

# Kingdom of Cambodia

## Cambodia National Report

**On the occasion of the Thirtieth Anniversary of the Fourth  
World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing  
Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

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Submitted by the Ministry of Women's Affairs  
Royal Government of Cambodia

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## ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
ACW	ASEAN Committee for Women
ACWC	ASEAN Commission on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children
BAKC	Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCAP	Climate Change Action Plan
CCCSP	Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan
CCWC	Commune Committee for Women and Children
CDHS	Cambodian Demographic and Health Survey
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHRC	Cambodian Human Rights Committee
CNCW	Cambodian National Council for Women
COB	Concluding Observations (CEDAW)
CSDG	Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals
CSES	Cambodia Socio-economic Survey
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DV	Domestic Violence
EmONC	Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
ESP	Education Sector Plan
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GMAG	Gender Mainstreaming Action Group
GMAP	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
ICPD PoA	International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action
ICT	Information, Communication and Technology
JPO/JPA	Judicial Police Officer/ Judicial Police Agent
LSS	Lower Secondary School
mCPR	modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate
MCS	Ministry of Civil Service
MISTI	Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation
MLMUPC	Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction
MoCFA	Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoH	Ministry of Health
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MoINF	Ministry of Information
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MoPTC	Ministry of Post and Telecommunication

MoSVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MoWA	Ministry of Women’s Affairs
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MTR	Mid-Term Review
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAADR	National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution
NAPVAW	National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women
NCCT	National Committee for Counter Trafficking
NCDD	National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development
NCDM	National Committee for Disaster Management
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NSP-CTIP	National Strategic Plan to Counter Trafficking in Persons
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RS	Rectangular Strategy
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TfGBV	Technology Facilitated GBV
TVET	Technical Vocational and Educational and Training
TWG	Technical Working Group
TWG-G	Technical Working Group on Gender
TWG-GBV	Technical Working Group on Gender- Sub-working group on GBV
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USS	Upper Secondary School
VAW	Violence Against Women
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WCCC	Women and Children’s Consultative Committee

## Section One: Highlights

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The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) is strongly committed to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as enablers of Cambodia’s socio-economic development. The Rectangular Strategy for *Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency: Building the Foundation for Toward Realizing the Cambodia Vision 2050*, Phase IV 2019-2023 recognizes gender equality as a key component of national development, capacity building, and human resources development, and highlights the importance to “strengthen gender equity and social protection to enhance the socio-economic situation and strengthen women’s role in society, who are the backbone of the economy and society.”<sup>1</sup>

Cambodia has proven to be a country with good practices, illustrating how high-level commitment, inter-ministerial collaboration and partnerships with development partners, private sector and civil society are instrumental to strengthening the institutional gender equality architecture across the government and to advance an inclusive national development agenda. Cambodia’s Gender Development Index (GDI) value, a measure of disparities in Human Development Index by gender, increased to 0.926 in 2022<sup>2</sup> showing improvements in women and girls health, education and command over economic resources.

Girls have benefited greatly from Cambodia’s commitment to the global agenda to increase access to education as well as the focus on gender parity and learning quality. Cambodia has achieved gender parity in basic education, and the changes in the Gross Parity Index for the Gross Enrolment Rates have been in favour of girls in both lower and upper secondary schools at 1.14 and 1.18 respectively in 2023-2024. The female literacy rate for the key age group 15-24 has increased to 96.6 percent in 2021, slightly higher than men (95.4 percent) of the same age. For maternal health, Cambodia was among the only ten countries to have achieved its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target on maternal health and the Maternal Mortality Ratio has continued to decline to 154 per 100,000 live births in 2021.

The government’s economic goals under the National Strategic Development Plan 2019-2023 have directly contributed to the economic empowerment of women. Women are significant contributors to Cambodia’s economy, owning 62 percent of microenterprises and 26 percent of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).<sup>3</sup> Research shows that 90 percent of the SMEs managed by women in Cambodia were profitable in 2018.<sup>4</sup> Positively, Cambodia has one of the highest rates of women’s participation in the labour force at 78.9 percent in the region.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the proportion of women in decision-making positions in the public sector has steadily increased, and currently female civil servants represent 42 percent of all civil servants with 27 percent in decision-making positions.

Building on past successes, the new Pentagonal Strategy - Phase 1 for *Growth, Employment, Equity, Efficiency and Sustainability* and the revised Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) targets and indicators, situates gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as both stand alone and crosscutting national priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> RGC (2019) *The Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase IV 2019-2023*

<sup>2</sup> UNDP (2024), *Human Development Report 2023/2024, Breaking the gridlock;*

<sup>3</sup> Ibid; UNCT Cambodia (2023)

<sup>4</sup> UNESCAP (2020); IFC (2019)

<sup>5</sup> NIS, MoP (2022): *CSES 2021*, Phnom Penh; *ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2023*, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, December 2023

## Section Two: Priorities, Achievements, Setbacks and Challenges

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1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

### 1.1 Most Important Achievements

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) continues to demonstrate strong commitment to gender equality principles through integration into national policy frameworks, sector strategies and action plans and Cambodian women have made significant progress along many dimensions of human development. Importantly, Cambodia has maintained its steady increase in gender equality rankings to 92 out of 146 countries in 2023 with a gender parity score of 0.695 from 93 out of 149 countries in 2018 with a gender parity score of 0.683. Cambodia continues to show improvements in reducing the gender gap in health and survival with a score of 0.978 and in educational attainment with a score of 0.981, according to the Global Gender Gap Reports.<sup>6</sup>

#### 1.1.1 Poverty Reduction

Cambodia's main national development priority, enshrined in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) for 2019-2023 is to reduce poverty while fostering economic growth of between 7-8 percent per year.<sup>7</sup> Cambodia achieved steady economic growth over the past two decades before the COVID-19 pandemic of around 7 percent and attained lower middle-income status in 2015 in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita. The poverty rate had declined to less than 10 percent before the COVID-19 crisis.<sup>8</sup> COVID-19 dealt a setback to the country's progress in combatting poverty as employment and wages diminished. Since 2020, the rate has increased by 2.8 percentage points, indicating that 460,000 people have fallen below poverty income thresholds.<sup>9</sup>

#### 1.1.2 Gender Responsive Policy Agenda and Mechanisms

Cambodia has proven to be a country with good practices, illustrating how high-level commitment, inter-ministerial collaboration and partnerships with development partners, private sector and the civil society are instrumental to strengthening the institutional gender equality architecture across the government and to advance an inclusive national development agenda. Currently, two national women's machineries, namely the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), have been leading the efforts to promote and protect women's empowerment and women's rights in Cambodia. A Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G) was also formed in 2012 to strengthen the partnership, to aid coordination and effectiveness, and to lead forums between government, civil society and development partners for dialogues on sustainable development and advancement of gender equality.

In addition, all line ministries were requested to establish Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) mandated to develop Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) in their respective technical sectoral

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<sup>6</sup> World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report 2018* (pages 51-52) and 2023 (pages 133-34)

<sup>7</sup> RGC NSDP 2019-2023

<sup>8</sup> Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1, page 6

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/11/28/pandemic-checks-cambodia-s-progress-on-poverty>



fields. These GMAGs have served as mechanisms for implementing and monitoring gender related commitments and harmonizing the inputs of different stakeholders in their sectoral domains. At the sub-national level, there is also a framework for ensuring the protection and empowerment of women and girls, called the Women and Children’s Consultative Committees (WCCC), at the commune, district and provincial councils.

Now, Cambodia is in the process of applying a Gender Transformative Approach in strengthening the institutionalized processes for gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting (GRB) and developing monitoring and evaluation processes within the government policy framework and the sectoral policies and programs.

### 1.1.3 Gender Parity in Basic Education

The female literacy rate for the key age group 15-24 has increased to 96.6 percent in 2021 from 95.7 percent in 2017, and slightly higher the male literacy rate of 95.4 in 2021 for the same age group.<sup>10</sup> The overall adult female literacy rate has increased to 80.3 percent in 2021, up from to 78.1 percent in 2017 and 74.4 percent in 2013 (75.0 in 2015), while the adult male literacy rate is still higher at 89.5 percent in 2021, 87.3 percent in 2017 and 87.7 percent in 2013 (86.5 in 2015).

