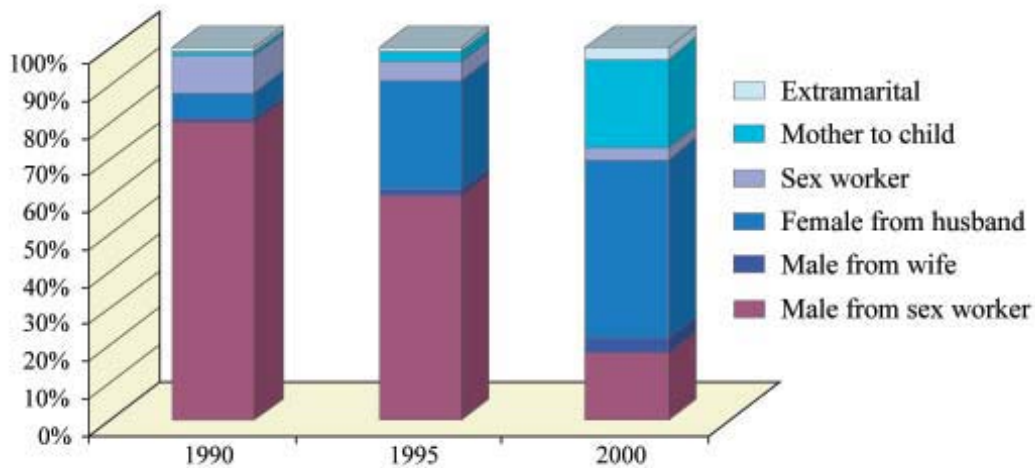
**Figure 6.7: HIV prevalence among pregnant women**



### 6.1.4 The routes of HIV transmission are changing

Although transmission of HIV along all routes is decreasing, mother to child, and husband to wife transmissions are not decreasing as fast as other transmissions and therefore women and children form an increasingly large percentage of those that are vulnerable.

Figure 6.8: Route of HIV transmission over time



Source: HIV Sentinel Survey, 2002

### 6.1.5 Women in direct and indirect sex work are still at risk of HIV transmission

Estimates of the number of women working as commercial sex workers varies, but may be up to 100,000 (UNDP 2001). Many of the women in sex work have been forced or tricked into that profession. While data is not available, there is some concern that the age of sex workers may be decreasing. The Behavior Sentinel Survey (BSS) 2000 indicated that a significant proportion of men among high-risk groups (military, police and motorcycle taxi drivers) have visited a sex worker at some point in their lives: 17-30 percent in the past year, and 8-20 percent in the past month.

Recent studies (PSI, 2002) also indicate a range of situations in which paid sexual work takes place, including long-term relationships with “sweethearts”. Sweetheart relationships are based on a degree of mutual trust and affection, with an assumption of “monogamy” on the part of the woman and the man, who is typically married to someone else (PSI, 2002).

These factors make it difficult for both direct and indirect sex workers to negotiate condom use during sex work. Social marketing campaigns appear to have contributed to increased condom use among clients and direct sex workers, but efforts need to continue to maintain and increase the levels of condom use among both clients and direct and indirect sex workers.

### **6.1.6 Married women are more at risk**

Married women are increasingly at risk of HIV transmission, and it is among this group that the epidemic could spread rapidly. Condom use among married women is only 1 percent. Condoms are associated with a lack of trust and infidelity and also with disease. Asking a husband to use a condom implies that infidelity is suspected. Discussion on contraception among married couples is low, with most women bringing it up once or twice in a year or not at all with spouses (CDHS, 2000). Condom promotion among married couples has been limited.

### **6.1.7 Strong gender stereotypes influence male sexual behavior**

Strong gender stereotypes about sexuality and sexual behavior underpin the evolving epidemic in Cambodia. Cambodian society frowns upon premarital sexual activity, and virginity among girls is considered essential before marriage. The society values attributes such as demureness, submissiveness and a lack of knowledge about sex among girls. Girls who are not virgins before marriage are considered to be “fallen women”, and are stigmatized. At the same time, some Cambodian men regard visiting sex workers and sex outside marriage as part of male bonding (GAD-C, 2003), acceptable when away from home and part of the attributes ascribed to masculinity. Peer pressure to visit sex workers is high in some groups of men. Current definitions of masculinity encourage men to nurture dominance, power and promiscuity, thus negotiating condom use within such a context is challenging for all women. Thus, to be effective, interventions will need to address definitions of masculinity and social norms of male sexual behavior.

### **6.1.8 Women shoulder the burden of care and support for people with AIDS**

The burden of caring for AIDS orphans usually falls on aunts and grandmothers, creating extra demands on their time and resources, especially in poor families. Married women who are infected and whose husbands succumb to AIDS end up taking care of them while simultaneously getting sicker themselves as the disease progresses in their own bodies. While data on girls discontinuing education specifically to take care of a family member with AIDS is not available, many studies indicate it is a common occurrence (Bredenburg et al, 2003; Velasco, 2002). Most Cambodians do not have access to antiretroviral therapy (ART) drugs or even to regular treatment of opportunistic infections. Treatment of these infections, such as pneumonia, diarrhea and toxoplasmosis, is thus available only at home for the majority of Cambodians. All of these infections require significant attention and constant care by women and girls in the household.

### **6.1.9 Access to treatment is limited**

Antiretroviral therapy drugs can be bought without a prescription at pharmacies and from wholesalers in Phnom Penh and a few other places. The cost of ART drugs has varied over the past few years. Currently, prices in pharmacies in Phnom Penh vary from US\$40 to \$50 per month, while a study undertaken in 2002 quotes prices of US\$60 per month in the market, and up to US\$600 for triple therapy (UNCT, 2002). These costs are prohibitive for the majority of Cambodians. Some NGOs are providing ART to people living with HIV/AIDS, requiring them to pay a small amount or for free, but the reach of these programs is very limited.

Even if ART is available in rural areas, under the current health system women will have difficulty accessing the treatment because of their generally poor access to health services. Further, many women do not get tested for HIV until quite late, which means that they will be unlikely to access appropriate care and support at an earlier stage of the illness (UNCT, 2002). Another concern is that intermittent use of ART or use of counterfeit drugs may increase drug resistance (UNCT, 2002). Women with lower levels of education who live in remote areas and who are poor are likely to be the most vulnerable.

The use of the prophylactic drug, nevirapine, has proved effective in reducing mother-to-child transmission. However, access to drugs and services by pregnant and post-partum women remains challenging.

## 6.2 Government Policies and Strategies

In 1991, the government established a National AIDS Program and provincial AIDS Committees were established in 1994. More recently, the government set up the National AIDS Authority (NAA) and the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs (NCHADS) to monitor and manage the national response to the epidemic. NAA is a multisectoral agency composed of representatives from all 26 line ministries. It coordinates all key activities of the line ministries, makes policy recommendations and ensures information exchange and dissemination. Many efforts have helped craft its broad-based, multi-sectoral approach. For example, the Ministries of Rural Development, of Education, Youth and Sports and of Defense have strategic plans on handling the HIV/AIDS issue. The Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs is also implementing HIV/AIDS activities, and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labor, Vocational Education and Youth has plans to start activities. NCHADS is responsible for the national sentinel surveillance systems and also develops plans and programs for HIV/AIDS prevention.

The strategic plan for HIV/AIDS and STI care and prevention for 2001-2005 provides approximately US\$6.5 million per year, almost exclusively channeled through the health sector, to support activities. A number of bilateral donors, multilateral agencies and NGOs have active programs in HIV/AIDS prevention and additional funding, especially for care and support, is awaited. A national plan to provide access to care and support and treatment along a continuum has been developed, has been developed, and includes free RT. However, while the numbers receiving the free treatment are increasing the progress is slow.

The health ministry plays a critical role in the provision of HIV/AIDS-related services. At the provincial level, health departments and AIDS committees set policy and coordinate and implement prevention activities.

In view of the high costs of chronic illness for the poor, especially women, the National Poverty Reduction Strategy identifies four priorities for poverty reduction: i) extending the continuum of care to the poorest groups to enable them to access appropriate and low-cost treatment; ii) targeting fishing communities and migrant workers with community prevention programs; iii) ensuring a significant political commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention and care; and iv) strengthening budget decentralization and provincial and district structures.

# CHAPTER 7

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

<b>Cambodia at a glance .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>7.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>113</b>
7.1.1. The acceptance of domestic violence .....	114
7.1.2 Women who experience abuse have no way out .....	114
7.1.3 Rape: an act of violence in an environment of impunity .....	115
7.1.4 Victims of trafficking absorb the blame .....	116
7.1.5 Poverty and social upheaval contribute to sex industry growth .....	117
7.1.6 Demand for commercial sex has increased .....	118
7.1.7 Changing nature of sex work .....	118
<b>7.2 Government Policies and Strategies .....</b>	<b>119</b>

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

## Cambodia at a glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Value
Percentage of women who suffer physical domestic abuse	23
Reported rapes in 12 provinces, 2002	270
Trafficked women and children	100,000
Commercial sex workers	100,000
Child sex workers (younger than 18) in Phnom Penh	5,000
Percentage of commercial sex workers who have been tricked or sold	47

### 7.1 Status, trends and issues

Perhaps one of the most serious and alarming manifestations of unequal power relations between men and women in Cambodia is the environment of impunity and tacit acceptance under which all types of violence against women takes place. Consultations for this gender assessment revealed that this is an issue of concern for both Government and civil society, and both sides welcomed efforts to address the causes and symptoms of violence. Among the causes, we include not just power relations, but also concepts of masculinity and femininity and ideals for behavior among men and women. These concepts, which are not yet well understood, also lead to violence against women. This chapter focuses on three forms of violence against women: domestic violence, rape and trafficking for sexual exploitation.

All forms of violence against women usually take place under a veil of silence and shame, due to fear of stigmatization and a strong sense of obligation to keep families' reputations intact. Victims of violence may be reluctant to speak out to avoid increased violence as revenge from the perpetrators and loss of face, not only for herself, but also for her family. The high costs of speaking out are not balanced by any significant benefits – few cases are brought to justice. Victims have little recourse but to accept their situation. This contributes to underreporting and makes data collection and initiating measures to address incidents very difficult.

Increases in reported violence do not necessarily imply an increase in incidence. When the issue first enters the public arena, increased reports are a positive indicator signaling that survivors of violence are beginning to recognize and challenge violent behavior. This is a critical first step in breaking the cycle of violence that feeds on silent acceptance. Most agencies working in this field believe that violence against women is pervasive and frequent in Cambodia. They argue that the lack of reliable statistics should not preclude the need for decisive and firm action to prevent violence against women and to provide support to survivors.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: CDHS 2000

Data provided by ADHOC and the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center

### **7.1.1. The acceptance of domestic violence**

A number of studies have reported widespread domestic violence. The 2000 Cambodia demographic and health survey (CDHS) found that one out of four (23 percent) of ever-married women and girls aged 15-49 reported having experienced physical violence since age 15, and one out of seven (15 percent) had experienced violence in the 12 months preceding the survey. There was little difference between urban and rural women or by employment status, although incidence is said to diminish among women with at least a secondary school education or residing with or near their parents (MoWVA 2003d).

One troubling aspect of domestic violence is the extent to which it is accepted by the victims. In situations of domestic abuse, while women feel comfortable about complaining about their husbands' to their friends, they feel less comfortable discussing it with local authorities (Giles, 2003). In Cambodian society, men and women believe, in certain contexts such as wives speaking disrespectfully to husbands, yelling at them in public, nagging, abusing children or not taking care of children, that husbands are justified in hitting their wives (Giles, 2003). Paradoxically, men and women may also say that hitting a wife to the extent that she is seriously injured is unacceptable (Giles, 2003).

Many women thus may accept, tolerate and even rationalize a certain level of abuse from their husbands: One out of three women (35 percent) agreed with at least one reason to justify a husband beating his wife. This tended to increase with age, duration of marriage and number of children and to decrease among urban higher-educated women (CDHS, 2000). These findings all attest to the pervasiveness and the widespread acceptance of the norms that give men the "right" to abuse their wives. In the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (2000), 31 percent of respondents said women are not justified in refusing their husband sex for any of the reasons listed in the questionnaire, which included recent childbirth and knowledge that the husband has HIV or AIDS. Rape within marriage is currently not a crime under Cambodian law (CDHS, 2000).

The participatory poverty assessment (ADB, 2001) also found that concern about domestic violence is increasing. Seventy-six percent of participants believed that "much more domestic violence occurs now than in the past". Participants did not link domestic violence and poverty because all believed that they were poorer in the past.

Domestic violence rarely occurs in isolation from other controlling behavior (CDHS, 2000). One in ten Cambodian women reported that their husbands display controlling behavior as jealousy, not trusting them with money or not allowing them to visit girlfriends (CDHS, 2000).

### **7.1.2 Women who experience abuse have no way out**

Abused women have limited options. Two out of five women responding to the 2000 Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey did not have anyone who could help them financially if they were to leave an abusive relationship. Less than one third (28 percent) owned at least one asset that they could sell without their husband's permission.

Alcohol, poverty, gambling, family squabbles, lack of education and political/social unrest are strongly associated with domestic violence. However, cultural and social beliefs about the subservient role and status of women and traditional attitudes also perpetuate violence (Project Against Domestic Violence, 1995). Although women who are physically abused by their spouses are at great risk of further violence and permanent injury, there is considerable societal pressure on women to remain with



abusive husbands. There are no cultural or easily accessible legal sanctions for spouse or child abuse. Under the current legal framework, domestic violence is covered by the criminal law, which involves complex and expensive legal procedures. Although women would like the domestic violence to end, few are prepared to take steps to have their husbands prosecuted. Those who do, find themselves pitted against a discriminatory judicial and legal system that sympathizes with men and prefers to focus on mediation, which is generally ineffective.

### 7.1.3 Rape: an act of violence in an environment of impunity

Victims of rape find it difficult to report to authorities or to seek help. Figures collected are therefore indicative of the problem and likely to be underestimated. The ADHOC Annual Human Rights Situation Report 2002, highlights violence against women and children. Incidents of reported rape in 12 provinces increased from 182 in 2001 to 270 in 2002. Compared with the previous year, the number of cases reported to the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC) increased two-fold to 227 between January 2001 and April 2002. Of the cases, 65 percent of victims were younger than 18, and 12 percent of the perpetrators were closely related by blood or marriage (Gender and Development Network and MoWVA, 2002. From a presentation entitled "Rape and the Law", It Phum, CWCC).

The Criminal Code classifies rape as a crime and indecent assault as a misdemeanor. According to Article 33: Anyone who rapes or attempts to rape another person of either sex is guilty of rape and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term of five to ten years. However, Article 33 does not recognize statutory rape (consensual sex with a minor). According to a report by the human rights NGO LICADHO (2001), Cambodia is unlikely to pass a law stating the legal age for consensual sex while some persons of influence continue to have sex with young girls and virgins.

Rape is a serious problem in Cambodia but one that rarely leads to the arrest of the perpetrator. Where proceedings are initiated, the accused is rarely found guilty. Of the 109 rape and indecent assault cases investigated between January 1999 and March 2000 by LICADHO, only 51 percent were resolved in some way (legally or otherwise) and closed. Of the cases closed, 41 percent were settled by payment of money. Of the unresolved and open cases, 26 percent of perpetrators had escaped, while the rest were still being investigated or are awaiting trial one to two years after the offences took place (O'Connell, 2001).

Many families do not wish to involve the authorities in rape cases due to the shame and stigma associated with rape. Victims of rape are considered to be "fallen women". Families prefer to protect their reputation and settle out of court by accepting a compensation payment. Many rape victims end up in commercial sex work (LICADHO, 2001).

Recent research (PSI, 2002; GADC, 2003) paints a disturbing picture of an increasing number of young men gang raping sex workers, garment workers or other "*srey kalip*" (modern women). Interviews revealed that a phenomenon known as *bank* – gang rape – is common among male university students. *Bank* involves taking a woman (often a commercial sex worker), sometimes by force, to a hotel where several men are waiting and proceed to rape her. The men justified *bank* by saying that the victim was "sexually available", in other words, because she was not a virgin, she was "fallen" and therefore it was acceptable. Gang rape of commercial sex workers is also widely recognized and even accepted among young people. Only 13 percent of men and women interviewed recognized *bank* as rape if the woman did not give permission to have sex with many men. The most common concern was that the perpetrators might contract a sexually transmitted disease –

but there was no expressed concern for the victim. Young people are exposed to a high level of violence and demonstrate an increasing level of acceptance of violent behavior (GAD-C, 2003; PSI, 2002).

Ongoing research conducted by the World Health Organization on adolescents indicates that management of sexual violence is a major issue for both adolescent boys and girls. While recognizing that sexual violence is wrong, adolescent boys still cited examples of girls being forced to have sex and rationalized these where the victim was a “sexually available” woman.

It is often stated that a “culture of impunity” has taken root in Cambodia, attributed in part to the recent history of violence and conflict and the long delay in taking action on the Khmer Rouge tribunals. Some NGOs state that the lack of State accountability for addressing human rights violations leaves the impression that perpetrators are above the law or that there is no real “rule of law.” The fact that LICADHO and ADHOC consider rape a human rights violation is very significant. As mainstream and well-respected human rights organizations, they are in a strong position to advocate for legal and judicial reforms to deal with this issue. On the whole, progress in addressing the issues of rape and domestic violence has been weak, despite strong advocacy from civil society organizations such as Project Against Domestic Violence, the Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center, LICADHO and ADHOC as well as MoWVA.

In order to prevent rape, gang rape, repeat rapes and rape of small children, the preferred preventive measure may be to restrict female mobility (in some cases, girls are not sent to school as their parents fear they may be raped). Other strategies such as fines or asking a man who has raped someone to then marry her do not address the root causes and may even legitimize the behavior. Finally, there is considerable ambivalence and confusion about rape and sexual violence; for example, oral sex with an underage girl is not regarded as rape.