The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at primary school, lower secondary school (LSS) and upper secondary school (USS) and for teaching staff at all 3 levels of basic education from 2016/2017 to 2023/2024 all show improvements. The GPI for the GER at primary school has stayed equal at 0.98, while the changes in GPI for the GER have been in favour of girls in LSS at 1.14 and in USS at 1.18 in 2023-2024. There have also been significant increases in women teachers at primary level, and steady increases at lower and upper secondary school levels.

Table 1: Gender Parity Index in Basic Education

Gender Parity Index (GPI)	2012/13	2016/17	2023/24
GPI Net Enrolment Rate in Primary School		1.0	1.0
GPI GER Primary School	0.94	0.98	0.98
GPI GER Lower Secondary School	1.02	1.14	1.14
GPI GER Upper Secondary School	0.93	1.13	1.18
GPI teaching staff Primary School	0.97	1.26	1.51
GPI teaching staff Lower Secondary School	0.63	0.77	0.85
GPI teaching staff Upper Secondary School	0.60	0.65	0.71

Source: MoEYS, Public Education Statistics and Indicators 2012-2013, 2016-2017, 2023-2024, Phnom Penh.

Overall completion rates at primary school remained around 83.0 percent in the school year 2023-2024, with girls’ rates higher than boys at 86.0 percent. The net enrolment rate in primary school is the same for girls and boys at 91.7 percent and 91.6 percent respectively, achieving gender parity (1:1 ratio). Enrolment in pre-schools has increased by 18 percent from 2018-2019 to 2023-2024, with equal

<sup>10</sup> NIS, MoP (2018), Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2017; NIS, MoP (2022), Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2021

enrolment of girls and boys, and the number of pre-schools and classes has increased by 9 percent and 24 percent respectively.

For Lower Secondary School, girls represent 52 percent of all students and 34 percent of all repeaters. The gap between female and male LSS Gross Completion Rate (GCR) is in favour of girls, with 61.5 percent for girls and 50.1 percent for boys, and a GPI of 1.23 in 2023-2024 similar to 1.21 in 2017-18. For Upper Secondary School, girls represent 55 percent of the students and 38 percent of all repeaters. The gap between female and male USS Gross Completion Rate (GCR) is also in favour of girls, with 42.7 percent for girls and 32.6 percent for boys, and a GPI of 1.31 in 2023-2024. More women are teaching at secondary schools: women represent 45 percent and 39 percent of all teaching staff in LSS and USS respectively. For all secondary schools, women represent 43 percent of the teaching staff, with slightly more women teachers in urban areas (46 percent) than rural areas (41 percent).<sup>11</sup>

Across ASEAN, Cambodia remains among the highest in the ratio of girls to boys in primary and secondary school in 2022, with 0.96 and 1.14 respectively.<sup>12</sup>

#### **1.1.4 Improvements in Women's Sexual Reproductive Health**

Cambodia is among the only ten countries to have achieved its Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target on maternal health. The Maternal Mortality Ratio declined from 170 to 154 per 100,000 live births between 2014 and 2022 Cambodia is committed to the SDG 2030 target to eliminate maternal mortality with a target of reducing the MMR to 70 per 100,000 live births. The Total fertility rate in 2022 is 2.3 children per women, down from 2.7 in 2014.

The proportion of births attended by skilled health professionals increased to 98.7 percent in 2021-22 compared to 89 percent in 2014. Antenatal Care (ANC) coverage increased from 95 percent in 2014 to 99 percent in 2021-22. In 2021-22, 86 percent of pregnant women had at least four ANC visits prior to giving birth, up from 76 percent in 2014. Caesarean section deliveries can reduce maternal and neo-natal mortality. The proportion of pregnant women delivering by Caesarean section increased from 6.3 percent in 2014 to 17.9 percent in 2021-202.<sup>13</sup> All health facilities across the country are providing at least three contraceptive methods and the majority are providing up to seven methods. As a result, the modern Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (mCPR) increased from 39 percent in 2014 to 45 percent in 2021.<sup>14</sup>

#### **1.1.5 Improvements in women's economic development**

The RGC's economic goals under the NSDP 2019-2023 were to ensure sustainable economic growth of around 7 percent per year and create more jobs including through skill training and improvements in working conditions,<sup>15</sup> which directly contributes to economic empowerment of women. Positively, Cambodia has one of the highest rates of women's participation in the labour force at 78.9 percent in the

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<sup>11</sup> MoEYS: *Public Education Statistics and Indicators 2023-2024 and 2017-2018*. Phnom Penh

<sup>12</sup> ASEAN Secretariat (2023): *ASEAN Statistical Yearbook, 2023*

<sup>13</sup> RGC CDHS 2014 and 2021-2022

<sup>14</sup> RGC CDHS 2021-2022

<sup>15</sup> RGC NSDP 2019-2023

region.<sup>16</sup> According to the Global Gender Gap Index 2023, Cambodia scores quite high in female to male labour force participation at 0.84, though this is a slight reduction from 0.93 in 2018.

The percentage of women aged 15-64 years of age who are paid employees declined to 40.6 percent in 2021 down from a high of 56.4 percent in 2017, compared to men at 56.4 percent in 2021, up from 45.4 percent in 2017. In 2021, the percentage of women aged 15-64 years of age who were own account workers/ self-employed was 38.4 percent, compared to men at 33.7 percent, while 20.9 percent of women were unpaid family workers, much higher than for men at 9.7 percent.<sup>17</sup>

For wage employment, women's (aged 18 years and older) share in the agriculture, industrial and service sectors is shown below for 2014, 2017 and 2021, showing overall decreases in the agriculture sector, though 52 percent of rural women are in wage employment the agriculture sector in 2021. Women's share of wage employment in services was significantly higher in Phnom Penh (68.1 percent) and urban areas (44.8 percent) than in rural areas (28.2 percent) in 2021.

*Table 2 : Women's share of wage employment by sector (18 years and older)*

<b>Women's share of wage employment by sector</b>	<b>CSES 2014</b>	<b>CSES 2017</b>	<b>CSES 2021</b>
Agriculture	45.2%	40.1%	36.7%
Industry	46.1%	24.4%	25.2%
Service	34.7%	35.4%	38.1%

*Source: NIS MoP, CSES 2014, 2017, 2021*

In Cambodia, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for around 98 percent of all businesses, contributing around 58 percent to the GDP and providing around 73 percent of total jobs.<sup>18</sup> Women are significant contributors to Cambodia's economy, owning 62 percent of microenterprises and 26 percent of SMEs.<sup>19</sup> Research shows that 90 percent of the SMEs managed by women in Cambodia were profitable in 2018.<sup>20</sup> According to the Economic Census of Cambodia 2022, female representatives of establishments accounted for 69 percent of the total number of establishments. The World Bank Report on Women, Business and Law 2022 suggests that Cambodia ranks the highest among countries in the world where women are free to start-up businesses.

The government recognizes the importance of strengthening policies and initiatives to promote and foster Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), especially as a pathway for women's economic empowerment. The Women Entrepreneurship Development Center in partnership with the private sector has provided support services for business development, creation and expansion of market opportunities and promotion of digital and financial literacy for women entrepreneurs from micro and small entities. The Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Network (CamWen) represents women entrepreneurs in the ASEAN arena and so far 59 Cambodian women entrepreneurs have received the ASEAN Outstanding

<sup>16</sup> NIS, MoP (2022): CSES 2021, Phnom Penh; ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2023, Jakarta, ASEAN Secretariat, December 2023

<sup>17</sup> NIS MoP (2018) CSES 2017; NIS MoP (2022): CSES 2021

<sup>18</sup> RGC: The Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2021-2023

<sup>19</sup> Ibid; UNCT Cambodia (2023)

<sup>20</sup> UNESCAP (2020); IFC (2019)

Women Entrepreneurs Award. The National Strategy for Informal Economic Development 2023-2028 has been developed to enhance the protection, capacity building, productivity and the resilience of the informal economy,<sup>21</sup> and is of key importance for rural women's economic development.