#### **7.1.4 Victims of trafficking absorb the blame**

Trafficking in women and children, both cross-border and internal, is widespread: Cambodia is a sending, receiving and transit country for trafficking. The Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC) estimates that, at any given time, 100,000 women and children are being trafficked in Cambodia. This figure includes women trafficked within Cambodia and those from neighboring countries, particularly Vietnam. An estimated 20,000-30,000 Vietnamese women are currently in Cambodia as sex workers. ADHOC found an increase in reported cases of trafficking from 96 in 2001 to 158 in 2002.

The greatest part of human trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation takes place within the country, but a large number of Cambodian children are also trafficked into Thailand (MoP, 1998). According to CWCC, every month, 800 women and children are trafficked or smuggled into Thailand and approximately 400 are deported back each month by Thai authorities.

Trafficking has attracted a great deal of attention from international rights groups and donors over the past year. In August 2002, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, told the Cambodian parliament that traffickers are able to operate with impunity in the country because of inefficient law enforcement, compounded in some cases by corruption (BBC, 2002).

The United States Department of State 2002 report on trafficking by country noted that the number of countries listed as worst offenders (Tier III countries) had fallen to 14 from 23. However, Cambodia had moved from Tier II to Tier III, placing it among those countries that have “significant problems with regard to human trafficking, have not complied with minimum standards to combat these problems and are not making significant attempts to do so”. This annual report is an element of the US Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000. The Act requires in the third year of its implementation, which is 2003, that sanctions be imposed on nations remaining Tier III offenders. The sanctions limit non-humanitarian and non-trade-related assistance and prompt US opposition to the issuance of loans from international financial institutions. However, in June 2003 Cambodia was moved from Tier III back to Tier II, owing to the “significant effort the Government has shown in the area of prostitution” (US Department of State, 2003).

The legal system has been known to prosecute trafficked women on charges of illegal immigration into the country. In a recent case that received worldwide attention, a Cambodian court sentenced 14 Vietnamese women and young girls, arrested during a brothel raid in June 2002, to three months in prison and deportation upon release. Efforts by a number of NGOs, including the CWCC, enabled their release.

Trafficking is a complex issue facilitated on the supply side by poverty, corruption (“law enforcers” colluding with traffickers), weak law enforcement (both internally and internationally) and gender inequality that places women in a weak economic, legal and social position. The same combination of factors affects survivors of trafficking. Returning women are treated poorly and may experience difficulty in being accepted back into the community, or even into their own family. Thus, trafficking must be addressed on multiple fronts: economic, social, legal and judicial.

Trafficking is a development as well as a women’s human rights issue. It has largely been seen as a supply-side issue. Young women and girls are considered vulnerable to exploitation because of poverty and a lack of alternatives, which are seen as the major risk factors for trafficking. However, the demand for services of sex workers and women for other purposes, such as exploitative factory work, is also at the heart of the trafficking issue (UNIFEM, 2002). Those working at all stages in the marketing chain also have much to gain: Trafficking victims often change hands several times before they reach their final destination and considerable profits are made by intermediaries at each step of the way (ADB, 2002, cited in Corner, 2003). UNDP estimates that globally trafficking is worth US\$7 billion, second only to drugs and arms smuggling (UNDP, cited in Corner, 2003). Those that benefit the least from these transactions are the trafficked victims.

### ***7.1.5 Poverty and social upheaval contribute to sex industry growth***

Although estimates by different organizations on the number of women working in the sex industry vary widely, the UNDP Human Development Report 2001 states that there are up to 100,000 women working in the sex industry in the country. Other organizations argue that given the unreliability of the data, under-reporting due to invisibility and the fact that for some this would be a “secondary occupation”, as well as the increasing number of “indirect sex workers”, it is likely that the actual figures are significantly higher.

A 1998 study found that very few women sought sex work “voluntarily” (ADB, 1998) – 47 percent were sold against their will and an additional 34 percent left home because of extreme poverty and believed that they had no other way to earn money. Some were rape victims cast out by their communities as “spoiled” and who believed they had no other means of livelihood. A

significant number had been sold by their families or tricked by traffickers and often were held in debt bondage by brothel owners. With generally low levels of education, these young women have few, if any, employment alternatives. Conditions of poverty, under-developed legal infrastructure and weak law enforcement have contributed to the growth of the sex industry (PADV, 1995; UNICEF, 1996).

Prostitution is not illegal in Cambodia, although it is illegal to facilitate or profit by it. Ironically, those who are punished are those who are not technically breaking the law, while those who are involved in the illegal side manage to avoid sanctions, either through impunity or payoff.

### **7.1.6 Demand for commercial sex has increased**

There have always been sex workers in Cambodia, though not in the numbers that there are today.

The arrival of approximately 22,000 UN peacekeepers and a large number of expatriates in the early 1990s led to the growth and legitimization of the sex industry, which had existed in the past but had been hidden (Kumar, Baldwin and Benjamin, 2000). After the UN mission, the high levels of sex work continued in part because of the new demand from international sex tourists but also because rising incomes among Cambodian men increased local demand (Ledgerwood, 1994.)

A study carried out jointly by the Ministry of Tourism, the National Council for Children and World Vision in early 2000 found that 22 percent of foreign tourists came to Cambodia for sex. More than 70 percent of the children surveyed around Angkor and in nearby towns said that tourists had approached them for sex (Los Angeles Times, December 2000, cited in Sok et al., 2001).

This is related to a disturbing increase in the demand for younger girls, in part stemming from fear of HIV/AIDS, as well as the desire for virgins, for whom clients are prepared to pay a premium. Cambodia is also on the pedophile map as an “easy” place for men seeking young boys. The high market value of children in the sex industry makes them even more vulnerable to traffickers and other intermediaries, who have the most significant financial stake in the sex trade. In Phnom Penh alone, it is estimated that 30 percent (5,000) of sex workers are children younger than 18.

### **7.1.7 Changing nature of sex work**

In a cosmetic attempt to clean up the city in anticipation of a series of high-level regional meetings in Phnom Penh in 2002, police cracked down on brothel and karaoke operators. Combined with the latest closure of a well-known brothel area in Phnom Penh (Svay Pak), sex workers were forced onto the streets, making them more vulnerable to harassment and gang rape and making it harder to provide them with services and protection. Both the closure of brothels and an associated increase in violence against sex workers provoked a strong reaction from MoWVA, NGOs and the media (Phnom Penh Post, 2002b.)

Brothel closures, together with the fear of HIV/AIDS, have also resulted in an increase in indirect sex work, which includes women who work in beer gardens, massage parlors or karaoke bars. It is difficult to estimate the exact numbers of women involved in indirect sex work; however, the number of beer promoters and “beer girls” reporting their involvement in sex work has been increasing since 1997 (BSS, 2002).

## 7.2 Government Policies and Strategies

Ensure women's and girls' legal protection and community awareness of gender issues:

- Develop new laws, amend gender-biased laws and provide training to the judiciary and law enforcement agencies, enact domestic violence and anti-trafficking laws, amend the labor law and others, as well as regulations, to be gender responsive.
- Lower the incidence of domestic violence and human trafficking.
- Support public awareness campaigns to promote gender equity and equality through the use of all forms of media.

A draft law on domestic violence was accepted by the Council of Ministers in June 2002 and submitted to the National Assembly by the Prime Minister the following July. There have been several unsuccessful attempts to pass it through the parliament. In the course of the debates in the National Assembly, a number of regressive amendments were proposed that would have significantly decreased the effectiveness of the law. For example, the exclusion of marital rape and inclusion of recommendations that beating one's spouse or children for "educational or disciplinary purposes" should not be considered a criminal offence, that what happens in the house is "private" and that the law should support mediation, despite the fact that this has not proven an effective deterrent. Due to the recent elections, time for submission of the draft law ran out. MoWVA will consider whether to resubmit a new draft law to the newly elected government or identify other regulatory mechanisms to address the problem of domestic violence.

In preparation for the passing of the domestic violence law, MoWVA established an advisory board, which included three subgroups responsible for dissemination of information about the law; help and support for victims; and training for officials in charge under the law.

The advisory board developed a National Action Plan to Support the Implementation of the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims.

At the local level, commune councils are mandated to address cases of domestic violence. The draft law states that public authorities, including the commune councils, have the responsibility to intervene immediately in order to protect the victims by moving them or the perpetrators from the scene, offering assistance and informing victims about their rights.

Recent research from UNESCO calls into question the ability of local authorities to carry out this responsibility effectively. Women seeking divorce from abusive men are blocked by traditional methods of conciliation that force them to stay in abusive situations. This is compounded by the law that requires that at least two reconciliation sessions are attempted (and maybe more in practice) as well as traditional norms that enforce the concept of women's subservience to their husbands. The commune chief can ask the husband to sign a document promising to stop the abuse, but rarely is it effective and the beatings often continue. The commune and village chiefs try to avoid these cases reaching the courts, out of a desire to not lose face. They do not want to give the impression that they are not in control of their area (Luco, 2003).

The involvement of law enforcement and government officials in the human trafficking process is a major challenge and a cause of weak law enforcement.

According to a recent report by the US State Department:

*The Government of Cambodia has no comprehensive anti-trafficking law. Law enforcement against traffickers is possible under existing statutes. The Ministry of Interior runs a hotline to gain tips on cases of child sexual exploitation. The hotline has helped officials to identify and rescue victims at risk. According to available data, there were at least 75 convictions of sexual exploiters under the Law on the Suppression of the Kidnapping, Trafficking, and Exploitation of Human Beings. The number of convictions under the law specifically related to trafficking in persons is not available, but NGOs reported at least nine criminal convictions, with six defendants receiving sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years imprisonment. Victims were also awarded financial compensation. Prosecution of traffickers was hampered, however, because the judicial system is backlogged and burdened by corrupt practices, a subject of continuing concern. While authorities have arrested public officials on charges of corruption related to trafficking, no complete information was available on these efforts. The government needs to take aggressive steps to address the involvement of public officials and their families in trafficking.* (US State Department, 2003)

A draft law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, which contains heavier punishment if the victims of trafficking are younger than 15, is currently in the legislative process. The draft law does not meet the requirements of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which supplements the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) and which was signed by the Government in November 2001. MoWVA has made significant comments to amend the draft law.

A proposal by MoWVA attempts to address the issue of trafficking on multiple fronts (draft report on Strengthening Mechanisms and Strategies to Counter Trafficking). This includes; i) preventative measures, such as information and awareness training, advocacy, etc; ii) protection measures, such as legal and judicial reform, enforcement and cross-border cooperation; iii) recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration measures, such as direct services and community reintegration; and iv) cooperation and coordination with other line ministries, such as the Ministry of Interior and the police, as well as NGOs.

MoWVA plans to strengthen the enforcement of the trafficking law. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be entered into with Vietnam, similar to that with Thailand in 1999, that sets guidelines and procedures for agencies in both countries to work together to counter human trafficking of children and women. The MoU includes training of officials, including local police, immigration officers, border patrol police, public welfare officials, public prosecutors, judges, doctors and medical staff from the Ministry of Public Health, representatives from the relevant educational units, representatives from the Ministry of Interior and representatives from private organizations. MoWVA will educate law enforcement authorities, and both MoWVA and the Ministry of the Interior will initiate public awareness campaigns. The role of the police in detecting the criminal elements involved in the trafficking process, including their cross-border operations, will be strengthened.

In an effort to help empower, educate and support women in the sex industry, the Women's Network for Unity (WNU) was formed in June 2000 with the assistance of five NGOs, including Oxfam and Family Health International (Phnom Penh Post, AP and FHI, 2002). The network now consists of more than 3,000 women who participate in activities and training programs that include savings schemes, vocational training, condom negotiation skills and techniques to avoid violence. Formed in response to the intense stigmatization and marginalization that sex workers face, the WNU has been successful in giving them a voice. Providing this voice and the power base from which to express it have been effective ways to endow sex workers with the strength to combat the discrimination and violence they endure on a daily basis.

# CHAPTER 8

## WOMEN'S VOICE IN POLITICS AND DECISION MAKING

<b>Cambodia at a glance .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>8.1 Status, trends and issues .....</b>	<b>123</b>
8.1.1 Government structure and decentralization .....	123
8.1.2 Average representation of women in the Parliament is lower than average for the region .....	124
8.1.3 Women's participation in the National Assembly is rising slowly .....	125
8.1.4 Party lists and election results .....	126
8.1.5 Once elected, women are active participants in Parliament .....	128
8.1.6 Very few women fill politically appointed positions at national and provincial levels .....	128
8.1.7 Women are under-represented in the judiciary .....	129
8.1.8 Women experience discrimination in the civil service .....	130
8.1.9 Public administration reform: Opportunity or risk? .....	131
8.1.10 Women civil servants lack access to training .....	131
8.1.11 The first commune councils reflect disappointing participation .....	135
8.1.12 The greatest participation of women is at the village level .....	136
<b>8.2 Government policies and strategies .....</b>	<b>137</b>
8.2.1 Governance Action Plan .....	137
8.2.2 Cambodian Millennium Development Goals .....	138
8.2.2 Seila Gender Mainstreaming Strategy .....	139
<b>Annex: Women Candidates in Party Lists - National Assembly Election July 2003 ..</b>	<b>140</b>

# WOMEN'S VOICE IN POLITICS AND DECISION MAKING

## Cambodia at a glance<sup>1</sup>

Indicators	Percentage of women
Percentage of women among those elected to National Assembly in July 1998/2003	11.5/12.2 <sup>2</sup>
Chairs of National Assembly commissions	33
Senate	13
Chairs of Senate commissions	11
Supreme Court	0
Magistrates	8
Judges	7
Ministers	7.4
Secretaries of state	7
Under secretaries of state	8
Civil servants	31
Provincial governors	0
Deputy governors	1
District chiefs	0
Commune Councilors	8
Trainees in the Royal School of Administration (1993-2003)	7
Candidates on priority lists (CPP, SRP, FUNCINPEC – 6/2003)	11

## 8.1 Status, trends and issues

### 8.1.1 Government structure and decentralization

The current system of governance is relatively new to Cambodia. According to the 1993 Constitution, the rights of Cambodian citizens are protected through three separate branches of the public sector: the legislative, the executive and the judiciary.

*The Legislature.* The Constitution stipulates that the parliament, known as the National Assembly, holds primary legislative power. The National Assembly consists of at least 120 members (there were 123 in the 1999-2003 National Assembly) elected through national elections to serve five-year terms. In March 1999, the Constitution was amended to create a second legislative body, the Senate. The 61 members of the first Senate were appointed by the three main political parties and the King. The Constitutional amendment stipulates that after the current term, which ends 2004, the Senators should be elected. A new draft law on appointing Senators was still to be debated by the National Assembly, as of early 2004.

<sup>1</sup> **Sources:** Media Business Network 2003: Who's Who in Cambodia, Year 2003-2004 Business Handbook  
PMATU 2003: Data from Ministry of Interior and FUNCINPEC's websites provided by Poverty Monitoring and Analysis Technical Unit (PMATU), Ministry of Planning



*The Executive.* The executive branch of the government is in charge of overall execution of national policies and programs and is accountable to the National Assembly. There were 24 line ministries, and one Council of Ministers in the 1999-2003 government. Twenty-two ministries were led by a minister, two (National Defense, and Interior) had co-ministers, there was also a minister in charge of the office of the Council of Ministers. The ministers were supported by two Secretaries of State and five Under Secretaries of State, except in the Council of Ministers and Ministry of Interior which each had four Secretaries of State. The Ministry of Interior is in charge of administering provinces and municipalities. Provincial and municipal governors are appointed by the State. The Cabinet is nominated by the King on the recommendation of the President and Vice Presidents of the National Assembly.

*The judiciary* was explicitly established as an independent branch of government. Judges are nominated by the King on recommendation of the Supreme Council of the Magistracy, over which the King presides, and cannot be dismissed.

Cambodia has made progress in the past few years in developing a two-level system of elected government, particularly with respect to the democratically-elected Commune *Sangkat* Councils (hereafter referred to as commune councils) in February 2002. Provinces and municipalities have received less reform attention, which is a critical concern because they play a major role as the sub-national agents in delivering national priority services. The Government is beginning to work explicitly on the development of a deconcentration policy.

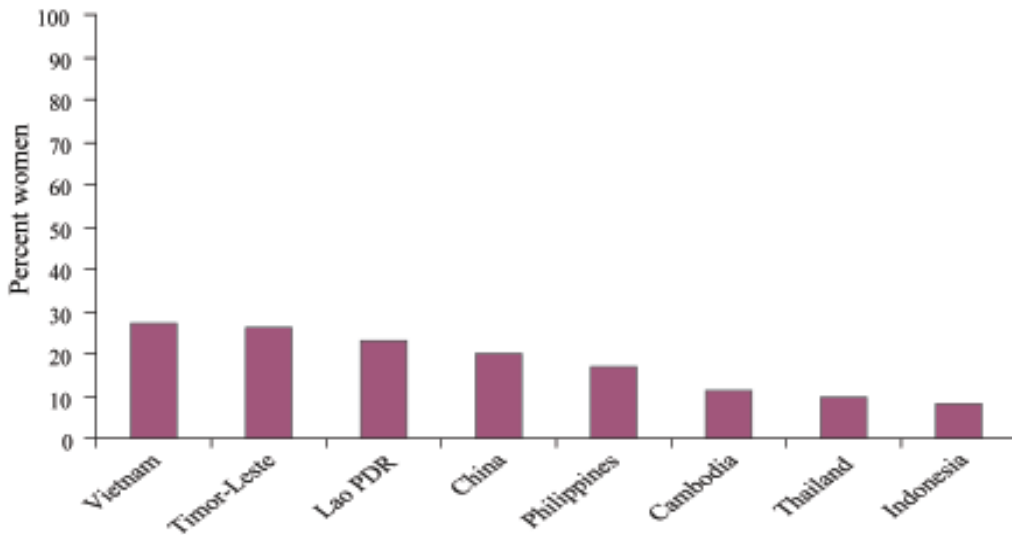
As part of the Government's decentralization programs, 1,621 democratically-elected Commune Councils were formed in February 2002. The role of the councils is still evolving, however, the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administration provides their basic legal framework and assigns to them both administrative and developmental responsibilities. Commune authorities are meant to articulate policies and programs on behalf of a local constituency and fund them with own resources, as well as to implement policies and programs defined and funded by higher-level authorities. Communes have their own financial resources, budgets and assets. They may raise own-source revenue from taxes, fees and service charges. They may receive a share of national revenue (revenue-sharing). They have rights to general-purpose fiscal transfers and they must be compensated for the cost of functions they perform on behalf of the central administration.

The responsibility for preparing and approving the Five Year Commune Development Plan (CDP) and three year rolling investment plans are respectively those of the elected Commune Chief and Commune Council.

This chapter looks at trends in the participation of women in the three separate branches and at the local level, and at attempts to identify some of the constraints to increasing women's voice through these channels. The following analysis looks at the different rates and constraints in elected, politically appointed, and civil service (merit-based promotion) positions.

### **8.1.2 Average representation of women in the Parliament is lower than average for the region**

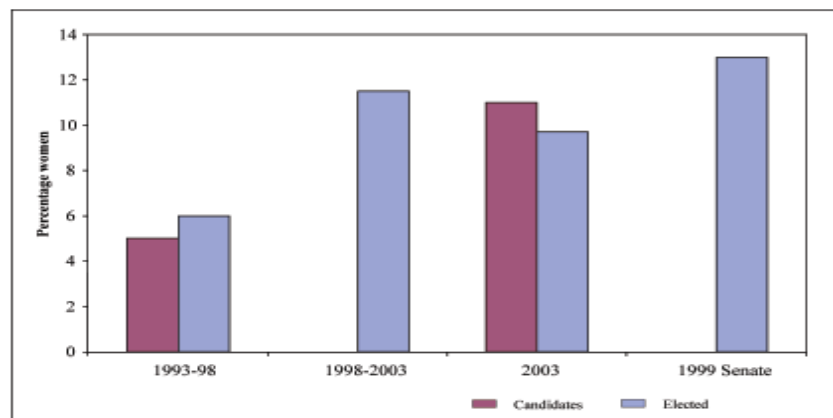
The rate of women's participation in National Parliaments in East Asian countries is shown in Figure 8.1. With the exception of Timor-Leste, the countries where the participation of women is highest are communist states. Women have not, in general, fared well in democratic elections.

**Figure 8.1: Percentage of women in national parliaments in the region, 2002**

**Source:** International Parliamentary Union database <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (29 FEB 04), Electoral Commission, Cambodia, 2003.

### 8.1.3 Women's participation in the National Assembly is rising slowly

Following the July 2003 elections in Cambodia, 12.2 percent of the elected candidates at the national level were women. This is higher than at anytime since the introduction of the current system in the early 1990s. However, the gains made in 2003 were only marginally higher than the 11.5 percent of members elected in 1998. In the 1993 elections, 5 percent of the candidates were women and only five women were elected to the 83-seat assembly.

**Figure 8.2: Women in national parliament since 1993**

**Note:** For the 1998 Election, no data is available on the percentage of women candidates. There is no column for candidates for the Senate because in 1999 the Senators were appointed.

**Source:** based on data from Media Business Network 2003, MoWVA, and PMATU 2003 (personal communication)

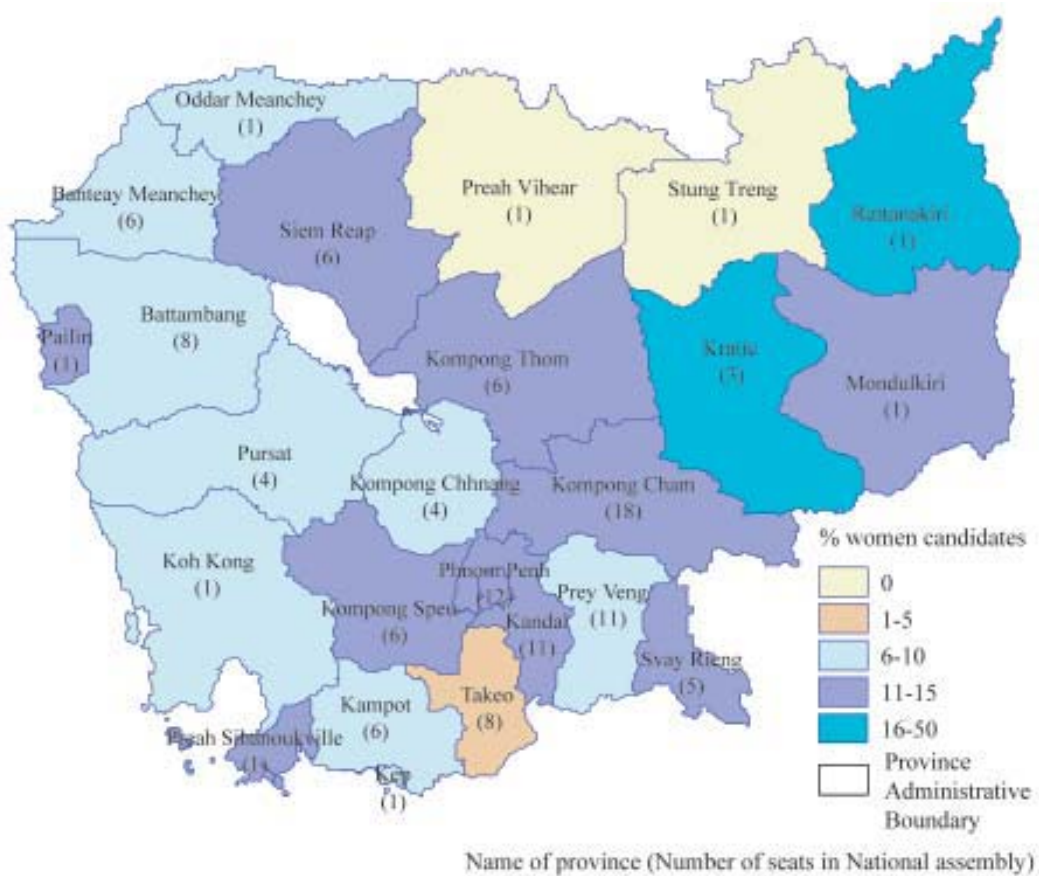
### 8.1.4 Party lists and election results

In June 2003, an analysis of the preliminary party lists for the three main political groups (Cambodian People's Party (CPP), Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), and Funcinpec) revealed that there were approximately 11 percent women in the priority lists and 11 percent women in the top five names on the three parties' lists. The provincial level analysis revealed that the provinces with the highest percentage of women candidates were Ratanakiri and Kratie. The lowest were Stung Treng and Preah Vihear, with no women candidates. The results of the election in July 2003 are as follows:

Total:	15 women out of 123 seats (12%)
CPP:	8 women out of 73 seats (11%)
Funcinpec:	4 women out of 26 seats (15%)
SRP:	3 women out of 24 seats (12.5%)

However, since as of 01 March 2004, the coalition government had yet to be formed and to agree on the composition of the Parliament, this figure does not necessarily represent the final rate of women in Parliament in the new administration.

**Figure 8.3: Percentage of women candidates for the July 2003 National Assembly elections, by province (CPP, SRP and Funcinpec)**

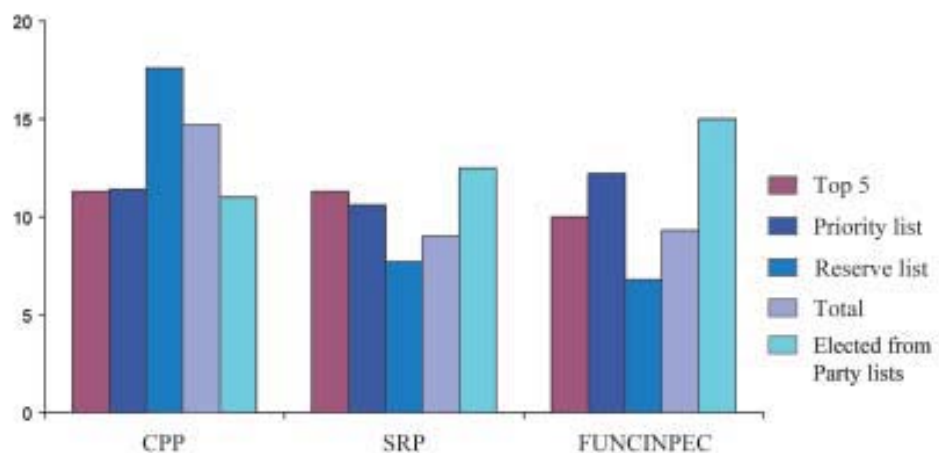


**Source:** based on data from the websites of the three main political parties (provided by PMATU 2003)

**Table 8.1: Women candidates in party lists and percentage of women candidates, by province**

Province	CPP	SRP	Func	All 3
Banteay Meanchey	8	17	0	8
Battambang	19	6	6	10
Kompong Cham	11	17	11	13
Kompong Chhnang	13	12	0	8
Kompong Speu	25	-	17	14
Kompong Thom	17	8	8	11
Kampot	25	-	0	8
Kandal	9	9	14	11
Koh Kong	25	-	0	8
Kratie	17	-	43	20
Mondulhiri	25	-	20	15
Phnom Penh	17	8	12	13
Preah Vihear	-	-	0	-
Prey Veng	5	14	9	9
Pursat	13	12	0	8
Rattanakiri	50	25	25	33
Siem Reap	17	8	8	11
Preah Sihanoukville	25	-	17	14
Stung Treng	-	-	0	-
Svay Rieng	30	10	0	13
Takeo	13	-	0	4
Kep	20	-	25	15
Pailin	-	25	20	15
Oddar Meanchey	-	20	0	7

*Source:* based on 2003 data from the websites of the three main political parties (provided by PMATU)

**Figure 8.4: Women candidates by position in party lists, June 2003**

*Note:* This figure shows where women rank on each of the three main political party candidate lists, and compares this to the total women elected. Those listed among the top five candidates and on priority lists for each party are more likely to get elected than lower-ranking candidates.

*Source:* based on 2003 data from the websites of the three main political parties (provided by PMATU)

### 8.1.5 Once elected, women are active participants in Parliament

The number of women in Parliament is just one indicator of women's political participation. Understanding where women sit on the parliamentary commissions is an indicator of women's inclusion in strategic policy debates. In the 1998-2003 government, each of the nine National Assembly commissions has one chair and eight members. Each of the nine Senate commissions has one chair and four members. Figure 8.5 shows where the women chairs and members were on the National Assembly and Senate commissions.

In the previous National Assembly 1993-97, the inclusion of women on these commissions was greater than their overall participation rate in Parliament. Three of the nine National Assembly committees and two of the nine Senate committees were chaired by women. Seventy percent of all National Assembly members and 71 percent of the women members belonged to one of the commissions. Only one of the total of eight women Senators was not a member of a special commission. However, as Table 8.2 illustrates, three of the nine National Assembly commissions and four of the nine Senate commissions did not have any women's representation.

**Table 8.2: Inclusion of women MPs on Parliament commissions, June 2003**

Commission	National Assembly (Commission includes 1 chair, 8 members)		Senate (Commission includes 1 chair, 4 members)	
	Chair	Members	Chair	Members
Protection of Human Rights and Reception of Complaints		2	1	1
Finance and Banking		0		1
Economy, Planning, Investment, Agriculture, Rural Development, Environment & Water Resources	1	0		0
Interior, National Defense, Investigation, Anti-Corruption		0		0
Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, Information and Media	1	0	1	1
Legislation		0		1
Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Tourism		1		0
Public Health, Social Work, Labor and Women's Affairs	1	3		2
Public Works, Transport, Communications, Post Office, Industry, Energy, Mines and Trades		1		0

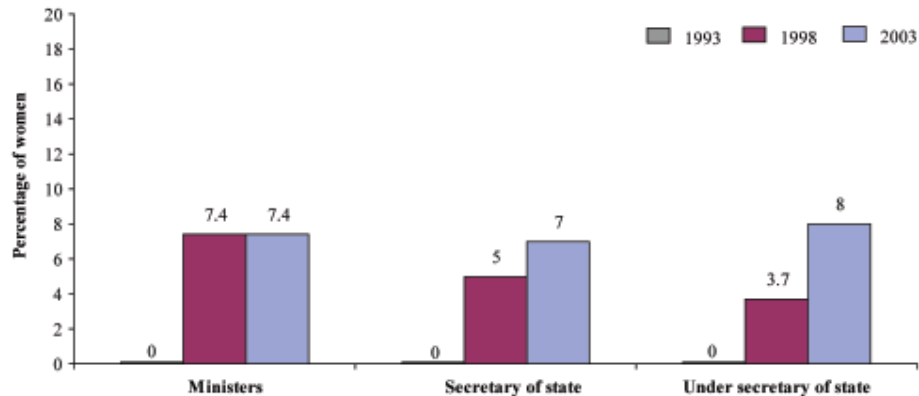
**Source:** Media Business Network 2003, *Who's Who in Cambodia, Year 2003-2004 Business Handbook*

### 8.1.6 Very few women fill politically appointed positions at national and provincial levels

The highest-level positions in the government – ministers, secretaries and under secretaries of state – are political appointments selected from the party lists after each election.

Following the 1993 national elections, there were no women ministers, secretaries of state or provincial governors. After the 1998 national elections, the situation improved somewhat with two women ministers among the 27 ministers (25 ministries) and three women secretaries of state, out of the total of 54. Thus, as Figure 8.5 shows, women's representation in national decision making was increasing (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 1999; Gorman, 1999).

**Figure 8.5: Women in politically appointed positions at the national level**



*Source:* based on 2003 data (provided by PMATU)

At the start of 2004, there were no women governors and only one woman deputy governor at the provincial level. These are appointed positions. Nor were there any women district heads, which are civil service positions. The Provincial Executive Committees (Ex Com) consist of governors, deputy governors and the directors of each provincial department (of each line ministry). The Provincial Department for Women's Affairs is always represented on the Ex Com, and thus there is at least one woman representative since a woman always heads that department. However, she is often the only woman representative on the Ex Com. The picture varies from province to province. For example, in Kampong Cham, three (18 percent) of the 16 Ex Com members are women, which is considered quite high by national standards. In Svay Rieng and Prey Veng provinces, there are no women at the level of department director or deputy director – with the exception of the Department for Women's Affairs (IFAD gender assessment, 2003).

### 8.1.7 Women are under-represented in the judiciary

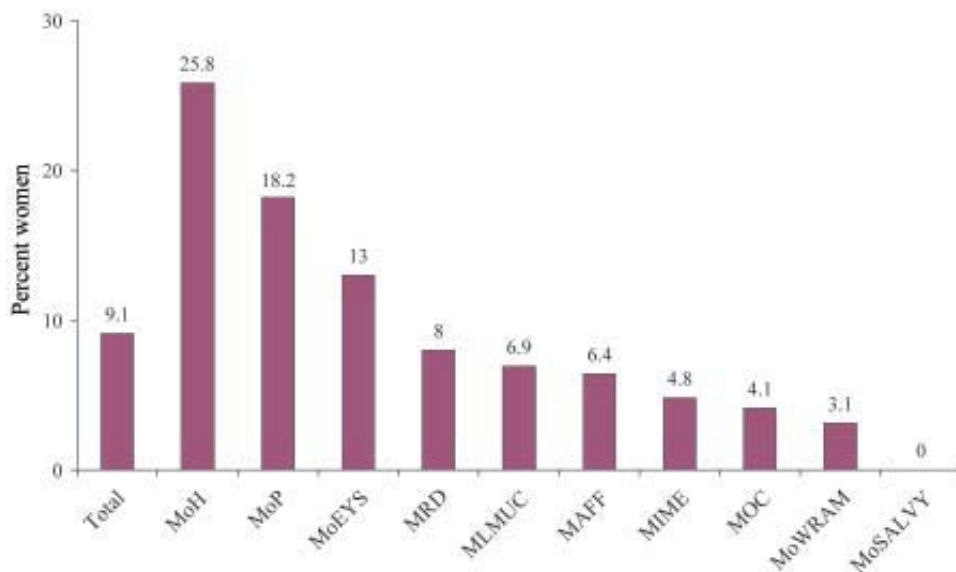
Of the 198 judges in Cambodia, 7 percent are women. Female representation in the judiciary remains extremely low as well. There are no women in the 15-member Supreme Court. A woman heads the Court of Appeals, but none of the eight judges and only one of the eight prosecutors is a woman. Of the 199 Magistrates, only eight are women. There is one woman judge in the Phnom Penh Court. The appointed director of the school for judges and prosecutors is a woman judge, who is very active in promoting women's participation in the judiciary. The recent completion of admission exams for the two-year Royal School for Judges and Prosecutors indicate that if no one drops out, by 2005, there will be six women among the newly-trained judges who, in total, will number 50 (ADB, 2003).

There is a strong need to increase the number of women in the judicial system, as well as ensuring that the system is more responsive to gender issues. Some donors are assisting programs to address these concerns: GTZ and UNDP, for example, are supporting the promotion of women to the judiciary through a fellowship that helps women students prepare for entry exams to the school for judges and prosecutors, and win subsequent fellowships to attend the two-year judge's training program. However, this preparation needs to be extended to include preparation for the entry interviews as well because it has been at the entry stage that potential female candidates performed poorly and lost the opportunity to win a scholarship.

### 8.1.8 Women experience discrimination in the civil service

Only 31 percent of civil servants are women (CAR, 2003). Data on the distribution of women at different levels of the civil service are not available; however, a rapid assessment of women in senior civil service positions in ten line ministries – MoH, MoP, MoEYS, MRD, MLMUC, MAFF, MIME, MoC, MoWRAM and MoSALVY – revealed 9 percent women at that level (Figure 8.6). The assessment deliberately did not include the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs as it is not representative of women's participation in key line ministries. Among the ministries surveyed, there were no women Directors General; and women filled only 11 percent of the deputy director general positions, 10 percent of the department director positions and 10 percent of the department deputy director positions.

**Figure 8.6: Rapid assessment of women in senior civil service positions, 2003**



Source: UNDP-UNIFEM May 2003

Female civil servants perceive themselves as treated unfairly or unequally compared to male civil servants. Several rounds of consultation with women civil servants revealed a strong sense that they were discriminated against in promotions, that men held negative perceptions about their capacity, that they lacked support from superiors and respect from subordinates, and that they were denied access to opportunities such as training and participation in provincial and overseas missions (see box *Consultations with Women Civil Servants*).