### **1.1.6 Women in Public Sector**

The proportion of women in decision-making positions in the public sector has steadily increased. Most ministries-institutions have implemented new recruitment policies for civil servants that focus attention on increasing the number of females, especially in increasing the percentage of women recruits from 20 to 50 percent in the new recruitments. Currently, in the public sector female civil servants represent 42 percent of all civil servants with 27 percent in decision-making positions.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs is the lead institution to coordinate and provide support for the women's leadership programme within government institutions as well as to integrate into the programmes of the public academics, Royal School of Administration (RSA) and National School of Local Administration (NASLA). However, gender equality in decision-making positions is needed in the sectors with wide gaps such as in politics, digital, science, media, environment and climate change.

### **1.2 Setbacks and Challenges**

The COVID-19 pandemic, the invasion of Ukraine and global warming have represented challenges to fully achieving the CSDGs, including CSDG 5, due to their adverse effects on health, mobility, production, income generation, trade, tourism and overall price levels – especially on food and durable goods. The economy contracted by 3.1 percent during COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and led to a loss of jobs and income for thousands of workers, women-owned enterprises, vulnerable communities and those living below the national poverty line. Women were most affected due to their prevalence in these sectors and cultural norms making them responsible for domestic and household chores, requiring them to care for sick family members and home school during the pandemic, and many were pushed out of the labour force.<sup>22</sup>

While progress on social indicators, notably in health and education, has been strong over the past two decades, human and social development were badly hit by the pandemic. School closures disrupted learning affecting nearly 3.3 million students (50.4 percent female). The completion rate in lower secondary school is 48.1 percent and the survival rate at upper secondary school was reduced to 24.7 percent, indicating there is a need for alternative pathways to access education and skill development.<sup>23</sup> The loss of income and livelihoods due to the pandemic has amplified the risk and vulnerability in healthcare protection. The pandemic overstretched the health system, leading to low utilization of sexual reproductive and maternal services.

Despite significant achievements in the progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, Cambodian women face difficulties as social norms on gender relations, including unpaid care work and the burden of family care, continue to constrain development of women's potential and

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<sup>21</sup> [https://data.opendevelopmentcambodia.net/en/library\\_record/national-strategy-for-informal-economic-development-2023-2028](https://data.opendevelopmentcambodia.net/en/library_record/national-strategy-for-informal-economic-development-2023-2028)

<sup>22</sup> Cambodia's Voluntary National Review (VNR) 2023, pg 6-7

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, pg 7

women's empowerment in the economic, social, public and political life. Promoting gender equality still remains a priority for the government through increasing investment in gender-related agenda, and empowering women and girls in the fields of economy, education, health, and public leadership to take advantage of gender dividends, create favourable conditions for women to exercise their rights to decide about family issues and number of children, reduce the vulnerability of gender-based violence against women and girls, and promote intergenerational relationships.<sup>24</sup>

While Cambodia has very strong policy frameworks, mechanisms and national plans for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, the government recognizes the need to further strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including the collection and analysis of disaggregated data and gender statistics, in order to document progress, identify areas of improvement and develop gender responsive interventions.

2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

### **2.1 Women's economic development, through SME development and digitalisation**

Recognising that women are significant contributors to Cambodia's economy, owning 62 percent of microenterprises and 26 percent of small and medium sized enterprises, the government has developed policies and programs to strengthen and improve women's access to a range of services, products, markets and knowledge to enhance their businesses. Examples include the National Strategy for Informal Economic Development 2023-2028 which has been developed to enhance the protection, capacity building, productivity and the resilience of the informal economy,<sup>25</sup> and is of key importance for rural women's economic development, The Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022-2035 has integrated gender perspectives to address the gender digital divide through several initiatives and programs are designed to bridge the gender gap by providing women with the necessary tools and knowledge to participate fully in the digital economy<sup>26</sup>, and The Women Entrepreneurship Development Center in partnership with the private sector has provided support services for business development, creation and expansion of market opportunities.

### **2.2 Strengthened social protection programmes for women and vulnerable groups**

Within the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF) 2016-2025, Cambodia has made significant efforts to enhance social protection measures and to ensure vulnerable and marginalized populations such as people living with HIV and people with disabilities receive assistance through its social protection schemes. Cambodia has implemented various government programmes such as the ID Poor programme, which has helped to identify and target the poorest households for assistance. The programme has enabled the government to provide social assistance, education, health, and livelihood support to the poorest sections of society and pregnant women and children. The Social Insurance pillar covers pensions, healthcare, job risk, unemployment, and disability issues in both the formal and informal economy. In response to the pandemic's impact on poverty in the country, the Cambodian government has introduced social protection measures such as cash transfers and food distribution programmes to

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<sup>24</sup> Pentagonal Strategy – Phase I, page 64

<sup>25</sup> <https://misti.gov.kh/page/index?param=overall-framework.html>

<sup>26</sup> <https://mptc.gov.kh/en/2022/04/cambodia-digital-government-policy-2022-2035/>

support vulnerable communities. The government recently launched the roadmap to universal health coverage in Cambodia 2024-2035, with three goals. Firstly, expand the coverage of the health sector to at least 80 percent of the total population, which has now covered close to 7 million people. Secondly, increase the coverage of essential health services to at least 80 percent. Thirdly, reduce the amount spent from people's pocket on healthcare to about 35 percent of the total cost.<sup>27</sup>

The National Ageing Policy (2017–2030) unveiled in 2018 takes a comprehensive approach to the social welfare, health care, economic needs and inclusion of older persons through nine priority areas. Given that women have higher life expectancy than men, older women are projected to outnumber older men.

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) coordinates across line ministries through the Cambodian National Committee for the Elderly. The Ministry launched two important programmes: 1) Community-based Older People Development Programme and 2) Family-based Care for Older People Programme.

### **2.3 Implemented policies to eliminate violence against women, girls, and vulnerable groups**

The elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls is a top priority of the government's agenda for human capital development and harmony in the family and society.<sup>28</sup> Several action plans were implemented to address all forms of violence against women and girls, including the third National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2019-2023 (NAPVAW III), The five year National Strategic Plan for Counter Trafficking in Persons 2019–2023, The Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children 2017-2021 and the Prevention of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy Action Plan in Rattanak Kiri province 2017-2021.

### **2.4 Improved and expanded SRHR policies and services, for women and youth**

Cambodia has a favourable national policy environment to advance sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) rights, and several key national SRHR strategies, guidelines, and protocols were developed and/or updated in line with international standards and implemented throughout the country. Examples include The Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC) Improvement Plan 2021-2025, The National Strategy for Reproductive Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights 2017-2020 extended to 2023, The Family Planning Protocol and Long-Term Birth Spacing Methods Training Protocol, and The National Standard Operating Procedures for Cervical Cancer Screening and Management. The health system capacity has been improved to deliver comprehensive SRMH services and information, focusing on Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC) and Skilled Birth Attendance and Midwifery programme. Healthcare providers have been capacitated with rights-based family planning counselling and new skills set in order to improve acceptance and utilization rate in the country. Youth friendly health services were further enhanced by the Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from UNFPA, including connecting schools with health facilities through community dialogues and forums for youth participation.

### **2.5 Improving and modernizing skills and education for women, girls and youth for future**

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<sup>27</sup> Universal Health Coverage Roadmap in Cambodia 2024-2035

<sup>28</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028

The RGC has introduced policies and programs aimed at increasing and expanding quality education and skills training for women, youth and vulnerable groups and to improve living standards. The National Policy on Lifelong Learning (2019) was developed to maximise human resource development to help sustainably meet Cambodia's 2050 goal of high-income-status. Lifelong learning (formal and informal) includes goals to skill, upskill and reskill youth and adults by promoting access to learning opportunities, particularly for vulnerable groups. The National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017–2025, aligned with SDG 4 and SDG 8, aims to equip the workforce to meet market demands and enhance Cambodia's competitiveness. The Master Plan for Technical Education at Upper Secondary 2015-2019 of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) includes a gender mainstreaming strategy with 3 sub-strategies to promote gender equality in infrastructure, technical education and institutional competency. Through these frameworks, the ministries have developed several training programs to be flexible so young women and men can better access education in the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector from basic to higher education.