### 8.1.9 Public administration reform: Opportunity or risk?

The public administration system is in urgent need of reform (IFAPER, 2003). There has been little promotion of women in the civil service at this point. Some women civil servants have expressed concern that they may be laid off first if the civil service is downsized. On the other hand, careful analysis and guidelines could result in new opportunities for women as a result of the reform process.

One element of the proposed public administration reform process is the creation of priority mission groups (PMGs). These PMGs are carefully selected teams “to carry out results-based priority missions of change called for under the GAP, NPRS and SEDPII” (Beresford et al., 2003). These are clusters of civil servants retained to perform time-bound assignments who would be rewarded with enhanced pay, tentatively set at US\$2,400 per annum (Beresford et al., 2003). While the exact arrangements for the PMGs have yet to be determined, it is estimated that 1,000 civil servants from priority ministries will be selected to form the groups. Measures to promote women as candidates have yet to be discussed. Some ministries may openly discuss the importance of promoting women into decision-making positions, but this is not reflected in their strategic plans.

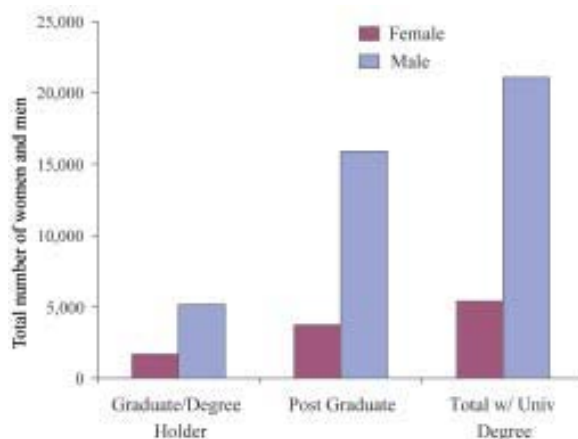
Given the already rather weak position of women in the public sector, there is concern that women will be negatively affected by the reform efforts unless specific measures are put in place to ensure gender-equity. For example, this could be some form of affirmative action in the PMG mechanism, including gender equity as the criteria for the process and outcomes of reforms undertaken by the PMGs.

### 8.1.10 Women civil servants lack access to training

A key constraint to women's participation in the civil service is the low rate of participation of girls and women in upper secondary and tertiary education. Currently only 0.4 percent of the total labor force has a university degree: 0.2 percent women and 0.7 percent men. Of all the university graduates, women make up 20 percent.

Given that the Secretariat of Public Functions requires a bachelor's degree for appointments to senior civil service positions, the gender gap in the civil service will to some extent be related to the gender gap in higher-level education (see Chapter 4 on gender disparities in education).

**Figure 8.7: Comparison of men to women with higher education in the labor force**



Source: LFS 2001



## Consultations with Women Civil Servants

A MoWVA consultation with women at senior levels of the civil service (May 2003) reflected the following concerns:

- Men occupy key decision-making positions. Men at senior levels do not want to address gender issues.
- Opportunities for promotion are not equitable between women and men due to the perception of women's weaker capacity, even when they have the same education levels as their male colleagues.
- Women feel discriminated against, lacking in support and responsibilities, particularly in access to training, provincial and overseas missions and other key opportunities.
- Women may be laid off first during retrenchment because of the qualification criteria.
- Men in the civil service receive additional benefits for an unemployed spouse but women do not.
- Women have a double burden of housework and professional work, which puts them at a disadvantage in terms of available time.

...and the following recommendations:

- Increase the number of women on the promotion assessment committees, as well as in other key positions (legislative, executive and judicial bodies).
- Establish a quota for recruiting and promoting women and equity in selection and promotion. CAR should strengthen the position of women in all ministries.
- Increase gender awareness among senior policy makers; include them in key gender meetings.
- Establish a budget for gender promotion and monitoring activities.
- Ensure transparency and equity in the administration reform process: CAR to review and revise all public function documents (including recruitment, salary and promotion policies) to correct gender bias.
- Establish a paternity leave policy for men and encourage men to share household responsibilities.
- Develop a national policy on gender mainstreaming from central to local levels.
- Approve laws related to gender (such as the domestic violence law) without delay. Ban pornography.
- Increase women's access to training and educational opportunities to close the "qualifications gap".

In October 2001, MoWVA organized group discussions with men and women civil servants and national consultants working on World Bank-financed projects. Several women in management positions talked openly and personally about the problems they faced. Comments included:

- Women are always perceived as having lower capacity than men.
- It is difficult to get support from the men working for them, without which it is inevitable that women will not achieve their goals.
- Women often lack senior management support and have to deal with male colleagues whom they were chosen over for the position and who thus resent their success.

- There is nowhere to turn to for support and women often feel like giving up – they are only stopped by the fact that if they did, it would fulfill negative expectations about women and make it more difficult for other women.
- Women's dual roles can be burdensome. The general feeling was that while women believed they were as capable as the men they worked with, the additional challenges they faced at work, on top of their roles in the home (which remain unchanged) often threatened to overwhelm them.
- World Bank task managers and task teams can provide the support and trust that women often lack from their own management.
- There was also discussion on the recruitment processes for consultants so that women had opportunities and also about World Bank-funded projects that offer opportunities to address the issues in a more integrated manner.

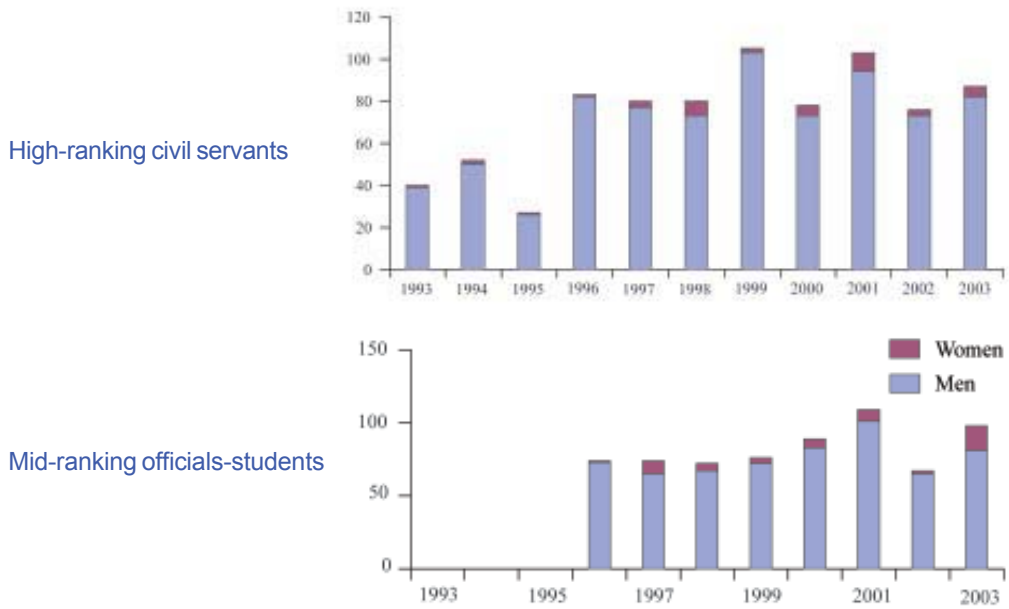
According to an NGO statement on gender to the Government, “Women with capacity are usually not allowed to use their skills but are only appointed to administrative or non-decision-making positions within their ministry.”

The Royal School of Administration (RSA) offers pre-service training to new recruits and enhances the management skills of middle- and high-ranking government officials by offering proficiency courses for officials working in the different ministries.

Since 1995, of the total of 295 trainees in the initial training, only 36, or 12 percent, have been women. Since the initial training course, there has been an increase in the percentage of women at higher levels, starting from 6 percent in 1997 and rising to 19 percent by 2002. However, at mid level, women's participation has fluctuated between 7 and 20 percent. The ongoing training course started with very few women at the mid-level (1.2 percent) in 1996 but by 2003 women's enrolment had increased to 17 percent. At higher-ranking levels, women comprised only 2.5 percent of trainees in 1993 and only 5 percent today, though they reached a high of 9 percent both in 1997 and 2001.

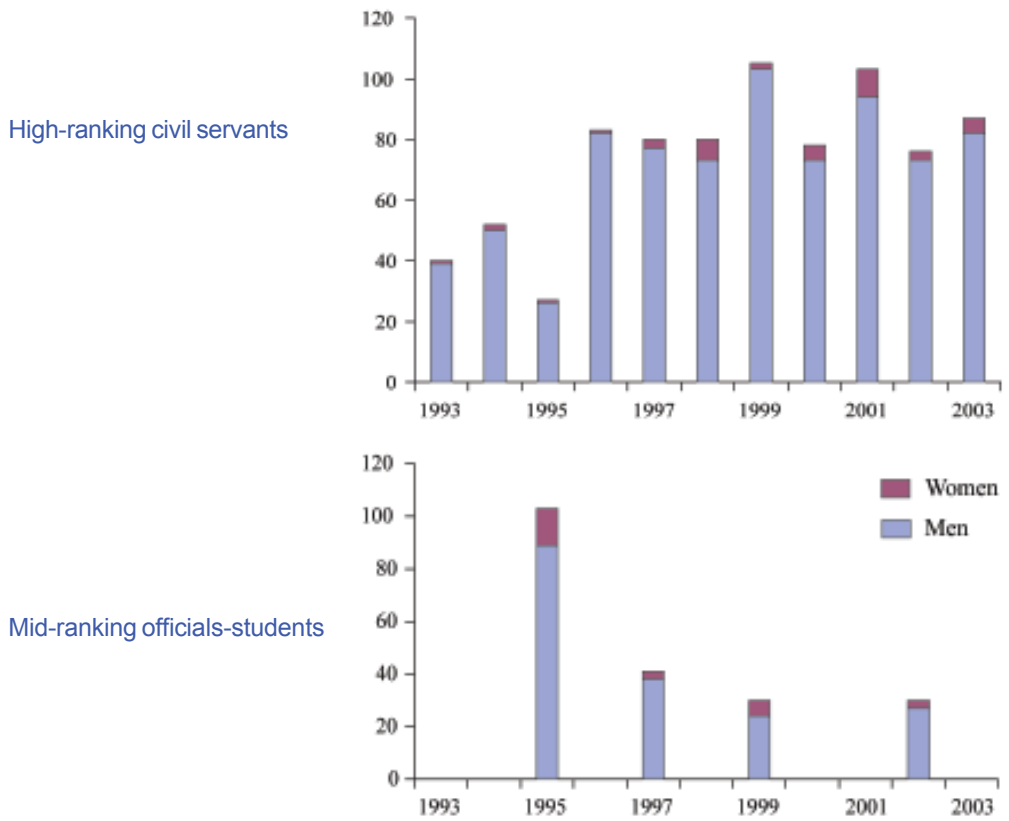
The absolute figures are very low: of the total of 1,470 trainees in the continuing training courses in the past eight years, only 86, or 6 percent, were women. This means that the pool of qualified women in the civil service is very small. The low rate of women in the RSA could be a bottleneck for increasing women's participation at higher levels of the civil service (RSA, 2003).

**Figures 8.8: Total number of women and men participating in initial training at the RSA**



Source: RSA 2003

**Figures 8.9: Total number of women and men participating in continuing training at the RSA**



Source: RSA 2003

### ***Decentralization could offer the opportunity to address gender at local levels***

There has been considerable analysis of the impact of decentralization on women's political participation and the incorporation of gender into local development planning. UNIFEM recently issued a paper on this topic looking at a number of countries in Southeast Asia, including Cambodia. The UNIFEM document stressed the need to ensure that the decentralization process not mirror the biases of national-level planning but specifically address the issue of women's poverty and human rights and ensure that poor women and men are equally empowered to contribute to and benefit from decentralization. In theory, this is possible for the following reasons:

- Moving the decision-making process closer to the population and communities should facilitate increased popular participation in decision making, including women's involvement;
- Due to their proximity to communities, representatives (and in particular women representatives) at the local level are closer to the issues that poor women face and thus in a better position to immediately identify and address them;
- Women may find it easier to enter into new democratic systems of governance in which men may not yet be entrenched; and
- The level of experience and qualifications for entry into local positions is lower than national positions, thus women are less disadvantaged in competition with men.

These potential benefits of decentralization were confirmed with women from VDCs and commune councils in Kampong Cham during consultations conducted by MoWVA and UNIFEM in June 2003. Women from both these bodies indicated that there is a strong role for the central government to play in terms of providing leadership, policy direction and technical support for gender equity in the context of decentralization (UNIFEM, 2003).

#### ***8.1.11 The first commune councils reflect disappointing participation***

In the lead-up to the commune elections in February 2002, MoWVA and Seila recommended a 30 percent quota for women. While each party leader publicly agreed on the principle that women deserve proper representation and greater women's political participation was needed, the Prime Minister disagreed with a proposal for a 30 percent quota system (Coffell et al., 2000).

Given the informal support for a female quota and the amount of NGO effort that went into training women candidates from all parties, the results of the commune elections were disappointing from a gender perspective. A total of 11,257 commune councilors were elected in 1,621 communes and *sangkats*. Of these, a total of 951 commune councilors (8.5 percent) are women. However, under the previous system of commune chiefs, there were only nine women out of 1,621 commune chiefs, or 0.5 percent women (UNIFEM, 2003). In comparison to this, the participation of women through the commune council elections represents some improvement compared to the prior arrangements.

In the 2002 Commune elections, women represented only 16 percent of candidates. According to consultations with women in commune councils in Kampong Cham, women tend to be placed lower down the party lists. The system for positioning candidates on the list is based on a "popularity poll" among party members in the community. The electoral procedures and proportional system do not offer men or women the opportunity to participate as independent candidates. Thus, while training women candidates is certainly a force for positive change for women's leadership capacity,

it is not sufficient. To increase the number of women in elected positions depends on the individual parties' commitment to increasing the number of women candidates and positioning them higher up the party lists

It is estimated that only approximately one-third of all communes have any women elected to the councils. In recognition of the limited number of women councilors and the need for increasing women's representation, Article 19 of Sub-Decree Number 22 on Decentralization states that every council must appoint a woman councilor to be in charge of women's and children's affairs. If the council does not have any elected female councilors, it should appoint a non-voting woman to undertake this task. The commune council must discuss with a representative from MoWVA and the Ministry of Interior's Department of Local Administration (DoLA) in order to select the assistant taking this responsibility. According to Article 22 of the same Sub-Decree, each village must appoint a chief, a deputy and an assistant – and one of the three must be a woman.

The Seila program has supported MoWVA to develop terms of reference, materials and support resources to enable these focal points to fulfil their roles. Their responsibilities include:

- Ensuring information flow between commune council, other provincial focal points and women and children constituents on all key issues affecting women and children;
- Raising awareness about gender, women's and children's rights in the commune;
- Encouraging school attendance;
- Ensuring the participation of women in expressing their ideas during the local development planning process and ensuring that during preparation and implementation of the local development plan, the priority needs of women as well as men will be considered; and
- Advocating for women to participate in decision making, have access to resources and receive benefits.

NGOs have been collaborating with MoWVA to carry out gender awareness and other forms of training for elected women and men to sensitize them on the importance of, and methods for, addressing the needs of women. It is not just the number of women elected that will make a difference in terms of policy and decision making, but also the gender responsiveness of both men and women decision makers.

Each commune council prepared a five-year commune development plan and a three-year rolling investment plan. The commune plans covered five areas of problem analysis and project descriptions: gender, social, economic, natural resources and the environment, and security. In effect, this means that in 2002-03 every commune council was exploring problems and identifying projects under the rubric of gender. It is too early to assess to what extent this policy has been translated into reality.

### ***8.1.12 The greatest participation of women is at the village level***

The CDP regulations also mandate the establishment of a Commune Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) including 2 representatives (a man and a woman) from each village. Where there were previously village development committees (VDC) the PBC members may be drawn from these.

Prior to the local government elections in 2002, many, but not all villages, had a village development committee (VDC). These were structurally designed to include three men and two women, and thus has a quota for both men (60 percent) and women (40 percent). Decentralization experiments

conducted under the Seila program up until 2001 achieved considerable success in increasing popular participation in governance and in particular increasing women's participation in decision making. Data from the 1998 Census shows that women's participation in the committees ranged from 31 percent in Siem Reap to 46 percent in Banteay Meanchey. Anecdotal evidence from the donor community and MoWVA suggests that over the first stage of the decentralization process, women's active participation in decision making increased and the choice and design of projects became increasingly responsive to the needs of female constituents. Before the Commune Council elections in 2002, the committees and commune development councils (including one man and one woman from each VDC) were project mechanisms and not formally elected local governments.

The large discrepancy between the rate of women's participation in the village development committees (40 percent) and commune councils (8.4 percent), is explained by the 40 percent quota for women in the committees introduced in the UNDP/CAREERE project. However, the 30 percent quota for the commune councils proposed by Seila and MoWVA officials was rejected.

During Kampong Cham focus group discussions (2-3 June 2003) with women from VDCs and commune councils, it emerged that women in the VDCs feel that they are well respected by their communities. Those participating in the focus group stated that villagers have more trust in women than men as women are considered to be honest and hard working. Women in the VDCs seemed to feel more empowered to articulate their concerns than women at higher levels such as the commune councils and the provincial level Excom. Several women in the VDCs stood for commune council election but few were elected because they were placed in low positions on the party lists.

## 8.2 Government policies and strategies

There are no strategies identified in the NPRS to promote women in decision making, even though it is recognized as an issue in the poverty diagnosis and as a target in the Policy Action Matrix: *"Promote participation of women in policy and decision-making positions: 20 percent increase in number of women decision makers and planners at all levels of government; percent increase in women in legislature and in senior positions in the public service."* This target has been refined by MoWVA. MoWVA is in the process of developing a Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan, for implementation across the civil service, beginning with the priority ministries (see Chapter 9).

### 8.2.1 Governance Action Plan

On paper, the Government is committed to promoting women into decision-making positions. Its Governance Action Plan (GAP), published in 2001, covers five cross-cutting areas: judicial and legal reform, public finance, civil service reform, anti-corruption and gender equity. Gender equity did not appear as a cross-cutting issue in the first draft of the GAP, which was distributed to all stakeholders. It was included in the second draft after the issue was raised in comments from donors and NGOs.

The GAP identifies four very broad gender-equity objectives: 1) to implement and coordinate programs to promote the rights of women and children; 2) to influence various reform programs so that they can fully take into account the particular needs of women and children; 3) to recognize women's contribution as full-fledged members of society; and 4) to invest in promoting the leadership role of women. The GAP identified two "expected" results: "reduced discrimination and improved

participation by women in the affairs of the State and in economic activities would further the country's socio-economic development" and "reducing birth-related mortality rates and illiteracy would directly contribute to alleviating poverty".

**Table 8.3: Status of progress in reaching GAP gender-equity benchmarks**

<i>Benchmarks</i>	<i>Progress to date since 2001</i>
Legal framework for trafficking in place	Anti Trafficking law is being amended National Council for Women established Established in 2001. Wrote and submitted Initial, Second and Third report to CEDAW and is disseminating information to provinces. Has limited resources
Law on domestic violence passed	Approved by Council of Ministers but stalled in National Assembly, to be started over again after July 2003 elections
Number of women in decision making in both public and private spheres increased	Representation remains minimal
Women's public participation increased	Indicators developed under CMDGs

Very little progress has been made in reaching the agreed benchmarks. Specifically, no progress has been made to increase the number of women in decision-making positions. The MoWVA consultations with senior civil servants concluded with recommendations that the CAR provide sex disaggregated statistics for all levels in the civil service and that the CAR's policies and procedures for recruitment and promotion be reviewed and revised from a gender perspective. Affirmative action including quotas were called for under the process of Public Administration Reform to increase gender equity. Apart from significant political commitment, this requires transparency and accountability as necessary but not sufficient conditions to increase women's participation and voice in decision-making.

## **8.2.2 Cambodian Millennium Development Goals**

MoWVA worked hard to engender the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals and to expand Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women. Targets and indicators for the political level as well as for civil servant positions were prepared. Both political will and a significant advocacy strategy on the part of MoWVA and women's organizations will be required to achieve the targets. At the political level parties will have to be convinced of the need to place women candidates in the first five positions on the party lists, with at least one woman in one of the first two positions. Only such commitment would ensure Cambodia meets the targets set. In the civil service meeting the targets will require a combination of affirmative action including quotas for both recruitment and promotion and will require an active commitment from the Council for Administrative Reform and follow-through with the Secretariat for Public Functions and the Royal School of Administration. Not only will more young women have to pass through the tertiary education system, they will also have to be coached to enable them to perform with confidence in interviews.

MoWVA has promoted awareness of gender issues in the civil service through gender awareness training programs conducted by a MoWVA Gender Training Team at both the central and provincial levels. It has also sponsored 57 senior women civil servants through a Women's Leadership Program conducted by a leading training organization. These participants have now formed an alumnae association and will meet regularly to continue upgrading their skills and to maintain their newly formed network.

### **8.2.3 Seila Gender Mainstreaming Strategy**

MoWVA has had a significant role, through the Seila program, in developing innovative and important gender-mainstreaming initiatives to be embedded in the emerging regulatory framework for commune councils. The Seila gender-mainstreaming strategy was prepared and implemented by MoWVA, which also focused attention on promoting awareness of gender issues to local government and community-based authorities.

The goal of the Seila Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2001-2005 is to ensure that "Government has sustained capacity to mainstream gender in poverty alleviation and governance and thereby promote equitable participation and empowerment of women in development" (MoWVA, 2000).

This will be achieved through the implementation of three components:

- Commitment and capacity building,
- Increased participation of women in local development, planning and governance and
- Enhanced capacity for gender monitoring, evaluation and database management.



## Annex: Women Candidates in Party Lists – National Assembly Election July 2003

Province	No. of	Main list		Top 5		Reserve list			Total			
	Seats	M	F	Seats	F	M	F	T	M	F	T	%F
<b>SRP</b>												
Banteay Meanchey	6	5	1	5	1	5	1	6	10	2	12	16.7
Battambang	8	8	-	5	-	7	1	8	15	1	16	6.3
K. Cham	18	15	3	5	1	15	3	18	30	6	36	16.7
K. Chhnang	4	4	-	4	-	3	1	4	7	1	8	12.5
K. Speu	6	6	-	5	-	6	-	6	12	-	12	-
K. Thom	6	6	-	5	-	5	1	6	11	1	12	8.3
Kampot	6	6	-	5	-	6	-	6	12	-	12	-
Kandal	11	9	2	5	2	11	-	11	20	2	22	9.1
Koh Kong	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Kratie	3	3	-	3	-	3	-	3	6	-	6	-
Monduliri	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Phnom Penh	12	10	2	5	1	12	-	12	22	2	24	8.3
Preah Vihear	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Prey Veng	11	9	2	5	1	10	1	11	19	3	22	13.6
Pursat	4	4	-	4	-	3	1	4	7	1	8	12.5
Rattanakiri	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	3	1	4	25
Siem Reap	6	5	1	5	1	6	-	6	11	1	12	8.3
Preah Sihanoukville	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Stung Treng	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Svay Rieng	5	5	-	5	-	4	1	5	9	1	10	10
Takeo	8	8	-	5	-	8	-	8	16	-	16	-
Kep	1	1	-	1	-	4	-	4	5	-	5	-
Pailin	1	-	1	1	1	3	-	3	3	1	4	25
Oddar Meanchey	1	-	1	1	1	4	-	4	4	1	5	20
Total SRP	123	110	13	80	9	132	11	143	242	24	266	
% Female			10.6%		11.3%		7.7%			9.0%		
% Females in top 5					69.2%							

Province	No. of	Main list		Top 5		Reserve list			Total			
	Seats	M	F	Seats	F	M	F	T	M	F	T	%F
<b>Funcinpec</b>												
Banteay Meanchey	6	5	-	5	-	6	-	6	11	-	11	-
Battambang	8	7	1	5	1	8	-	8	15	1	16	6.3
K. Cham	18	14	4	5	-	18	-	18	32	4	36	11.1
K. Chhnang	4	4	-	4	-	4	-	4	8	-	8	-
K. Speu	6	5	1	5	1	5	1	6	10	2	12	16.7
K. Thom	6	5	1	5	-	6	-	6	11	1	12	8.3
Kampot	6	6	-	5	-	6	-	6	12	-	12	-
Kandal	11	10	1	5	1	9	2	11	19	3	22	13.6
Koh Kong	1	1	-	1	-	4	-	4	5	-	5	-
Kratie	3	1	2	3	2	3	1	4	4	3	7	42.9
Monduliri	1	1	-	1	-	3	1	4	4	1	5	20
Phnom Penh	12	9	3	5	2	12	-	12	21	3	24	12.5
Preah Vihear	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Prey Veng	11	10	2	5	1	11	-	11	21	2	23	8.7
Pursat	4	4	-	4	-	4	-	4	8	-	8	-
Rattanakiri	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	3	1	4	25
Siem Reap	6	6	-	5	-	5	1	6	11	1	12	8.3
Preah Sihanoukville	1	1	-	1	-	4	1	5	5	1	6	16.7
Stung Treng	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Svay Rieng	5	5	-	5	-	5	-	5	10	-	10	-
Takeo	8	8	-	5	-	8	-	8	16	-	16	-
Kep	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	3	1	4	25
Pailin	1	1	-	1	-	3	1	4	4	1	5	20
Oddar Meanchey	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
<b>Total Funcinpec</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>270</b>	
<b>% Female</b>			<b>12.2%</b>		<b>10%</b>		<b>6.8%</b>			<b>9.3%</b>		
<b>% Females in top 5</b>					<b>53.3%</b>							

Province	No. of	Main list		Top 5		Reserve list			Total			
	Seats	M	F	Seats	F	M	F	T	M	F	T	%F
<b>CPP</b>												
Banteay Meanchey	6	6		5		5	1	6	11	1	12	8.3
Battambang	8	6	2	5	1	7	1	8	13	3	16	18.8
K. Cham	18	16	2	5		16	2	18	32	4	36	11.1
K. Chhnang	4	4	-	4	-	3	1	4	7	1	8	12.5
K. Speu	6	5	1	5	1	4	2	6	9	3	12	25
K. Thom	6	6	-	5	-	4	2	6	10	2	12	16.7
Kampot	6	5	1	5	1	4	2	6	9	3	12	25
Kandal	11	9	2	5	1	11	-	11	20	2	22	9.1
Koh Kong	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	3	1	4	25
Kratie	3	3	-	3	-	2	1	3	5	1	6	16.7
Mondulkiri	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	3	1	4	25
Phnom Penh	12	11	1	5		9	3	12	20	4	24	16.7
Preah Vihear	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Prey Veng	11	11		5		10	1	11	21	1	22	4.5
Pursat	4	4	-	4	-	3	1	4	7	1	8	12.5
Rattanakiri	1	1	-	1	-	1	2	3	2	2	4	50
Siem Reap	6	5	1	5	1	5	1	6	10	2	12	16.7
Preah Sihanoukville	1	1	-	1	-	2	1	3	3	1	4	25
Stung Treng	1	1	-	1	-	3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Svay Rieng	5	2	3	5	3	5		5	7	3	10	30
Takeo	8	7	1	5	1	7	1	8	14	2	16	12.5
Kep	1	1	-	1	-	3	1	4	4	1	5	20
Pailin	1	1		1		3	-	3	4	-	4	-
Oddar Meanchey	1	1		1		3	-	3	4	-	4	-
<b>Total CPP</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>265</b>	
<b>% Females</b>			<b>11.4%</b>		<b>11.3%</b>		<b>17.6%</b>			<b>14.7%</b>		
<b>% Females in top 5</b>					<b>64.3%</b>							

## Judges in Cambodia

N° Place	Total	Female	Male
1 Supreme Court	18	0	18
2 Appeals Court	19	2	17
3 Phnom Penh	19	1	18
4 Kandal	14	2	12
5 Kompong Cham	10	2	8
6 Battambang	9	1	8
7 Kompong Som	7	0	7
8 Siemreap	7	0	7
9 Banteay Mean Chey	9	0	9
10 Kampot	7	1	8
11 Kompong Speu	5	0	5
12 Takeo	5	0	5
13 Kompong Chhnang	6	0	6
14 Kompong Thom	8	1	7
15 Pursat	6	0	6
16 Prey Veng	7	1 (chief of the court)	6
17 Kratie	6	0	6
18 Svay Rieng	6	0	6
19 Stung Treng	4	0	4
20 Koh Kong	5	0	5
21 Ratanakiri	5	0	5
22 Mondulakiri	4	1 (deputy chief of the court)	3
23 Preah Vihear	3	0	3
24 Ministry of Justice	6	1	5
24 School of Magistracy	1	1 (director of the school)	0
25 Council of Ministers	1	0	1
26 Supreme Council of Magistracy	1	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>198</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>184</b>

**Note :** In 2005, an additional of 50 judges (six women) who will complete the two-year training of the Royal School for Judges and Prosecutors.

# CHAPTER 9

## GENDER MAINSTREAMING – INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

<b>9.1 Legal Framework</b> .....	<b>147</b>
<b>9.2 Institutional framework</b> .....	<b>147</b>
9.2.1 The Ministry of Women’s and Veterans’ Affairs .....	148
9.2.2 The Cambodian National Council for Women .....	151
9.2.3 The experience of line ministries in mainstreaming gender .....	152
9.2.4 Donors and NGOs .....	152
<b>9.3 National Policies and Strategic Planning Processes</b> .....	<b>153</b>
9.3.1 Socio-Economic Development Plan II (SEDPII) .....	153
9.3.2 National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) .....	154
9.3.3 The integrated framework – pro-poor trade strategy .....	155
9.3.4 Cambodian Millennium Development Goals .....	155
9.3.5 Budget planning and allocation .....	156
9.3.6 National statistical systems .....	156

# GENDER MAINSTREAMING - INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

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Social, legal and economic institutions shape women's and men's access to resources, their opportunities, their relative decision-making authority and how they benefit from development outcomes. Reforming institutions to establish equal rights and opportunities for women and men is a critical element in promoting gender equality. This chapter explores the legal framework and laws designed to address the gender disparities and the institutional arrangements of the government to address gender issues. It also looks at the extent to which gender issues are addressed in key government policies and strategies and then incorporated into the planning and budget allocation process.

## 9.1 Legal Framework

The Constitution of 1993 states that “every Khmer citizen shall be equal before the law, enjoying the same rights, freedom and fulfilling the same obligations regardless of race, color, sex, language, religious belief, political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth or other status” (Article 31.). It stipulates that men and women have equal rights before the law; enjoy equal participation in political, economic, social and cultural life; equality in marriage and in the family, employment and pay; and it contains measures against gender-based discrimination and exploitation. A number of laws promoting women's interests have been passed or proposed:

- The government modified a restrictive national law on abortion to make it available during the first 14 weeks of pregnancy without restriction as to reason. Previously, abortion had been permitted only to save a woman's life.
- The 1997 Labor Code recognizes gender-specific concerns and affords quite liberal rights to women in employment. The approach is protectionist, rather than rights-based. Under the law, women and children are protected from working in “dangerous” occupations (Article 177) and special protection is offered to women who work during pregnancy. Discrimination against women and the exploitation of women are to be abolished.
- The Marriage and Family Law allows divorce on grounds of “cruelty and beatings” (Article 39). This law recognizes that men and women bring property into a marriage, have joint properties and can take property out of the marriage if there is dissolution. The procedures, provisions and grounds regarding divorce are not sufficiently detailed in the legislation and result in general clauses, such as the “loss of parental powers” (Schimmel and Ruenger, 2001). A Family Code is currently being prepared with assistance from the government of Japan.
- The draft law on domestic violence was submitted to the National Assembly in July 2002. It had been partly debated, and several amendments proposed, before the end of the session for the July 2003 elections. It had not been passed into law before dissolution of Parliament. (Chapter 7).
- The Law on Suppression of the Kidnapping, Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings does not provide a comprehensive legal framework to address trafficking; however, a new law is being drafted on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Chapter 7).

- The new Land Law states that women and men have the right to co-sign land titles (Chapter 2).
- Cambodia is a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was ratified on 15 October 1992 without any reservation. The draft report, including the initial, Second and Third National CEDAW reports, was submitted to the Council of Ministers on 28 April 2003 and took seven months to be approved. Pursuant to Article 18 of the Convention, the report reviews actions undertaken by public authorities to give effect to the rights of women in Cambodia. It provides an overview of the current status of Cambodian women and the practical measures that have been taken since the Convention came into force. The report was submitted to the United Nations Committee on the Status of Women in January 2004.

The experience with the draft Law on Domestic Violence and the draft CEDAW report indicates that much more advocacy will be needed with the government and parliamentarians in order to establish a policy environment that protects women. There are still several existing laws that contain gender bias, such as the regulation governing remuneration of male civil servants with a dependent spouse, which does not apply equally to women in the civil service with a dependent spouse.

There also remains much to be done to establish a credible justice system, to enhance the integrity of the courts and to improve the enforcement of laws. Legal reform issues addressed in the GAP include holes and inconsistencies in legislation, weaknesses in dissemination of legislation, the lengthy law-making process, the excessive use of decrees and sub decrees, lack of capacity to draft laws and lack of participation of stakeholders in the legislative processes.

## 9.2 Institutional framework

### 9.2.1 *The Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs*

**Background:** The Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs (MoWVA) is the national machinery for promoting the role and status of women and veterans in Cambodia. Prior to the signing of the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, a network of women's associations extended down to the village level. After the general election of 1993, a new Secretariat of State for Women's Affairs assumed many of the functions of the women's associations at the national, provincial and district levels. The Secretariat was elevated to ministry status in 1996 and a minister was appointed. The ministerial mandate was expanded to include veterans' affairs in 1998 and the agency was renamed the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs in 1999.

**Role and mandate:** MoWVA is responsible for coordinating and monitoring the government's efforts to reduce gender disparities and to ensure that Cambodia achieves gender equality over time. The ministry's basic mandate is to influence and guide the line ministries and lower-level administration units to mainstream gender concerns. At the provincial and commune levels, this mandate is exercised through the Provincial Department of Women's and Veterans' Affairs (PDWVA) and the Women and Children Focal Points attached to the commune councils (see Chapter 8). Initially, the ministry used a direct project-implementation approach. Over the past few years, however, its role has evolved into that of a facilitator for mobilizing political and financial support for a broader range of services and policies that better address the specific needs of women and veterans. While its role in direct service provision is shrinking, MoWVA is moving toward becoming more of a catalyst for systemic change at the institutional and policy levels.

**Strategies and priorities:** In February 1999, MoWVA issued a five-year strategic plan, called *Neary Rattanak* (“Women are Precious Gems”). SEDP II 2001-2005, identified five priority areas: gender mainstreaming, health and nutrition, education and economic empowerment, legal protection, and women in decision making. The main focus is strengthening the capacity of and support for policy development in priority line ministries, which include MAFF, MRD, MoEYS and MoH, to process gender mainstreaming in their respective sectors. Staff from MoWVA regularly conduct gender-related training programs in line ministries and in provincial departments. MoWVA is represented in inter-ministerial committees and is particularly active on poverty reduction, education and health. It also took an active role in the development and engendering of the Cambodian MDGs and is monitoring the further development of the NPRS from a gender perspective. In August 2003, MoWVA was designated one of the six priority ministries under the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), the other ministries being MoEYS, MoH, MAFF, MRD and MoJ.