3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?

### **3.1 Women with disabilities**

Cambodia has a strong commitment to disability rights, evidenced by the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Optional Protocol, and the signing of the Marrakesh Treaty. Cambodia instituted a law on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (National Disability Law) and the National Disability Strategic Plan 2019-2023 (NDSP2) that provide a strong framework for action across all ministries and agencies at the national and sub-national levels. The National Disability Strategic Plan 2019-2023 includes programs to promote disability inclusion and quality services for gender-based violence victims. This ensures that women with disabilities received the necessary support and protection.<sup>29</sup>

There is heightened awareness of government officials and CSOs/NGOs of the intersectionality between gender-based violence (GBV) and different groups of vulnerable women and women at risk of violence. The integration of Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion (GEDI) training packages for service providers is an example of effective and efficient collaboration between MoWA, MoSVY and NGOs/CSOs to address the intersectionality between GBV and disability.

### **3.2 Girls, Adolescents and younger women, including indigenous women/girls**

To address high rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancy in the Northeast regions of Cambodia, which is home to the majority of indigenous peoples, the MoWA provided technical support to the Ratanak Kiri Province Women and Children's Consultative Committees in piloting the Prevention of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy Action Plan in Ratanak Kiri province (2017-2021). The action plan has been incorporated into the provincial development plan by the Ratanak Kiri Provincial Administration, and budget has been allocated for implementation.<sup>30</sup> The MoWA is leading the nation to develop the National Action Plan on the Prevention of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.undp.org/cambodia/projects/programme-promote-disability-inclusion-ppdi>

<sup>30</sup> Cambodia UPR National Report 2024, page 9

<sup>31</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI Strategic Plan 2024-2028

### 3.3 Migrant Women

Through the Safe and Fair Programme<sup>32</sup>, in collaboration with the MoWA, MoLVT and CSO partners, women migrant workers and their family members have greater access to information through innovative applications (Apps) and multiple media campaigns regardless of their literacy levels. From 2018-2022, over 500,000 people were reached via social and mass media campaign to change attitudes and behaviours towards women migrant workers and violence against women, over 65,000 community members engaged through community-based and women-led online platforms and peer networks on VAW, trafficking and prevention. Furthermore, 5,849 women migrant workers received migration, VAW psychosocial, health and social services and information from migrant worker resource centres and VAW service providers.<sup>33</sup>

4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

The COVID-19 crisis and the slowdown in the global economy greatly affected Cambodia's growth performance in 2020 and growth prospects in the medium term. GDP growth, projected between 5.8 to 7 percent pre-COVID-19, was downwardly adjusted to -3.1% in 2020. The pandemic caused a collapse of global trade, with significant negative direct and indirect impacts on Cambodia. In the United States and Europe, demand has evaporated for Cambodia's key exported products such as textiles, footwear, travel goods and rice, which comprise about 52 percent of total merchandise exports. Job losses have resulted, affecting more than 150,000 textile, footwear, and travel goods factory workers, the majority of whom are women; over 90,000 migrant workers who returned from Thailand; more than 17,000 tourism-sector workers; and an unknown but significant number of informal sector entertainment workers.<sup>34</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a loss of jobs and income for thousands of workers women-owned enterprises, as well as vulnerable communities and those living below the national poverty line. Women were most affected due to their prevalence in these sectors and cultural norms making them responsible for domestic care and household chores, requiring them to care for sick family members and home-school during the pandemic. This pushed many women out of the labour force.

The Government's ID Poor programme has enabled the government to provide social assistance, education, health and livelihood support to the poorest sections of society, including vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls. In response to the pandemic's impact on poverty, the Government introduced social protection measures such as cash transfers and food distribution programs to support vulnerable communities.<sup>35</sup> The Government developed the Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2021-2023, with the aim to

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<sup>32</sup> *The Safe and Fair: Realising Women Migrant Workers' Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN Region programme is part of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate VAWG by 2030, a global, multi-year initiative between the European Union and United Nations. Safe and Fair is implemented through a partnership between the ILO and UN Women, in collaboration with UNODC*

<sup>33</sup> *Safe and Fair Programme key results in Cambodia (2018-2022)*

<sup>34</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023

<sup>35</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023



restore and bolster Cambodia's economic growth back to its potential rate and strengthen resilience for sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development in the long run.<sup>36</sup>

## 5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in all sectors and areas remains a priority in the Royal Government of Cambodia's **Policy Agenda and Pentagonal Strategy – Phase 1 for Growth, Employment, Equity, Efficiency and Sustainability** in Building the Foundation Towards Realising the Cambodia Vision 2050 through strengthening citizenship in a highly civilised, ethical, equitable and inclusive society in which 'women are at its core'. The Government will continue to promote and increase investment in gender equality and women's empowerment in the economy, education, health, and public leadership, which will create an enabling environment for women to exercise their decision-making rights in respect of family planning, reduce vulnerability to gender-based violence against women and girls, and promote intergenerational relations.

### 5.1 Gender Transformative Approach

The draft National Policy on Gender Equality 2024-2034 has been formulated to provide a longer-term policy framework for gender equality in line with the Government's Pentagonal Strategy, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and CEDAW principles. The policy is the key document to apply gender transformative approaches to promote accountability across government ministries-institutions, stakeholders and the whole society.

The core strategy of the Five Year Plan for Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women and Girls 2024-2028 (Neary Rattanak VI) is the gender mainstreaming framework through gender transformative approach. For applying this approach, MoWA will focus on improving gender research and evidence-based policy formulation, gender responsive budgeting (GRB), monitoring and evaluation system and mechanism and transforming social attitudes and behaviours to promote gender equality at all levels.<sup>37</sup>

### 5.2 Strengthening women in economic development

The RGC recognizes that stronger investment in social and human development are vital to ensure the success of Cambodia's economy in the longer term. Moreover, an increase in investment in gender equality and women's rights is needed to bridge the gender wage gap and remove barriers to enter and/or be part of the formal labour force.<sup>38</sup>

Under the Pentagonal Strategy-Phase 1, women's economic empowerment is a priority to achieve gender equality and women's rights, and this is enshrined in various sectoral and policy frameworks. Building on the past successes as well as addressing key barriers to women's participation in the economic sector, the government will continue to strengthen the implementation of key sectoral policies including the National Employment Policy 2015-2025, the National Technical Vocational and Education Training Policy 2017-

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<sup>36</sup> RGC, Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2021-2023

<sup>37</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028

<sup>38</sup> Cambodia's VNR 2023, pg 6-7

2025, the National Strategy for Informal Economy Development 2023-2028, The National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2019-2025, as well as further promoting women's entrepreneurship through expanded education, technical and vocational training for women.

In Cambodia, for promoting women's economic empowerment the government will focus on 1) supporting women's entrepreneurship development, especially women led MSMEs, 2) promoting care economy and unpaid care and domestic work, 3) addressing gender gaps in skill and job development, especially in digital, green and care jobs and 4) family economy development for women. Under these priorities, MoWA will lead and coordinate with relevant line ministries, institutions and partners, including the private sector, in order to promote ecosystem including public and private partnership, policy framework and public investment.<sup>39</sup>

### **5.3 Legal protection for women and girls, including eliminating violence against women and girls**

Violence against women is a human rights violation and poses a major obstacle to women's participation in national development, and the consequences place heavy economic and social burdens on families, communities and society as whole. The elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls remains a top priority of the government's agenda for human capital development and harmony in the family and society.<sup>40</sup>

Under Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028, MoWA will continue to lead and coordinate ministries, institutions development partners, civil society, media and the private sector, in formulating and implementing the fourth National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2024-2030 (NAPVAW IV). The following are priorities and measures: 1) Mainstream gender in the process of formulating and implementing laws and legal and judicial reform processes, 2) Develop and implement the legal framework, policies and regulations related to the prevention of GBV, and sexual exploitation of women and girls, 3) Develop and implement the NAPVAW IV (2024-2030) and the national, regional and sub-regional plans to related to countering human trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation, drug addiction/abuse and multi-sectoral response mechanisms, 4) Strengthen and expand the implementation of capacity building programs and campaigns to prevent violence against women and girls as well as digital platforms to prevent and provide response services to assist victims of gender-based violence, and 5) Develop and implement the National Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy.