During the first MoWVA National Congress in April 2003, participants developed a new *Proposal for Future Directions for MoWVA* and presented it to the prime minister. The proposal is framed around five broad objectives:

1. **Poverty reduction for women and veterans:** Ensure that the NPRS reduces gender disparities, develop appropriate indicators and monitor the NPRS from a gender perspective.
2. **Integration of demobilized soldiers and their families**
3. **Promotion of good governance, decentralization and de-concentration:** Increase understanding about the causes of gender disparities and develop strategies to address them at all levels of government, the administration and civil society; develop and implement a Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan to enhance policies and programs. In the context of decentralization and de-concentration, ensure that budgets at each level are adequate to address gender disparities.
4. **Judicial reform:** Promote legal protection of women and children against all forms of exploitation. The domestic violence law should be passed and a new anti-trafficking law should be developed. The Marriage and Family Law, Labor Law and Penal and Civil Codes, which are now with the Ministry of Justice, are to be amended, which will require increasing cooperation between MoJ, MoWVA and MoSALVY. Strengthen law enforcement through collaboration with MoI, especially to protect victims, and prosecute and punish perpetrators of trafficking in women and girls.
5. **Implementation of administrative reform and promotion of women in decision making:** Advocate for the inclusion of women’s perspectives in policy making and implementation by increasing the number of women employed in the civil service at all levels; and build capacity of women in decision-making and leadership skills. Review administrative procedures for recruitment and promotion to identify gender discrimination.

These *Future Directions* have aligned MoWVA’s functions with national priorities and have the potential for rationalizing the current overlaps with the responsibilities of line ministries. *Neary Rattanak* will be revised and updated in the light of *Future Directions*, and some restructuring will be necessary in the ministry.

**Principle activities:** MoWVA engages in three types of activities: influencing national development strategies, influencing sectoral (line ministry) and donor strategies, and implementing projects.



*Influencing national development strategies:* MoWVA has actively participated in the two national strategy processes – the Socio-Economic Development Plan II (SEDPII) and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS). One of the secretaries of state for MoWVA is a member of the Council for Social Development (CSD), which is the coordinating body for the developing and monitoring of the NPRS. MoWVA's efforts have been most successful where the overall strategy development process incorporated opportunities for broad consultation and comment. MoWVA also has been active in the development of new laws, such as those on domestic violence and anti-trafficking. Through a new JICA project, MoWVA is moving into data collection, analysis, policy development, monitoring and evaluation.

*Influencing sectoral ministries:* MoWVA also works with key line ministries to integrate gender issues into their programs. While there is a reasonably high level of awareness within the government of the need to address gender issues, there is little capacity to put this into practice. In order to address this, MoWVA:

- Established a system of gender focal points in ten line ministries in 2000. These are at various levels, some as high as deputy general director, others at a lower level without decision-making authority or technical expertise. Many of the gender focal points do not have strong endorsement and support at the management level within their own ministries. They are expected to function as individuals without ministry-wide support or a budget. As a result, they lack the necessary leverage to effectively mainstream gender into their ministries policies and programs. The exceptions to this assessment are MoEYS and, more recently, MAFF. MoEYS is the only ministry to have a formal gender-mainstreaming strategy and a gender mainstreaming committee chaired at the level of secretary of state, and MAFF is developing one for agriculture.
- Established a working group for gender mainstreaming and a team that conducts training of civil servants and commune councilors, particularly in provinces under the Seila program.
- Conducted national training on *Engendering the Statistical System* in Cambodia for 16 ministries and agencies, in the context of identifying and filling data gaps for monitoring and reporting on the MDGs and the NPRS.
- Developed gender mainstreaming strategies on HIV/AIDS, as well as for the Seila program (Chapter 8).

Because there is still limited understanding in the line ministries of the concepts and processes of gender mainstreaming, MoWVA is developing a gender mainstreaming action plan for implementation across the civil service, starting with the priority ministries. This is intended ultimately to be a national action plan with implications not only for the government, but ultimately also for civil society, NGOs, religious institutions and the private sector.

*Influencing donor strategies:* MoWVA, usually at the senior management level, is frequently consulted by donors at the formulation stage of new project proposals. This provides an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of addressing gender issues. MoWVA advocated for gender to be included in the World Bank's Integrated Fiduciary Assessment and Public Expenditure Review resulting in a chapter devoted to gender. MoWVA has also been consulted about, and staff have been involved in, agricultural livelihood projects, such as AusAID's Agricultural Quality Improvement Project and the recently started International Fund for Agricultural Development project in two provinces.

*Implementing projects:* MoWVA provides direct services in legal literacy, advocacy on reproductive health, micro-credit, income generation, agriculture, vocational skills training and anti-trafficking issues. MoWVA continues to implement a variety of activities for several reasons: to test new

approaches to service delivery, with the intention that successful approaches will be scaled up later by the line ministries; to obtain funding for field visits, which are crucial for maintaining an understanding of the issues faced by poor men and women; and, as practical training for their largely inexperienced staff.

**Budget and donor support.** Although the budget of MoWVA is modest compared to other ministries, it has increased tenfold between 1999 and 2003, totaling 10 billion riel in 2002 (not including the department dealing with veterans' affairs). This gives MoWVA the opportunity to hire ten more qualified staff under the new mandate. New positions in statistics, planning, monitoring and evaluation, information management and law could substantially boost the human resource capacity.

As in many ministries, MoWVA's official budget only covers its overhead costs (staff salaries, office space, stationery, etc.). Donors support most of the program activities through projects of varying duration. MoWVA has been successful in attracting donor financing for a number of key program areas and receives approximately US\$2 million each year. Donor support comes at a price, however, as it takes staff time away from policy analysis, advocacy and administrative responsibilities.

In the face of the considerable challenges to mainstreaming gender, MoWVA struggles to balance project implementation and policy analysis and advocacy, all with very limited resources. Its principal challenge is to obtain consensus and agreement on gender-responsive policies from other ministries. MoWVA's capacity to provide technical advice to sector ministries to enable them to develop and implement gender-awareness programs is thinly stretched to meet many competing demands. While MoWVA leadership recognizes the strategic impact of focusing on integrating gender into the work of line ministries, the ministry continues to implement some projects in response to the volume of unmet needs at the sectoral level.

As the emphasis continues to shift from implementation toward advocacy and monitoring, MoWVA confronts new challenges and constraints. Its structure is still geared toward the delivery of services and very few staff have experience in gender analysis, strategy development or the provision of policy advice. The new mandate provides an important opportunity to restructure the ministry and align its structure with its future directions.

### **9.2.2 The Cambodian National Council for Women**

The Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW) was established in March 2000 by Royal Decree. As an inter-ministerial body of 14 ministries represented at the level of secretary of state, the council does not directly represent women's interest groups. It is tasked with advocacy, monitoring and evaluation of the laws, regulations and policies of the government from a gender perspective and monitoring compliance with international conventions. It is thus responsible for promotion of the status of women in Cambodia and for reporting to the United Nations on the CEDAW.

Given its senior level (and therefore mostly male) representation from 14 ministries, the CNCW has the potential to influence the development and implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs within these ministries. Unfortunately, MAFF and MoC, two ministries critical for expanding employment opportunities and reducing poverty, are not represented. The functions of MoWVA and CNCW overlap and need to be clarified by an amendment to the Royal Decree. At the same time, membership could be expanded to include MAFF and MOC.

### 9.2.3 *The experience of line ministries in mainstreaming gender*

The majority of line ministries conflate a focus on women as targets or beneficiaries with a gender perspective and gender is not well mainstreamed into sectoral policies and programs. Gender is widely regarded as an “issue” falling under the mandate of MoWVA rather than an approach to development that cuts across all sectors.

MoWVA is currently developing a strategy for national gender mainstreaming. While it is the role of MoWVA to elaborate broad strategies for gender mainstreaming, it is the responsibility of all ministries and agencies to establish the mechanisms to carry this forward. Ten ministries have appointed two gender focal points, including the ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Planning; Tourism; Justice; Health; Information; Social Affairs, Labor and Youth Rehabilitation; Education, Youth and Sport; and Interior. MoEYS, with the support of UNICEF, has established an institutional mechanism to address and monitor gender issues: a gender steering committee chaired by a secretary of state, which produced a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2002-2006 (see Chapter 4). MAFF is establishing a gender working group chaired by an under secretary of state (see Chapter 3).

There has been considerable progress in laying the foundations for gender mainstreaming through the establishment of institutional and policy frameworks, as just described. The reality of competing demands in a massive development and reform agenda often means that gender is not high on the list of priorities. It is more likely regarded as an issue that donors want government “to do” or as a responsibility only of MoWVA. Most line ministries have no gender analysis capacity; and the system of gender focal points will require considerable institutional leadership and support in order to influence policy and leverage change in the ministries.

Gender mainstreaming in ministries tends to be donor driven or implemented by MoWVA with little ownership of the executing ministry. In the absence of ministry leadership, donors working with a specific ministry use and promote different approaches in the individual projects that they support. For example in MAFF, AusAID, World Bank and ADB (ASDP) all mainstream gender into their projects. In the absence of any MAFF-wide gender mainstreaming framework, these efforts are necessarily donor driven, with little coordination among the donors. This creates the potential for duplication of effort and the introduction of different systems to support gender mainstreaming.

### 9.2.4 *Donors and NGOs*

International donors and NGOs play an important role in all aspects of development in Cambodia. The following is a very brief overview of the activities of some donors and NGOs that promote gender equality:

**Non-government organizations:** NGOs have played a valuable role as independent advocates and activists, providing training and undertaking cutting-edge research and advocacy. Currently, 24 Cambodian and 31 international NGOs focus specifically on women’s and gender issues. Many other NGOs have also organized gender training, sent their staff to gender training or targeted women as beneficiaries. Human rights organizations have included women’s rights in their advocacy programs and cooperated with women’s organizations on issues such as domestic violence and human trafficking for sexual exploitation.

NGO gender networks, the Gender and Development Network (GADNET) and the NGO Forum Gender Working Group, coordinate NGOs’ (and to a limited degree donors’) efforts to mainstream a gender perspective. MoWVA hosts an open forum to coordinate activities between the ministry and NGOs, mainly around International Women’s Day.

The Cambodian Committee for Women (CAMBOW), formed on 8 May 2000, has a membership of 33 Cambodian NGOs that focus primarily on advancing the situation of women and combating trafficking of women and children. The NGO committee on CEDAW, chaired by the NGO Women for Prosperity, monitors and reports on the application of CEDAW. The Cambodia Men's Network also was initiated to work on gender issues.

Women for Prosperity has contributed significantly to the advancement of women in leadership through its training programs for women candidates in commune and national elections and for women commune councilors after the elections. The training focuses on leadership and decision-making skills, as well as raising awareness about the gender implications of laws and policies in areas such as land, marriage and family law, violence, etc.

The “NGO Statement to the Consultative Group Meeting on Cambodia” in 2001 and 2002 prioritized the following areas for addressing gender issues: violence against women (human trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced prostitution and domestic violence), health and education (reproductive health and education) and labor and employment (internal migration, the growth of the female manufacturing labor force and the informal economy).

**International donors:** In varying degrees, most international donors have a policy to mainstream gender into their work, but implementation is patchy. As Table 2.1 indicates, some donors support MoWVA to address specific issues, such as the trafficking of women and children, while others promote gender mainstreaming in their projects within sector ministries – such as designing an agriculture project that equally addresses the roles and needs of, and constraints facing, women and men farmers). A few key donors recognize the need to focus on more strategic structural change and mainstreaming gender into national policy making with appropriate machinery and capacity building to support this focus. These donors include ADB, UNDP, JICA and the World Bank. However, more donor support is needed in the sectoral ministries, as with UNICEF and MoEYS, and recently with ADB and MAFF, to provide expertise and capacity building to carry gender mainstreaming into their specific policies and programs and to address the attendant budgeting, monitoring and evaluation implications. There is also a need for coordination between donors working in this area since gender is a pre-eminent cross-cutting issue.

There are currently no formalized coordination mechanisms between international donors and MoWVA or between donors and line ministries.

## 9.3 National Policies and Strategic Planning Processes

MoWVA, line ministries, NGOs and donors have made significant efforts to ensure that gender issues are addressed and appropriate action is identified in national policy and the strategic planning processes. The government is embarking on a wide-ranging and challenging poverty reduction and reform agenda. The next section explores the extent to which this agenda addresses the gender issues outlined in the previous chapters.

### 9.3.1 Socio-Economic Development Plan II (SEDPII)

The Royal Government of Cambodia accepted gender mainstreaming as a principle for all its policies and programs in the SEDPII 2001-2005, which incorporated the five-year strategy of the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs, *Neary Rattanak*. SEDPII was developed in 2001, principally by the Ministry of Planning, with limited input from key line ministries. In an attempt to

incorporate gender issues into the SEDPII, MoWVA officials met with line ministries, provided written inputs and participated in public consultations. Despite these efforts, there was little coverage of gender in the action plan of the final SEDPII document. While gender has been well integrated throughout the diagnostic section, the links between the gender analysis and the sectoral interventions are sometimes weak, and the gender analysis has not always been used to define strategies and outline actions.

### **9.3.2 National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS)**

In early 2002, MoWVA and representatives from line ministries and NGOs participated in an East Asia-wide regional workshop on gender and PRSPs. During this workshop, the delegation prepared the PRSP Gender Action Plan, which included components to:

- Review progress made in integrating gender into the SEDPII and the IPRSP.
- Take steps to build the capacity of MoWVA staff and NPRS core teams in line ministries to understand gender issues in the context of poverty reduction.
- Ensure civil society inputs into the NPRS are coordinated and address gender issues.
- Ensure that the participation process conducted by the Ministry of Planning, line ministries and NGOs is gender inclusive and that the voices of women and men who are poor are heard.
- Promote awareness of gender issues in poverty reduction to key decision makers at the grassroots level.
- Develop approaches to strengthen MoWVA's capacity to engender monitoring and evaluation systems and develop gender-responsive budgets (in the medium to long term).

A series of opportunities for gender mainstreaming was built into the PRSP process, and attention to gender issues has improved considerably since the IPRSP. MoWVA and gender advocates within civil society contributed to the PRSP process by participating in the various working groups and have expressed satisfaction with the efforts of some ministries and their treatment of gender. Time ran out on the comprehensive development of the policy action matrix, which should have included a more complete set of targets and indicators. However, as an iterative document, it is expected that further gender indicators and targets can be included in the next version and this will be greatly assisted by the work done on the MDGs.

Despite these gaps, many of MoWVA's recommendations were addressed in the narrative of the PRSP. A section on gender is included (though in some places reworded from the text provided by MoWVA), and some sectors have addressed gender issues. The education, agriculture and rural development sector strategies address gender issues and include some gender responsive action and/or indicators. However, gender is not mentioned in the other priority areas such as land, legal reform and governance, macro-economic policy or public resource management (budget and revenue).

Women were under-represented in the provincial PRSP consultations organized by the Ministry of Planning. However, the NGO Women for Prosperity, in collaboration with MoWVA, conducted village-based consultations with poor women in six provinces. Recommendations from these consultations were presented to and discussed with the PRSP priority-sector ministries.

The PRSP policy action matrix includes measures to:

Mainstream gender issues in all government departments, especially health.

- *Promote gender research and analysis for policy development.*
- *Conduct education and training programs in gender analysis, budgeting, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for MoWVA, MAFF, MoH, MoEYS, MRD, MoJ, MND, and MoI. Develop a core group of at least 20 key people in MoWVA and ten in each of the five line ministries to ensure that gender mainstreaming is practiced. Line ministries should address gender disparities in their budgets.*

Ensure women's and girls' legal protection and community awareness of gender issues.

- *Develop new laws such as the Domestic Violence Law, ensure the anti-trafficking law is passed, amend gender-biased laws and provide training to judiciary and law enforcement agencies.*

Ensure equal access rights of women (and veterans) to economic resources and opportunities and their equitable participation in national decision-making, development planning and poverty reduction process

- *Create alternative livelihood opportunities and enhance the capacity of women entrepreneurs and workers*
- *Increase women's access to land*
- *Help women establish micro and small enterprise credit schemes and provide training*
- *Organize farmers' associations with 50 percent women membership*
- *Initiate and support leadership programs for women in the political sphere, trade unions and the civil service*

The first Annual Progress Report was still being written early in 2004. Because the current NPRS is too broad and lacks prioritization, strategies and costing, the Annual Progress Report is meant to remedy these weaknesses.

### **9.3.3 The integrated framework – pro-poor trade strategy**

Economic activities for rural women are identified in this assessment as a key concern, particularly in the context of promoting trade and export-led growth. Given that 90 percent of women who are poor live in rural areas, increasing productivity and rural incomes for poor women farmers is clearly a priority in order to achieve the objectives of the CMDG1: Reduce poverty and hunger. However, the Pro-Poor Trade Sector Strategy, which represents the government's trade-related policy framework, needs to include more gender analysis, clearer strategies and indicators for women's employment and budget allocations. There has been no systematic analysis of the impact of economic reforms on women who are poor. Thus, the macro-policy agenda would benefit from a rigorous gender analysis of the links between growth, trade and poverty, particularly as related to WTO accession and the ending of the Multi-Fiber Agreement in 2004.

### **9.3.4 Cambodian Millennium Development Goals**

In late 2002, the Poverty Monitoring Assessment Technical Unit (PMATU) in the Ministry of Planning began the process of localizing the MDGs in Cambodia to develop the first national MDGs report. Although this did not take place in the context of developing the NPRS, the report and accompanying policy recommendations will provide substantive input into the NPRS annual review and prioritization process. MoWVA, in collaboration with a UNIFEM project, is actively

involved in mainstreaming gender into the localization process for the MDGs by participating in and facilitating consultations, providing extensive commentary and analysis on all the goals, and producing a complementary gender analysis that has been integrated into this Cambodia Country Gender Assessment sponsored by the World Bank, ADB and UNDP/UNIFEM. The Cambodian MDGs Country Report includes a number of additional gender responsive indicators that have been noted regionally and used as a model.

The extensive and widespread consultation and advisory process undertaken during this work has contributed to raising the profile of gender issues within PMATU, as well as among donors, government agencies and NGOs involved in the MDG localization initiative and the writing of the Cambodian Country Gender Assessment.

### **9.3.5 Budget planning and allocation**

Some of the most strategic entry points for mainstreaming gender relate to engendering the national statistical system and promoting gender-responsive budgeting processes.

Many institutions are responsible for various aspects of strategy development, program planning, budgeting, and monitoring budget execution and outcomes. There is no functional mechanism in Cambodia to ensure that relevant gender issues are incorporated into the national budget process, or if identified in planning, are appropriately funded. This would require agreement at the most senior levels to establish and support an inter-ministerial working group to monitor ministerial budgets from a gender perspective. The forthcoming World Bank project based in MoWVA will begin to lay the groundwork for this development, and a future UNDP/Japan Women in Development Fund project is planning to support MoEF in this work.

Throughout the various ministries, inadequate collection and reporting of key information makes it difficult to assess the extent to which strategic plans are matched by adequately budgeted programs, and the extent to which adequately budgeted programs meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries. While this problem is not limited to gender issues, it makes it even more difficult to form a clear picture of gender dimensions in public-service provision. Information problems arise at two levels: First, line-item budgeting makes it difficult to identify how much is spent on any particular program (though the move to program budgeting under the MTEF will help to address this issue); and second, because target groups are not sex-disaggregated, data on the beneficiaries served by particular programs are either not collected or are not readily available in a useable format. As a result, it is difficult to identify the number, poverty status or sex of beneficiaries and to assess the efficiency and impact of service delivery. An exception is the education sector, which maintains a parallel, program-oriented budget system and a strong database on beneficiaries.

### **9.3.6 National statistical systems**

MoWVA has contributed extensive comments to the CSES 2004 on the gender dimension of survey instruments, with a particular focus on sex-disaggregated data collection, as well as a new component on time use that was added as a result of the ministry's recommendation. The training program sponsored by the UNDP Partnership for Gender Equality and provided by UNIFEM for *Engendering the National Statistical System* brought together middle management from 16 line ministries and agencies to build commitment to and understanding of the need for a gender perspective in all stages of data collection, presentation, dissemination and analysis. This is an important beginning and needs to be

supported at the senior management levels of the line ministries. It also needs to be effectively tied into the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, which will be established under the NPRS and MDG reporting systems.

**Table 9.1 : Donor-Financed Projects Implemented by MOWVA 2003-04**

Programme	Donor	Time period	Objectives/main activities/location	Approx. amount (US\$)
Partnership for Gender Equity	UNDP/Royal Government	2001–2004	Capacity building of MWVA to mainstream gender Build the capacity of MWVA to plan, manage and coordinate its internal operations and external assistance. National level	\$800,000
Sustainable Employment Promotion for Poor Women (ADB)	Asian Development Bank	2003–2005 (18 months)	Strengthening the capacity in advocacy for economic empowerment. Development of approaches and materials for strengthening women's employment opportunities. Strengthening capacity in policy formulation and networking. National level and Provinces – Kg Speu, Takeo, Kg Chhnang, Kg Cham	\$400,000
Promotion of Women's Rights	GTZ	2002–2005 (first phase)	Legal mainstreaming in MWVA and gender mainstreaming in selected legal areas. National level	First phase will be up to 2.3 million euro.
Prevention of all Forms of Trafficking in Women & Children	IOM/Finland	2000– 2003	Legal literacy, advocacy and information campaigns. Six countries shared \$1million. Provinces/Municipalities – Banteay Meanchey, Koh Kong, Svay Rieng, Pailin, Sihanoukville, Phnom Penh	\$220 000
Information Campaign to Combat Trafficking in Women & Children in Cambodia	IOM/USAID	2003-05	High profile media campaigns, village-based activities to develop community networks, development of a trafficking database and training of staff in policy development and advocacy Training of PDWVA staff in Battambang; KG Cham; Kg Chhang; Kg Speu; Kg Thom; Kampot; Kep; Kandal; Mondolkiri; Oddar Meanchey; Preah Vihear; Prey Veng; Pursat; Rattankiri; Siem Reap; Stung Treng; Takeo	\$839 000
Cambodian National Project Against Trafficking of Women & Children in the Mekong Sub-Region	UNIAP	1999–2003 (Stage 1)	Innovative approaches to community-based support systems through capacity building, law enforcement, policy and legislation; strategy analysis and impact evaluation. Central level	\$100 000 pa
Gender Mainstreaming in Decentralization & De-concentration (Seila)	UNDP Partnership for Local Governance	2001–2005	Gender mainstreaming in all provinces; capacity building of provincial departments and commune councils; and monitoring and evaluation. All provinces	\$75,000



Reproductive Health Community-based Distribution of Contraceptives	UNFPA/MOH	2001–03	MWVA is sub-contracted to improve reproductive health services, especially community-based distribution of contraceptives and IEC (executed by MOH) Provinces – Kampong Chhang, Kandal, Svay Rieng, Prey Veng, Battambang, Kampot	\$217,658
Reproductive Health Volunteers	UNFPA	2001-03	MWVA has sub contracted RHAC (NGO) to continue community-based distribution of contraceptives and IEC integrated with provincial/district levels Provinces – Kg. Cham, Kg Chhang, Kampot, Kandal, Siem Reap, Prey Vieng, Svey Rieng, Battambang	\$138 291
HIV/AIDS Policy for Women and Girls	UNAIDS	1999-2003	Develop policy on women and girls and HIV/AIDS and workshops. Provinces – Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Pailin, Siem Reap, Oudor Meanchey, Pursat, Siem Reap, Kg Chhang/Svey Rieng, Koh Kong, Kg Thom, Prey Veng, Kg Cham	\$68,346
Reproductive Health and Gender Advocacy	UNFPA	2002–04 (Feb)	Strengthen capacity of selected government institutions and NGOs in advocacy to support gender equality in reproductive health. Increase understanding & commitment of policy & decision makers and media National level	\$755,920
Policy Change on Gender and HIV/AIDS/STIs at community level	POLICY Project	2003–2004	Focus on women, girl child & STIs and HIV/AIDS in target provinces: Koh Kong, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Svay Rieng, Takeo and Phnom Penh	\$29 737
Asian Regional Program for Expansion of Employment Opportunities for Women (NEEOW)	ILO/Japan	2001–2006	Strengthening institutional competency related to gender analysis at work; community-based pilot activities. Provinces – Takeo, Kandal, Siem Reap, Phnom Penh (USG, IUWC)	\$1m
Assisting Women to Improve Household Food Security and Family Economy	FAO	2001–2003	Training workshops at ministerial and provincial levels; training of rural women as trainers; pilot training for 200 rural women; and assist the establishment of rural technology centers. Provinces – Kandal, Kg Chhang	\$249,000
Gender Mainstreaming & Policy Development through Upgrading Information and Research Capacity	JICA	April 2003–2008	Establish an effective mechanism for gender mainstreaming by strengthening MoWVA, especially in information and research activities. Pilot projects in one or two provinces – Kampong Cham and other TBD	\$2–\$3 million
Market Development Pilot Project	NZ ODA	Nov 2002 — April 2003	Basic training in business development and marketing; provide market/marketing development advisory services; formation of a vendors' association Province- Banteay Meanchey (Poipet)	\$22,900
Empowering Vulnerable Groups through Training on Village Level Food Processing	FAO	2003-2005	Micro-enterprise development & marketing skills for women, disabled, demobilized soldiers; training of community-based trainers & govt extension officers & NGO/CBO staff Provinces – Kg Cham – pilot project	\$369 000

Women's Voices; Women's Choices	Rockefeller Foundation	2003-04	Dissemination of information about reproductive health, gender-based violence; trafficking & other issues of concern to women National level	\$49,310
Integrated Economic Empowerment: Entrepreneurship & Employment for Women (NEEEW)	ILO/Germany	2003-2006 (not yet begun)	To achieve sustainable livelihoods & decent employment opportunities & poverty reduction for women especially to convert three WID Centres to Women's Enterprise Centres Provinces – Kampong Cham, Kampong Thom, Kampot	\$1,652m
Integrated Economic Empowerment: Entrepreneurship & Employment for Women (NEEEW)	ILO/Ireland	2003-2006	To achieve sustainable livelihoods & decent employment opportunities & poverty reduction for women esp to convert 1 WID Centre to a Women's Enterprise Centre Provinces – Kampong Chhang	\$115 000
Gender sensitive monitoring, planning & budgeting for Implementation of NPRS	World Bank	2004-2005	To shadow national budget process, leverage funding to reduce gender disparities through analysis & research, costing, assessment of impacts & monitoring results, National level	\$300 000

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**Source:** MoWVA 2004

# CHAPTER 10

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions and Recommendations .....	163
10.1 The challenge of economic empowerment increases as the adult population expands .....	164
10.2 Rural women do not have the access to resources and services that would help them reduce poverty and ensure food security .....	166
10.3 Gender inequality in access to health and education services is most severe among the poor, and in rural areas .....	167
10.4 Those that are especially vulnerable have little support and nowhere to turn .....	169
10.5 Social, legal, and political institutions perpetuate gender discrimination and vulnerability .....	171
10.6 Institutions still struggle to mainstream gender effectively .....	172

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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In just a decade, Cambodia has made significant strides in rebuilding the human capital and social fabric that had been so brutally destroyed in the troubled past. Social indicators for health and education have shown steady improvements, along with the economic indicators, and the country has enjoyed relative stability in recent years.

However, this steady progress may now be threatened. The baby boom of the 1980s has resulted in a bulge in the population that is now of the age where they are looking for jobs and starting their reproductive lives. Health and education services are, and will continue to be stretched to provide for them and their children, and agricultural productivity will need to increase in order to feed them. But most of all, opportunities need to be opened for them to contribute to the country's economy. If these opportunities can be found, this generation will become the engine for Cambodia's economic growth. In the absence of opportunity, they, and their children, will increasingly burden the State; and their frustrations will put the security of the nation at risk.

At this critical juncture, Cambodia cannot afford to let gender discrimination and inequalities limit the full potential of the country. Yet, competition for jobs, services, resources and assets will undoubtedly increase, and without changes that specifically help them, women will become increasingly marginalized. If this is allowed to happen, it will be a loss not only for the women, but for their children, their children's children and the whole of Cambodian society. Proactive measures to break down the persistent barriers and constraints to women's active and equal participation in social and economic development need to be implemented.

Existing government plans and strategies already propose many good and constructive actions to address gender issues. The recommendations in this section are intended to supplement and complement these actions, and to highlight areas that have not been given much attention as yet. Several important challenges face the Royal Government of Cambodia in its efforts to achieve gender equality:

- The challenge of economic empowerment of women at a time when the population, and therefore the competition, is increasing. At the same time, importance is given to providing employment opportunities for men, through which the country's stability will be protected.
- The challenge of providing resources and infrastructure to women in rural areas where the majority of the country's poor population lives, and where women play such an important role in ensuring food security and improving family income.
- The challenge of providing the essential services of health and education, especially to women in rural areas
- Care and support for those that are especially vulnerable – such as HIV/AIDS sufferers and victims of violence
- The challenge of bringing about the social and structural change necessary to give women a voice in development, and strengthen their position in society, so that they can eventually enjoy the full rights that are accorded to them under Cambodia's own Constitution, as well as various international agreements that the country has signed.
- The institutional steps to better mainstream gender into the country's planning and budgeting, and sectoral development process.

## **10.1 The challenge of economic empowerment for women will increase as the adult population expands**

### ***10.1.1 Formal paid employment opportunities need to expand rapidly to absorb the growing labor force***

The labor force is increasing at a rate of 3.5 percent (or roughly a quarter of a million people) per annum, yet paid employment opportunities are severely limited and not increasing at a rate that can begin to absorb this increase. The ability of the country to attract foreign investment will be critical, yet the latest indications point to decreases in foreign direct investment. A weak governance environment and endemic corruption are pinpointed as major disincentives to potential investors.

### ***10.1.2 A broader range of formal employment choices is needed for both men and women***

As the agriculture sector shifts from subsistence to market-oriented production, both men and women are moving into waged employment in this sector. However, outside of agriculture there have been relatively few new employment opportunities for men in their ‘traditional’ occupations, which combined with rising expectations in a market economy, is a source of great frustration. Women are taking on increased responsibility for contributing to household livelihood within their ‘traditional’ occupations, while still remaining responsible for housework and child care. Or they are migrating to seek employment in urban areas where they are highly vulnerable to exploitation. There is a heavy reliance on the garment industry for women’s paid employment — but this is fragile, and the future is uncertain. If the industry fails, any gains made in getting women into the paid employment sector will be lost. At the same time, the garment industry is not providing employment for young men, and employment in the traditionally ‘male’ public service sector has become a much less viable option for most young men. With demobilization, administrative reform, and privatization of services, public sector employment is expected to decrease. As unemployment is a key factor triggering social unrest and instability, the country faces serious problems if young people, particularly young men, are unable to find gainful employment.

### ***10.1.3 Employment opportunities in rural areas are limited and unreliable***

The majority of the poor live in rural areas, and while the agriculture sector has been the backbone of rural employment, it cannot continue to absorb labor force entrants as it has done, without significant changes. There are few alternatives for these people. Local labor markets are fragile and change rapidly, and when local labor opportunities are not available, migration is the only option for many men and women – making them vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. Local non-farm employment in rural areas, including opportunities for women, would help reduce rural poverty, mitigate one of the drivers for trafficking, and help to develop secure communities.

### ***10.1.4 Emerging opportunities, but women have limited capacity to compete***

Although education for women has a high premium in terms of job opportunities and wages, far fewer women than men are literate or have more than a primary school education. Although women with a higher level of education seem to be able to compete well with men with the same level of education, the vast majority of women in the existing labor force simply do not have the education they need in order to avail themselves of new employment opportunities.

### 10.1.5 Recommendations:

- *Improve governance to encourage investment and growth*

Investment and growth are preconditions to expanding employment opportunities, which will benefit both men and women. Weak governance and corruption are disincentives, and indications suggest that these are increasing problems in Cambodia. Improving governance, and employing effective anti-corruption strategies are essential to keeping Cambodia on the path to a better future.

- *Promote decentralized growth and expand efforts to develop employment opportunities in rural areas*

The vast majority of the workforce is in rural areas. However, the agriculture sector is increasingly unable to provide viable livelihoods for the nation's rapidly growing labor force. The development of new employment opportunities in factories located in urban areas or export promotion zones necessitates migration. The social impact of urban migration on young women is particularly severe. Much more effort is needed to expand employment opportunities for women in rural areas, possibly linked to the development of more profitable crops and agro-processing

RGC is committed through its "Pro-Poor Trade Sector Strategy" to promote diversified agricultural production and processing of niche products such as spices, herbs, tropical fruits, essential oils and handicrafts. In order to reduce poverty and promote women's economic empowerment in rural areas, this strategy should promote decentralized growth, focusing on remote rural areas, strengthening backward linkages, and ensuring that women are provided with the necessary skills and information to access the new employment opportunities that this strategy will generate. This includes both waged positions and self-employment.

- *Support the development of small enterprises and the informal sector*

Employment opportunities in the formal sector tend to be for the better educated. Therefore, while girls' education lags significantly behind that of boys, economic empowerment for most women is going to lie in improved opportunities in non-farm employment – mostly in the micro- and small enterprise, as well as the informal sector. Helping these women may mean increasing their access to literacy and numeracy training, affordable credit, and business development services.

- *Develop strategies for upgrading the literacy and skill levels of women in the existing labor force*

Achieving greater gender equality in employment in the existing labor force requires addressing the extreme disparities between women and men in literacy and levels of education. Unless proactive measures are taken to address these disparities, most women will find it difficult to compete for any decent jobs that might emerge from efforts to promote foreign investment or expand trade. They will continue to be restricted to low level, low paid occupations and remain vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and any hope for achieving gender equality in employment will need to be left to the next generation. Interventions could include integration of functional literacy training into employment promotion strategies, as well as support for community-based adult education programs responsive to the situation and interests of those who missed out on basic education in their youth. The focus of the education policy on the future workforce does not take into consideration the education and training needs of the significant majority of women in the existing workforce.

- *Address the social protection needs of female migrant workers*

Although working conditions within garment factories are being closely monitored, little attention is being paid to the risks faced by young garment sector workers outside the gates of the factories. With the future of the garment industry in question after 2004, contingency plans must also be developed for providing decent employment alternatives for garment workers.

- *Expand monitoring of compliance with the labor code*

As waged employment expands, much more attention needs to be paid to ensuring compliance with the labor code. In light of the rapidly growing waged agricultural sector, it will be necessary to establish and enforce agricultural labor and wage regulations to prevent exploitation of vulnerable group, such as women and children.

## **10.2 Rural women do not have the access to resources and services that would help them reduce poverty and ensure food security**

### ***10.2.1 Most of Cambodia's women farmers do not have access to the resources they need***

Formal employment aside, 80 percent of the increase in the employed population between 1993 and 1999 — 1.28 million people, of whom 53 percent were women — were absorbed into the agriculture and fisheries sectors. If this trend continues, then services (advice, markets, technology) and resources (credit, land, inputs) for farmers — most of whom are women — need to be significantly improved and expanded. As it is, women have considerably less access to extension services, land, or other resources, than do men. Women are more likely than men to be involved in agro-food processing, trading, livestock raising and other activities with export potential.

### ***10.2.2 Basic services such as roads and water supply are a priority for poor women as well as poor men***

Lack of basic infrastructure has a tremendous impact on society. Collecting water, especially, is not only a burden on women's time, but lack of clean water exacerbates health problems and figures heavily in maternal and child mortality. Better provision of water reduces the opportunity cost of keeping girls in school, and better roads will improve access to schools and health care.

### ***10.2.3 Recommendations:***

- *Develop innovative ways to provide agricultural services, extension and information to women*

Agriculture extension services are only reaching a fraction of the people who need them, especially women. New ways need to be explored for making sure that services and information reach the women for whom they are intended: For example, combining agricultural advisory services with other services such as health care, or education; working through markets or other places where women meet and socialize; working through the private sector; and finding other ways to take services to women, rather than expecting them to come to the service providers.

Women need to be targeted for training in business skills and extension service, increased access to technology, and market information.

- *Provide women with improved, and secure access to land and natural resources*

While in principle the new land law stipulates that women should co-sign the land titles alongside their husbands, this may not be sufficient to ensure and safeguard their land rights. Effort must be made to ensure land titles are in the names of both husbands and wives and that the needs and constraints of women-headed households are better understood and addressed. Awareness about women's land rights needs to be raised among both men and women land title holders, the cadastral staff and the commune chiefs, as well as higher level authorities, to ensure that their land rights are respected.