### **5.4 Enhancement of Quality Education and Technical Skills Training, including for women and girls**

Under the Pentagonal Strategy-Phase 1 2024-2028, Pentagon 1: Human Capital Development identifies five priorities including two related to education and skills: 1) Enhancement of quality education, sports, science and technology (Side 1) and 2) Technical skills training (Side 2).

The MoEYS National Education 2030 Roadmap has aligned national policy and planning with the global targets. The Royal Government of Cambodia has initiated a number of key policies and interventions for 2024-2028. Key gender related actions include 1) systematically increasing coverage of early childcare and education to reach 82 percent, primary school completion to 91.1 percent, lower secondary school

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<sup>39</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028

<sup>40</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028

completion to 61.1 percent, Upper secondary school completion to 45 percent, GER to 35 percent and Tertiary Education GER to 25 percent by 2030, 2) systematically implementing teacher reforms addressing the issues of recruitment, training, deployment, continuous professional development, mentoring/on-site support and career pathways 3) strengthening implementation and monitoring of inclusive education policies, including the provision of targeted scholarships for learners from all disadvantaged groups to ensure equity and no-one is left behind, and 4) encouraging learners to enrol in STEM education in tertiary and higher education.

The Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022-2035 vision is to establish a digital government to improve citizens' quality of life and build their trust through better public service provision, and sets out 10 strategies to achieve this.<sup>41</sup> Under Strategy 7: Building Digital Human Capital, key priority actions for women's empowerment include enhancing digital leadership training and organizing orientation, outreach, encouragement and incentivization programs for more youth, especially young women, to uptake and major in digital technology skills, with the purpose of reducing the gender gap in digital skills.

### **5.5 Empowerment of Women and Girls in Leadership and Governance**

The Royal Government continues to promote investments in gender equality and empowering women and girls in public leadership, which is an important part of promoting resilient, sustainable and inclusive development.<sup>42</sup> In line with the Pentagonal Strategy Phase I, MoWA will continue to coordinate the implementation of programs and initiatives to promote women's leadership, including young women and girls, promote gender mainstreaming in reform programs and strengthen governance, and continue to lead the Technical Working Group on Women in Leadership and Governance, which is a technical mechanism to promote participation and shared responsibility to advance women's role in leadership and governance.

MoWA's priorities are to 1) Strengthen policy support, support mechanisms, and workplace environment to promote women's participation in leadership and governance at all levels, 2) Expand women's leadership development programs and networks in public and political sectors, 3) Increase public awareness and support for women's and girls' leadership at all levels, and 4) Promote girls' leadership through innovative programs and initiatives in schools and communities.

Key strategies include promoting the proportion of women participating in civil service in line with the CSDG targets (CSDG 5 and CSDG 16) through policies and programmes, Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028, the National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD) *Strategy and Action Plan to Increase Women in Sub-National Management Positions 2024-2028*, the *Policy on Promotion of Gender Equality for Sub-National Democratic Development 2019* and the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan (GMAP) in all sectors which have a focus on increasing female civil servants and strengthening women's leadership in each sector. Embedded in each policy and plan is a strategy to develop and implement capacity development programs for women on leadership, advocacy, negotiation, and gender mainstreaming to strengthen their capacity to fulfil their leadership roles.

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<sup>41</sup> RGC Cambodia Digital Government Policy 2022-2035, MoPTC, January 2022

<sup>42</sup> Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028

## Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

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### I. Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

*Critical Areas of Concern: A) Women and poverty, F) Women and the economy, I) Human rights of women and L) The girl child*

6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (*including informal, non-standard employment, entrepreneurship*)?

#### **6.1 Strengthened gender responsive job creation, including women's entrepreneurship**

The RGC has developed and updated several strategies, plans and programs to support women's economic development, including entrepreneurship. In 2020, MoWA established the Women Entrepreneurship Development Center (WEDC) to provide capacity building support to women entrepreneurs by adopting a partnership model with the private sector.<sup>43</sup> From 2022-2023, the WEDC has provided the services for business development, the creation and expansion of market opportunities and the promotion of digital and financial literacy for 278 women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises.

Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Network (CamWen) represents women entrepreneurs in the ASEAN arena; 59 Cambodian women entrepreneurs received the ASEAN Outstanding Women Entrepreneurs Award. The World Bank Report in 2022 on Women, Business and Law suggests that Cambodia ranks the highest among countries in the world where women are free to start-up businesses.

Provincial Women's Development Centers (WDCs) have diversified their functions and trained 18,700 women from 2019-2023, including widows, women in need, prisoners, women who have dropped out of society, and women from indigenous peoples' groups), on ancestral vocational skills, business start-up and development skills, entrepreneurship, digital literacy and occupational development. At the same time, handicraft production and community savings groups, with a total of 125 members, have been formed and operated.

MoWA and the Provincial WDCs also play an important role to coordinate with the TVET/Provincial Training Centers (PTCs) to facilitate women to participate within the TVET programmes.

Over the past five years, the government has provided TVET to 273,194 trainees in total (120,128 female), reskilling training to workers and employees affected by COVID-19 impact under the government intervention (14,000 employees), provided apprenticeship opportunities to 116,968 persons in total (85,715 female), and internships/field trips to factories and enterprises for 16,116 persons (4,108 female) and conducted the test on ERPL for 1,391 persons (64 female).<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Cambodia Progress Report; Agreed Conclusion on Women's Economic Empowerment in Changing World of Work (undated)

<sup>44</sup> Cambodia Skills Development Roadmap 2023-2035

## 6.2 Improved financial inclusion and access to credit

The National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS) 2019-2025 aims to increase access to formal financial services, reduce the financial exclusion of women by half from 27 percent to 13 percent, and increase usage of formal financial services from 59 percent to 70 percent by 2025 as well as improve household welfare and support economic growth through six key priority areas. Gender is mainstreamed throughout with evidence-based information and analysis of women and men’s participation and barriers to financial services, including rural women, and both gender sensitive and gender responsive actions, as well as sex-disaggregated data collection, are included.<sup>45</sup> Fifty nine percent of Cambodian adults have access to formal financial services, 12 percent use only informal services, while 29 percent are completely excluded. The level of overall financial inclusion is similar for women (73 percent) and men (69 percent) though access to financial services is slightly lower for rural areas (69 percent) than urban areas (73 percent).<sup>46</sup>

## 6.3 Improved access to modern technologies, infrastructure and services

The Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework in Agriculture (GMPSFA) 2022-2026 is gender transformative in design as it provides a detailed analysis of gender and agriculture. The key objectives are 1) to promote women’s economic empowerment through women’s equitable access to and use of resources and services for and improved conditions for women in agriculture, 2) to strengthen capacities, resources and commitments within MAFF to ensure effective mainstreaming of gender perspectives into agriculture sector, 3) increase women’s and men’s capacity, equal representation and participation in the agriculture sector, and 4) to improve collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders in the agriculture sectors, climate change and natural resource management.

Agriculture cooperatives and producer groups are useful means to improve agriculture production and knowledge, share experiences and learnings, and increase access for farmers, especially women, to agriculture inputs, information, agri-technology and markets. As of 2021, there were 1,217 agricultural cooperatives with 254,759 members (63 percent women), 636 community forestry groups with 16,924 members (49 percent women), 516 fishery groups with 190,070 members (44 percent women) and 817 saving groups with 43,024 members (68 percent women) formed under MAFF.<sup>47</sup>

7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

The RGC acknowledges unpaid care work is a significant deterrent to women’s economic empowerment and has included some measures to address the unequal distribution of unpaid domestic and care work on women in various national plans, including Neary Rattanak V 2019-2023 and more recently Neary Rattanak VI 2024 to 2028. The Cambodian SDG 5.4.1 indicator measures “the number of legal and policy measures to address and recognize work-life balance, and unpaid care works and promote access to decent employment”, and Cambodia’s VNR 2023 report noted an increase of measures taken from 7 in 2019 to 10 in 2022.

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<sup>45</sup> NFIS 2019-2025

<sup>46</sup> NFIS 2019-2025

<sup>47</sup> MAFF GMPSFA 2022-2026

In 2021, the MoWA initiated research and documentation of lessons learned from the implementation of policy measures responsive to unpaid care work and care economy, engaged in consultations and capacity development with relevant ministries and institutions to develop a Care Economy Framework and Action Plan and public awareness materials and campaign programs.<sup>48</sup> This framework and action plan focuses on 1) Care Infrastructure, 2) Care Services, 3) Employment-related care policies and 4) Care-related Social Protection.

### **7.1 Expanded care services for child care**

The government has continued to expand early childhood education and childcare centres to support young children’s development as well as reduce the care giving burden on women, including the promotion of community-based childcare programs to provide affordable and accessible childcare solutions. The Early Childhood Education program objective is to expand early childhood services for children aged from 0 to under 6 years old, especially for children from poor families, ethnic minorities and children with disabilities, with priority given for community and home-based schools. The number of pre-schools for children aged 3-5 increased to 8,607 in 2022/2023 up from 7,587 in 2017/18 with 88 percent of the pre-schools located in rural areas. Enrolment increased by 30 percent to 380,788 students in 2022/2023, with equal percentage of girls and boys, up from 293,385 students in 2017/18.<sup>49</sup>

Both the MoWA and MoEYS are introducing of childcare facilities and services within their institutions to support female staff with caregiving responsibilities. Under Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028, MoWA is promoting childcare facilities and programs in public and private workplaces, through disseminating guidelines on the operation of child care centre and programs in workplaces.

### **7.2 Improvement of care infrastructure, including rural roads and water and sanitation**

The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) has made important progress in rehabilitating rural roads at the provincial, district, commune and village level, rehabilitating approximately 2,000 kilometres of rural roads from 2019 to 2024. The number of rural roads registered under MRD totals 45,241 kilometres. Enhancements in rural road infrastructure have facilitated better and timelier access to markets, healthcare centres, educational facilities, and employment opportunities, thereby reducing women’s time spent on traveling and enabling women to have more time for economic activities, and participating in community activities, while contributing to overall poverty reduction efforts in rural areas.

The MRD has made important progress in promoting access to improved water supply and sanitation in rural areas in line with NSDP and SDG targets, and the National Strategic Plan for Rural Water Supply Sanitation and Hygiene 2014–2025. Access to improved sanitation also rapidly increased from 70.9 percent in 2017 to 88 percent in 2021. The percentage of rural population with access to improved water supply increased rapidly from 58.3 percent in 2017 to 87 percent in 2021.<sup>50</sup> Investments in water and infrastructure projects reduce the time rural women spend on water collections and household chores. Other clean water projects for lower income households have enabled time and cost saving for women, thereby reducing care burdens and ultimately increasing their health and well-being.

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<sup>48</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028

<sup>49</sup> MoEYS Education Congress Report 2021-2022, April 2023

<sup>50</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023, CSES 2017, 2021

### 7.3 Expanded care related social protections

The IDPoor system of social protection is the national targeting system for identifying poor households for social assistance. Since May 2020, the on demand system has enabled newly poor households to register. As many as 692,092 households comprising 2.8 million people were able to register were able to benefit from cash assistance under the Cash Transfer for COVID-19 scheme as of March 2021, 50 percent of the beneficiaries expected to be women. Especially noteworthy is the cash transfer program to pregnant women and families with children aged up to 2 years. More than 170,000 pregnant women and children young than 2 years have received social protection stipends totalling \$10 million since 2019. Around 68,000 women had received this benefit in March 2020 as a baseline and 6,600 more women were being added per month.

8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

#### 8.1 Mainstreamed gender perspectives in national digital policies

Cambodia has a strong commitment to leave no woman behind and believes that encouraging and empowering women in science, technology and innovation is crucial to achieving a sustainable and inclusive future. That is why the government has put in place national policies, plan of actions as well as key measures. For example: 1) The National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy and Roadmap 2030 target five main pillars, namely Governance, Education, Research and Development, Collaboration and Networking, and Enabling Ecosystem. Among these pillars, the most important goal focusing on driving women's and girls' empowerment is that by 2030 *"at least 40 percent of STEM graduates are women"*.<sup>51</sup> 2) The Policy Framework on Digital Economy and Society outlines a long-term vision to build a vibrant digital economy and society and puts a special focus on improving women's digital literacy, women's access and participation in the digital sector. 3) the National Digital Government Policy 2022-2035 highlights specific targets to promote women digital leadership within government institutions, and provides a roadmap to guide and develop programs for young girls and women to close the gender gap in the digital sector in Cambodia.

#### 8.2 Introduced and strengthened programmes to increase digital literacy and skills of women and girls

Several ministries have been actively involved in programmes to reduce the digital divide. MoWA has implemented various digital literacy programs aimed at improving Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) skills among marginalized and rural women providing them with the necessary tools to participate in the digital economy. MoWA's initiatives include supporting women entrepreneurs by providing them with digital tools and training to enhance their business operations and access to markets. MoEYS has integrated ICT education into the school curriculum to ensure that all students, including girls, have basic digital literacy skills. This initiative includes providing computer labs and internet access in schools across the country. The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) has developed vocational training programs that include ICT training modules. These programs are designed to equip women with digital skills that are essential for various professions. MoLVT also collaborates with private sector companies to provide training and job placement opportunities for women in the ICT sector.

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<sup>51</sup> RGC/MISTI. 2021. *Cambodia's Science, Technology & Innovation Roadmap 2030*.  
<https://misti.gov.kh/public/file/202108261629990117.pdf>

Through the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications (MoPTC) GMAP 2029-2023, ICT Development Strategy 2020 and the Gender Promotion Guidelines in the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology (CADT), the MoPTC provides basic training on ICT and smart phones to users, especially vulnerable groups, such as the poor, people with disabilities, women, the elderly, and ethnic minorities, to strengthen management information technology capacity and digital economy at the national and sub-national levels.

### **8.3 Measures to promote gender-responsive STEM Education**

The MoEYS has launched campaigns and programs to encourage girls to pursue education and careers in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields. These efforts include scholarships, mentorship programs, and STEM clubs. The Skills4Girls initiative introduced secondary-school girls to digital devices and programming. The Generation Future initiative supports promising ideas by young Cambodians through mentoring: includes scaling up projects such as Code for Girls.

Through the MoPTC GMAP 2029-2023, ICT Development Strategy 2020 and the Gender Promotion Guidelines in the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology (CADT), the MoPTC provided basic training on ICT and smart phones to users, especially vulnerable groups, such as the poor, people with disabilities, women, the elderly, ethnic minorities, etc. for the growth of the local economy and to strengthen management information technology capacity and digital economy at the national and sub-national levels.