- *Continue investment in **locally-planned** rural infrastructure so that both men's and women's needs are recognized and addressed*

Mechanisms have been established for local identification of needs and for development planning that includes women in the process. This is an effective way to ensure that their needs are addressed. The mechanism needs to be further supported, and women's participation more strongly encouraged.

### **10.3 Gender inequality in access to health and education services is most severe among the poor, and in rural areas**

#### **10.3.1 Gender inequalities in education are worst in rural areas, and among poor people who are predominantly concentrated in these areas**

At the primary school level there are no significant differences in enrollment rates between urban and rural areas, and girls' enrollment in the poorest quintile has increased faster than for any other group. There is, however, a much higher drop out rate for girls in primary school. Differences between male and female enrollments increase significantly at the secondary school level, and especially in rural areas. Rural girls must be kept in secondary school if they are to compete in the labor market and contribute to improving life for the next generation. A significant number of women over the age of 40 cannot read or write, and many more are functionally illiterate.

#### **10.3.2 Current health services are not reaching rural areas, and especially rural women and girls**

At 437 per 100,000 live births, Cambodia's maternal mortality is one of the highest in the region, and improvements have been slow. Although utilization rates and spending on health care appear to be the same for men and women, when reproductive health is taken into account, women's needs are greater than men's and utilization rates should be higher. Women often cite costs and time for travel as a reason for not accessing health care. Thus, these services may need to be moved closer to where women live. Needed services include contraception, for which there is high unmet demand, and without which, a second-generation population bulge will occur.



### 10.3.3 Recommendation

- *Keep girls in primary school, increase girls' enrollment in secondary school, and provide non-formal education*

The importance of education for girls cannot be overstated. It opens the way to improved livelihoods for women themselves and for future generations. Whatever it takes to get girls to school and keep them there is a worthwhile investment. The design of school systems plays an important role in facilitating equitable access for girls and boys. Toilet facilities, safe transport to and from schools, and the presence of female teachers are needed to significantly increase girls' enrollment. In the formal school system, providing dormitories, toilets, or scholarships can be enough to make a difference. The IFAPER (2003) recommends allocating a specific budget to renovate and construct toilet facilities in existing lower secondary schools.

Innovative and flexible provision is needed beyond the formal school system. There should be additional resources to support interventions for women and out-of-school girls, particularly in non-formal education (Bredenburg et al., 2003). For older women who are illiterate, access to non-formal education needs to be increased.

Better coordination and linkages between gender equity interventions are needed. For example, coordination between interventions focused on attitude change (e.g., gender-awareness training) and concrete applications of gender equity principles (scholarships, life skills, etc.) are recommended.

- *Make health services affordable for poor women,*

Removing costs as a barrier to accessing essential health care services is critical. Health equity funds, such as have been piloted in some districts, can be scaled up to provide access to emergency obstetric care and care for catastrophic illnesses. The Health Equity Fund program is still quite new (since September 2000) but experience so far has been positive. However, a significant number of the poor continue to delay seeking hospital care due to high indirect costs (including the opportunity cost of a stay in the hospital and lack of money for transportation to the hospital). These funds need to be carefully monitored to ensure quality and to make sure that women benefit from it. For example, barriers to access such as the costs of transportation to a health facility must also be addressed by health equity funds, or poor women may continue to lack the health care they require.

- *Prioritize outreach using culturally appropriate methods*

Increasing outreach activities and culturally appropriate health education, especially in rural areas, will help to reach more women. Approaches such as peer networks (volunteer women's networks) and community-based distribution to provide health information to women have been piloted by a few NGOs in select areas. These may be replicated and expanded. Outreach strategies need to examine and take into consideration women's cultural beliefs and preferences concerning childbirth and pregnancy. Resources for basic health facilities and outreach visits in geographically underserved areas need to be increased to strengthen the delivery of birth spacing and safe motherhood services. Outreach services include immunization, antenatal care, contraception, nutrition counselling and monitoring, and other health services.

- *Try out new approaches to increasing the number of midwives in rural areas*

The lack of skilled midwifery personnel in certain parts of the country will remain a challenge in reducing maternal mortality. Incentives for new midwives, or appropriate compensation to make these posts more attractive, is a must. Security measures also need to be explored. Further, there are several bottlenecks to training new midwives, and there is a need to re-examine the strategy for training midwives.

## **10.4 Those that are especially vulnerable have little support and nowhere to turn**

### ***10.4.1 Transmission of HIV/AIDS is declining, but moving into the broader population***

Cambodian women and girls are increasingly at risk of contracting HIV. In a country where access to information, care and support, and treatment are low, the sexual risk taking behavior of men is high, and gender dynamics in Cambodian culture make it difficult for women to negotiate condom use, women are especially vulnerable to contracting HIV.

The pattern of transmission of the HIV epidemic is shifting: prevalence is decreasing in all groups surveyed, but at the same time, groups such as married women and women in longer-term sexual relationships still remain extremely vulnerable, and the epidemic may still evolve rapidly in these groups. Mother to child transmission, and husband to wife transmission, are becoming increasingly important. Methods for prevention in these populations are limited, but are urgently needed.

Most Cambodians do not have access to antiretroviral therapy or even to regular treatment of opportunistic infections such as pneumonia, diarrhea, and toxoplasmosis. Caring for family members suffering from any of these infections places significant demands on women's time and resources, and results in deepening poverty in already poor households. Women have less access to treatment and are less likely to receive follow-up and counseling to ensure compliance.

Existing institutional arrangements may not be effective in addressing prevention as the epidemic moves from sex workers into the broader population.

### ***10.4.2 Violence against women takes many forms and few services are available for victims of violence***

Cambodian women and girls are vulnerable to domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, and are trafficked for labor or commercial sex work. A weak and ineffective legal framework contributes to a culture of impunity, and inadequate support and services for survivors leaves little, if any, options for recourse.

Cambodian traditions do not condone violence in the home, either by parents towards children or husbands towards wives. Nonetheless, 23 percent of ever-married women over age 15 who were surveyed in the CDHS 2000, reported being physically abused in the home. Abused women have limited options. If they do not own land or other assets, they risk losing financial support for themselves and their children if they leave their husbands. If a husband is imprisoned, the wife loses his income for that period and it is unlikely that he will change his behavior on release. A draft law on domestic violence was still under review early in 2004, and had yet to be passed in the National Assembly.

Rape victims find it difficult to report rape or seek help: societal scorn and family shame resulting from loss of virginity perpetuate the notion that a rape victim is no longer a woman of value. Many victims of rape internalize the negative view that people hold of them and end up in commercial sex work. Although rape is a crime in Cambodia, perpetrators are seldom sentenced. Many families do not wish to involve the authorities due to the stigma associated with rape and prefer to protect their reputation and settle out of court by accepting a compensation payment.

Trafficking takes place both internally and across borders in Cambodia, which is a sending, receiving and transit country for trafficked humans. Conditions of poverty, social upheaval, under-developed legal infrastructure and weak law enforcement have contributed to the growth of the sex industry. Prostitution is not illegal in Cambodia, although it is illegal to facilitate it or profit from it. Unfortunately, those who are breaking the law are not those who are punished.

### 10.4.3 Recommendations:

- *Provide care and support for vulnerable groups, including those suffering from HIV/AIDS*

Programs at both national and local levels on gender, environment, agriculture, and community infrastructure development should all mainstream HIV prevention activities. Condoms should be further promoted as a means of contraception. An official policy of promoting condoms for contraception within marriage and in other long-term relationships may be a useful strategy, rather than just for protection against HIV. This approach would enable women to ask their husbands to use condoms without indirectly accusing them of infidelity. New strategies targeting youth need to be explored. Female controlled methods, that is, the female condom, also need to be explored for use in Cambodia

Implementation of the continuum of care strategy for people living with HIV/AIDS requires that district health services partner with key stakeholders in HIV/AIDS care to strengthen service delivery. One key aspect of such a strategy would be to encourage earlier testing, as this increases opportunities for a healthier and better quality life. Expansion of the program to prevent mother to child transmission should include training and promotion of gender sensitive voluntary and confidential counseling and testing services for pregnant women. Training in care and support in the community for people living with HIV/AIDS is also needed, as is capacity building on delivering antiretroviral therapy. Programs such as home-based care programs can be useful in decreasing the burden of direct care, as well as play a role in linking the HIV-positive person and their family members to services.

- *Develop a systematic approach to assist survivors of violence against women*

A coherent and multisectoral national plan to prevent violence against women should be developed and implemented in a participatory process among governmental and non-governmental actors. This should include putting in place instruments to monitor the implementation and a timetable with an action plan. Data needs to be collected at various settings such as hospitals, police stations, community centers, and other places where authorities come into contact with victims and perpetrators. National health systems should incorporate training and capacity building to enable them to provide care to victims. Further, training and capacity building should be provided to ensure that health, judicial, policing and social services help victims to recover and avoid further victimization. They must also prevent perpetrators from re-offending.

At the commune level, increased awareness that violence against women is wrongful behavior and a criminal act is necessary. Pilot projects to provide care and support to victims of violence and to work with men who are opposed to violence against women need to be expanded and replicated. It is essential that men play a role in developing and implementing any national as well as grassroots prevention and advocacy strategies that are aimed at eliminating violence against women.

## 10.5 Social, legal, and political institutions perpetuate gender discrimination and vulnerability

### 10.5.1 Gender-related social norms and behaviors can have negative impacts on both men and women

Social norms, behaviors and cultural factors influence the transmission of HIV, the incidence of gender-based violence (trafficking, domestic violence, rape, sexual exploitation) and men's vulnerability to accidents. Socially proscribed roles and endemic inequalities persist despite an improving economic environment. Positive changes need not necessarily come from outside the culture. In any society, women and men typically have different views about norms and behaviors and finding a balance between those views can help reverse negative trends.

Inequalities based on traditional attitudes towards gender roles are clearly reflected in the jobs allocated to men and women and their status in different industries. Traditionally, boys have been encouraged to go to school so that they can qualify for highly desirable positions in government, hence the dominance of men in the public service and in decision-making positions. Education for girls has been seen as less important in Cambodia's predominately agrarian society where women work in the rice fields, take care of the house and children, and possibly work as a market vendor or produce handicrafts.

### 10.5.2 Participation of women in decision making is essential at all levels in order to bring about improvements

Women's representation is weak at all levels of decision making: in government, in parliament, in the judiciary and at the commune and village level. Unless this is increased dramatically, social norms and accountability for gender equality are unlikely to change. Government has set ambitious targets for women in decision making but is unlikely to meet these.

### 10.5.3 Judicial systems and law enforcement agencies need to be held accountable through improved monitoring and reporting of their activities

Although a reasonable legal framework to uphold women's rights is now in place, weak law enforcement, impunity of violators to prosecution, and complicity of law enforcers increases the vulnerability of people who are poor and especially of women. In a corrupt environment, women are the least-supported by the legal system, and they have the fewest resources to bypass it.

### 10.5.4 Recommendations:

- *Develop consensus on the meaning of gender equality in the Cambodian context*

To build consensus on gender equality and reconcile it with traditional gender roles, more discussion is needed among stakeholders to generate local definitions. Advocates for gender in Cambodia have often been effective when their arguments centered on promoting gender equality in the context of Cambodian tradition. Effective advocates for women should be promoted in the media and elsewhere as inspirational role models.

- *Introduce affirmative action policies*

The government is committed to increasing the number of women in decision making, but success has been minimal. Given the lack of improvement, more proactive measures are needed including affirmative action, introduction of quotas, special training for female civil servants and potential leaders in the private sector and in civil society. A quota system has the advantage of reducing the extent to which women compete against men – which they often find culturally difficult. In a quota system, men compete against men for positions, and women against women.

- *Increase women's participation at village level*

At the village level, women tend to be more vocal, and active in community activities. Empowering women to work directly with service providers could lead to improvement and better targeting of services. New innovative ways to reach women could include working through the VDCs, which have a built-in quota for women.

- *Monitor the functioning of the legal and judicial system*

Increased assistance to monitor, track, and report back on the outputs of the judicial system, especially with relation to crimes against women, would increase the accountability of the judicial system. This would be especially effective if reporting was to a high level body that could follow up. The culture of silence surrounding violence will be lifted if women see and hear of offenders being punished, and offenders see that prosecution and sentencing are likely consequences. As the number of reported cases increases, systems need to be developed to document and monitor the quality of action taken by the police and courts.

## 10.6 Institutions still struggle to mainstream gender effectively

### ***10.6.1 Weak governance and poor financial management are a major constraint to improving gender equality***

The social and agriculture sectors are under-financed, and budgets that are allocated do not necessarily reach their intended beneficiaries. The irregular distribution of funds to service delivery points, especially in rural areas, reduces the effectiveness of services. This, and the poor compensation paid to civil servants, encourages requests for informal fees. Where services become expensive, or the opportunity costs are too great compared to perceived returns, women will be more affected than men.

### ***10.6.2 The mechanisms in place to integrate gender into the budgeting and planning process are limited in their effectiveness***

Targets –especially for gender balance – are inconsistent with planned spending. Realistically, targets may need to be brought into line with both capacity and available financial resources (World Bank 2002a).

### **10.6.3 Mechanisms to mainstream gender in line agencies are weak and only partly effective**

There is still a long way to go to mainstream gender in line ministries. In the face of competing priorities and demands, gender is often not high on the list, and much of the gender work tends to be donor-driven. MoEYS is the only ministry to have its own gender mainstreaming strategy, and in other ministries the skills and capacity to develop and implement something similar are limited.

### **10.6.4 MoWVA's capacity to sustainably mainstream gender issues in the policy process remains weak.**

MoWVA has taken steps to create networks of gender focal points in the sectoral ministries, but those selected are in low-level positions and not influential. While they have achieved much in getting a seat at the table in policy discussions, their capacity to effectively influence is limited by lack of capacity to analyze and monitor impacts of policies and laws, and to advocate for changes.

### **10.6.5 Recommendations:**

- *Strongly support efforts to improve management of public expenditure, and increase accountability of service providers*  
It is likely that the resulting improvements in service delivery will have a greater impact on girls than boys.
- *Improve mechanisms to integrate gender into planning and budgeting processes.*  
MoP and MEF should continue to collaborate with MoWVA to establish gender-responsive costing and budget allocation mechanisms to ensure that key reforms and policy measures address gender issues, and that the budgets allocated are sufficient to achieve the gender objectives.
- *Improve collection and analysis of data to effectively monitor gender targets*  
The next Cambodian Socio-economic Survey (2004-5) and the next World Bank/ADB PPA (alongside the CSES 2004) should include gender-responsive quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments. The analysis of both should be merged and engendered, using the issues outlined in this report as a framework for the analysis and as a basis for monitoring progress in poverty reduction and progress toward the MDGs.

Include time-use data in the next CSES in order to measure women's unpaid and invisible work in the context of household and family activities that are not currently defined as work – or are not captured in the existing labor force data. Ensure that labor force data include the work women do in gathering fuel and collecting water. Analysis of the next CSES should demonstrate that much of the “non-work” activities of women provide goods and services that in a more monetized economy would be provided by the market – and usually by men. These activities are often much affected by policies that are meant to target market sectors but often have inevitable negative consequences for households.

The National Institute for Statistics and PMATU should strengthen and build on their excellent cooperation with MoWVA that was established in the NPRS and MDG processes, to set up gender-responsive monitoring mechanisms and report on achievements in the regular reporting processes, such as for NPRS/CMDG.

- *Line agencies should develop their own gender mainstreaming plans with monitorable indicators*

All ministries should develop action plans for gender mainstreaming and realistic sex-disaggregated targets for beneficiaries and systems for reporting success in reaching those targets (IFAPER, 2003). These systems could be modeled on those currently used by MOEYS. MOEYS' experience in establishing gender mainstreaming mechanisms should be documented, assessed and shared with a view to adapting and replicating in MAFF, and other key line Ministries.

- *MoWVA should continue to build its capacity to focus on policy analysis and advocacy in order to sustainably mainstream gender issues in policy processes.*

The recent surge of policy analysis work around the NPRS and the MDGs provided an initial opportunity to build capacity. Further work on the NPRS review and prioritization, development of the Medium-term Economic Framework and sector programs provide another opportunity to build capacity. Since MoWVA lacks the institutional authority to influence sectoral planning and budgeting, the Ministry needs to strengthen its capacity to mobilize appropriate sector-specific policy analysis skills and political support. This would enable MoWVA to advocate for gender-responsive policies and the necessary budget support to do so. In order to facilitate this, line ministries should systematically include MoWVA in policy formulation and monitoring efforts, and provide it with the information necessary to participate effectively.

Capacity for gender analysis and advocacy is particularly needed in poverty assessment and monitoring (through the forthcoming World Bank/ADB PPAs, 2004), developing macro-economic policy frameworks and reforms (with a particular focus on fiscal and trade policy), and for revising the Integrated Framework Pro-Poor Trade Strategy to include gender responsive policy measures.

The legal office within MoWVA should be up-graded and strengthened with legally qualified staff who can analyse laws and regulations in order to identify gender bias, draft gender-responsive amendments and new laws, and monitor their implementation. On-going support from GTZ will be necessary to do this work. Special consideration should be given to the judicial system to ensure that women's rights are fully protected, particularly with respect to the elimination of all forms of violence against women.

- *Donors should continue to work together, and in partnership with MoWVA, to improve coordination and the effectiveness of all their combined efforts*

Donors, in partnership with MoWVA, should establish a gender working group as one of the technical working groups set up to improve donor coordination. Donors and government should identify and appoint at least one sector-specific gender focal point in each of the working groups (they would also be members of the Gender Working Group). This would provide an entry point into the sector-wide strategies of all donors and all key sectors. The recommendations in this report should be a platform for sectoral gender strategies at the CG and be included in the Country Assistance Strategy, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, and other donor strategies. It should also be tied to CMDG 8: ODA and Basic Social Services (BSS). Donors should develop a mechanism for measuring the extent to which ODA is contributing towards reaching the engendered CMDGs.

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