9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

The Medium-term Revenue Mobilization Strategy 2019–2023 has served as a foundation for ensuring effective revenue collection to meet increasing spending needs in the implementation of the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV. The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) implements the medium-term macroeconomic and public finance frameworks aimed specifically at identifying resource needs and financing requirements on a three-year rolling basis. Each ministry/institution, both at the national and sub-national level, have developed their respective Budget Strategic Plan to ensure budget linkage with their policy priorities as outlined in the Rectangular Strategy and the National Strategic Development Plan. Each ministry/institution has comprehensively identified policy objectives and programme structures which have been implemented within a performance-based budget in line with the Budget System Reform Strategy 2018–2025. The Strategic Budget Plan of each ministry/institution has been reconciled with the macro and public finance frameworks which have been the basis for effective and efficient annual budget allocation to meet the RGC’s policy priorities. Therefore, the annual budget has been an important tool to make progress towards the CSDGs.<sup>52</sup>

The RGC has implemented a resource mobilization strategy that significantly increased tax revenue, resulting in substantial government savings. Indirect taxes, particularly excise taxes on petroleum and other products, have been the largest source of tax revenue. However, the fiscal space has shrunk due to increased spending needed to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. While

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<sup>52</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023



economic growth and increased tax revenue provide opportunities for investment in social protection and educational programs, inequality, limited fiscal space, and governance challenges pose significant obstacles. Addressing these issues through targeted policies and reforms is essential to ensure that women can fully participate in and benefit from economic growth and development initiatives.

## II. Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

*Critical Areas of Concern: A) Women and poverty, B) Education and Training of Women, C) Women and Health, I) Human Rights of Women and L) The girl child*

10. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Available data shows that before the COVID-19 outbreak, the poverty rate in Cambodia reduced significantly. At the country level, it decreased from 26.3 percent to 17.8 percent over 2014–2019. During the same period, the poverty rate in Phnom Penh and other urban/rural areas dropped from 6.8 percent, 18.5 percent, and 30.2 percent in 2014 to 4.2 percent, 9.6 percent, and 22.8 percent in 2019, respectively. This progress is attributed to the country's strong economic growth and improved access to education and healthcare, among other factors.<sup>53</sup> COVID-19 dealt a setback to progress in combatting poverty as employment and wages diminished. Since 2020, the poverty rate increased by 2.8 percent.

### **10.1 Strengthened social protection programmes for women**

Cambodia has implemented various government programmes such as the ID Poor programme, which has helped to identify and target the poorest households for assistance. The programme has enabled the government to provide social assistance, education, health, and livelihood support to the poorest sections of society, including women and girls. In response to the pandemic's impact on poverty in the country, the Cambodian government has introduced social protection measures such as cash transfers and food distribution programmes to support vulnerable communities. These efforts have helped to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on poverty levels to some extent. Through the establishment of the National Social Protection Policy Framework and its General Secretariat, the Government is making headways towards building more comprehensive coverage through expansion of contributory and non-contributory schemes.

### **10.2 Support for rural women's' entrepreneurship and business development activities**

At the sub-national level, MoWA has focused on reducing poverty among women and their families and improving women's economic situation. The 18 Provincial Women's Development Centres (PWDC) in 14 provinces and Provincial Department of Women's Affairs (PDOWA) have diversified their functions and trained 18,700 women, including widows, needy women, prisoners, drop-out women, and indigenous peoples' women, on traditional vocational skills, business start-up and development skills, entrepreneurship, digital literacy and occupational development. The WDCs help women to start and manage their business ventures, and offers skills training such as weaving, manufacturing, handicrafts, tailoring, hairdressing and food processing.<sup>54</sup> MoWA has helped organize over 200 handicraft production

<sup>53</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023

<sup>54</sup> MoWA 2021, "Women Development Centers"

and community saving groups with over 5,000 families in non-agricultural industries. Other initiatives include the Women’s Economic Empowerment Project which was implemented in five provinces to provide skills and techniques for raising chickens, growing vegetables, making handicrafts, tourism service delivery and other services to improve household economies of 473 women.<sup>55</sup>

### **10.3 Increasing and improving skills and education for women, girls and youth.**

Poverty in Cambodia largely results from underemployment rather than unemployment, due in part to a lack of employable skills. Underqualification affects more women than men. The RGC has introduced policies and programs aimed at increasing and expanding quality education and skills training for women, youth and vulnerable groups and to improve living standards. The National Policy on Lifelong Learning (2019) was developed to maximise human resource development to help sustainably meet Cambodia’s 2050 goal of high-income-status. Lifelong learning (formal and informal) includes goals to skill, upskill and reskill youth and adults by promoting access to learning opportunities, particularly for vulnerable groups. The National Technical Vocational Education and Training Policy 2017–2025, aligned with SDG4 and SDG8, aims to equip the workforce to meet market demands and enhance Cambodia’s competitiveness. The policy also calls on youth to volunteer and highlights job opportunities for those who have volunteered.

11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

#### **11.1 Improved access to social protection for other groups of marginalized women**

Within the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025, Cambodia has made significant efforts to enhance social protection measures and to ensure vulnerable and marginalized populations such as people living with HIV and people with disabilities receive assistance through its social protection schemes. In 2019, Cambodia extended the IDPoor registration system to include people living with HIV, including women living with HIV. In 2020, Cambodia included people living with disabilities, including women, into the IDPoor registration system. In addition, the Health Equity Fund targeting low income families, including poor women and female headed households, through a national identification system had a 25 percent increase in members from 2019-2021.<sup>56</sup>

The Framework for Social Protection Response to Emergencies finalized in September 2023 produced by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), with the MoH, MoWA, MoEYS, MoI, MoP with support of development partners, focusing on social assistance for vulnerable groups, including women.<sup>57</sup> During COVID-19 specific measures were implemented to support women and girls, including emergency cash transfers, food assistance and health services.

#### **11.2 The cash transfers program for pregnant woman and children under 2 years old**

The Cash Transfer Program for Pregnant Woman and Children under 2 years old is a national social assistance program under the Human Capital Development Section of the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF 2016-2025) which was officially rolled out on June 1, 2019. The target group of the program are pregnant women and children under 2 years old in the poor households. The program’s

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<sup>55</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028

<sup>56</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023

<sup>57</sup> MoSVY 2023, Framework for Social Protection Response to Emergencies, September 2023

objective is to improve the well-being of mothers and children and contribute to addressing malnutrition of children in poor families, from pregnancy until the age of 2 years, thus enhancing their physical and mental development within the first 1000 days of lives.

This program is being implemented by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY), with the participation from relevant ministries and institutions both at the national and sub-national levels, including the public health centers. In regards to the progress from the start of the implementation until May 2022, this program has been delivering benefits to 165,610 pregnant women and 102,083 children under 2 years old with the total expenditure of 74 billion riels or equivalent to 18.6 million USD<sup>58</sup>. In addition, from August 2023, pregnant women workers receive cash support in three stages under social security scheme. In the first stage, pregnant women will receive cash support of 80,000 riel (20 USD) up to four times when they come for antenatal care visits. After delivery in a health facility, new mothers will be given an additional one-time payment of 800,000 riel (200 USD). In the final stage, mothers will be given 80,000 riel up to 10 times each for post-delivery check-ups for themselves and their babies until their children are two-years-old. In 2023, there are 105 192 pregnant women workers benefits from social security fund and 53 797 pregnant women benefits from cash transfer program of social assistance scheme<sup>59</sup>.

These schemes are designed to encourage pregnant women and mothers to seek the health services they need for themselves and their children, while also providing further income support to reduce poverty. Currently, this program is continued and being part of the new family package social assistance program<sup>60</sup>.

### **11.3 Expanded social protection to women in formal and informal employment**

The 2019 Law on Social Security Schemes replaces the previous law from 2002, which regulates social security for individuals defined under the Labour Law, including those in the public and private sectors, and provides for the future inclusion of self-employed persons. It represents a significant step towards comprehensive social protection in Cambodia, focusing on inclusivity and support for vulnerable groups, including women. The law covers various schemes ensuring occupational safety, health care, pensions, and future plans for unemployment benefits, reflecting Cambodia's commitment to improving social security and addressing gender disparities. The National Social Security Fund (NSSF) is the implementing agency.

By 2022, the total number of people covered under the NSSF increased to over 3.12 million (1.8 million women or 57 percent), up from 2 million in 2018.<sup>61</sup> Under the Occupation Risk Scheme, 20,483 formal enterprises/institutions in the private and public sector were registered with over 2.8 members (1.75 females or 62.5 percent). Under the Health Care Scheme, 18,803 formal and informal enterprises/institutions in the private and public sectors were registered with over 3.12 members (1.8 million females or 57 percent ). Women accessed health care services at far greater numbers and more

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<sup>58</sup> NSPC – Policy Brief Vol 6: Country-Led Process Evaluation of the Cash Transfer Program for Pregnant Women and Children under 2 years old, September 2022

<sup>59</sup> Annual CNCW Report in 2023

<sup>60</sup> Sub-Decree on the Implementation of the National Social Assistance Program in the Family Package, December 2023

<sup>61</sup> NSSF Annual Report 2022

times, 2.2 million times/women or 73 percent, out of a total of over 3 million visits.<sup>62</sup> Membership of the NSSF for Health Care covering private sector workers, including women workers, and current and ex civil servants and veterans, grew by 63 percent from 2019-2022.

Since 2018, the NSSF has registered informal workers, in line with the regulation that reduced the registration threshold for the NSSF schemes from enterprises with at least eight employees to one. By 2022, NSSF had registered 943 informal enterprises/establishments consisting of 96,259 members (20,822 females). In 2023, maternity allowances were provided to 105 192 women and additional allowances for childbirth .<sup>63</sup>

In July 2022, NSSF launched the Social Security Scheme on Pensions for workers. By the end of 2022, 14,352 enterprises/establishments had registered with over 2.58 million members (1.65 females or 64 percent) or which 2,706 members (992) are with the voluntary pension scheme.

Furthermore, Increased budget allocations for social protection and social assistance rose to 4.6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023, expanding the number of people benefiting from cash-transfer programs. Sub-national budget allocations for women and children continued to increase in 2023, and the Government adopted two sub-decrees that increased budget thresholds for social services, hygiene and the environment at the district, municipality and commune/sangkat levels for 2024-2028.<sup>64</sup>

12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

### **12.1 Updated Sexual and Reproductive Health Policies and Guidelines**

Cambodia has a favourable national policy environment to advance sexual and reproductive health (SRHR) rights, with the Health Strategic Plan and the National Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, incorporating key principles of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and 2030 SDG agenda. Essential sexual reproductive and maternal health (SRMH) services are well embedded in the Primary Health Care (PHC) and the Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Several key national SRHR strategies, guidelines, and protocols were developed and/or updated in line with international standards and implemented throughout the country. Examples include The Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC) Improvement Plan 2021-2025 and an updated EmONC Curricula (1-month and 3-month courses); The National Strategy for Reproductive Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights 2017-2020 extended to 2023, which fully incorporates the ICPD Nairobi commitments; updated Birth Spacing Manuals, Training Curriculum and Training Materials, in line with National Commitments to ICPD25 Summit in Nairobi in 2019, updated Safe Motherhood Protocol for Health Centres and Referral Hospitals, The Family Planning Protocol and Long-Term Birth Spacing Methods Training Protocol, The National Standard Operating Procedures for Cervical Cancer Screening and Management and The National Guidelines on ensuring the continuity of essential SRMNCH services during COVID-19 pandemic.

### **12.2 Expanded SRHR health services for women and girls**

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> CNCW Annual Report in 2023

<sup>64</sup> UNICEF COA Report 2023

The health system capacity has been improved to deliver comprehensive SRMH services and information, focusing on Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC) and Skilled Birth Attendance and Midwifery programme. All health facilities across the country are providing at least three contraceptive methods and the majority are providing up to seven methods. Healthcare providers have been capacitated with rights-based family planning counselling and new skills set in order to improve acceptance and utilization rate in the country. The Government fully finances the Reproductive Health commodities and all contraceptive supplies to the public sector are procured via the UNFPA Third Party Procurement mechanism. Youth friendly health services were further enhanced by the Ministry of Health (MoH) with support from UNFPA, including connecting schools with health facilities through community dialogues and forums for youth participation. The Ministry of Health, with support from UNICEF, introduced nationwide the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination which has so far benefited 87,500 9-year old girls by 2023.<sup>65</sup>

### **12.3 Nutrition programs**

The National Nutrition Program, coordinated by the Ministry of Health, has been a cornerstone of Cambodia's efforts to improve nutritional outcomes. This program focuses on 1) Micronutrient Supplementation by providing iron and folic acid supplements to pregnant and lactating women to prevent anaemia, Fortified Foods through distribution of fortified foods to improve the intake of essential vitamins and minerals and Nutrition Education by promoting awareness and education on balanced diets and healthy eating practices among women and girls. Other programs include the Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition Project which aims to improve maternal nutrition, enhance infant and young child feeding and offers nutrition counselling, and the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement which combines multi-sectoral approaches and community-based programs aimed at ending malnutrition by in all its forms by 2030.

13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

The RGC through the NSDP 2019-2023 has prioritized developing a “quality, equitable and inclusive education system” by focusing on science and technology, labour market orientation, and physical education to support national socio-economic. Several ministries, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), and the Ministry of Women's Affairs have undertaken many initiatives that collectively aim to eliminate gender disparities in education, increase women's participation in delivering educational services, and create a gender-sensitive educational environment and social behaviour.

#### **13.1 Gender-responsive Infrastructure Development for Basic Education**

Under the MoEYS Education Sector Plan 2019-2023 and the Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan for Education 2016-2020 and 2021-2025, improvements in infrastructure are aimed at increasing women and girls participation in the education sector. Schools have been built closer to communities to reduce transportation costs and ensure safety, particularly benefiting girls from poor households. Separate bathrooms and toilets have been constructed for male and female students to promote regular class attendance. Dormitories for female students, teacher trainees, and accommodations for teachers have been constructed to support girls' education, especially in teacher training colleges, general education,

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<sup>65</sup> *ibid*

and technical high schools. More schools structures and facilities have been designed to be accessible for students with disabilities, thereby creating a more inclusive learning environment.

### **13.2 Gender mainstreaming in Improved Curriculum and Training Programs**

Curriculums and textbooks have been updated to be more attractive and inclusive, promoting women and girls without discrimination. Technical education curriculums in fields like accounting, tourism, and food processing have been developed to attract female students. Technical education and life skills education at the secondary level have been expanded to provide skills beneficial for daily life and career opportunities, particularly for female students. Gender has been mainstreamed into teacher training curriculums at all levels. Capacity-building programs for trainers, teachers, and managers on gender knowledge and gender mainstreaming into teaching and learning have been conducted. For example, MoEYS, with technical assistance from UNICEF, continued to build the capacity of about 300 female MoEYS officials at sub-national levels in 2023, where they are underrepresented.<sup>66</sup> Teacher education was supported through the digital continuous professional development platform, revised teacher education curriculum frameworks and the development of the Teacher Policy Action Plan.

### **13.3 Modernising Technical and Vocational Training**

Cambodia has focused on modernizing the Technical Vocational and Education Training (TVET) system by continuing to strengthen the quality of education and vocational education and expand skills training. This supports economic and social development policies and strengthens public-private partnerships and other partnerships to ensure the sustainability of TVET.<sup>67</sup> The TVET Gender Policy and Action Plan 2017-2026, in support of the National TVET Policy 2017-2025, provides a roadmap to increase opportunities for women to participate and benefit from TVET and to engender TVET government and management, while tailoring programs to meet both market demands and women and girls interests. The Master Plan for Technical Education at Upper Secondary 2015-2019 (MoEYS) includes a gender mainstreaming strategy with 3 sub-strategies to promote gender equality in infrastructure, technical education and institutional competency. Through these frameworks, the ministries have developed several training programs to be flexible so young women and men can better access education in the TVET sector from basic to higher education.

14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

The General Secretariat of the Committee on Economic Policy and Financial Policy of the Royal Government developed the Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2021-2023, with the aim to restore and bolster Cambodia's economic growth back to its potential rate and strengthen resilience for sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development in the long run.<sup>68</sup> The framework focuses on 3 key areas: RECOVERY of the main

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<sup>66</sup> UNICEF, COA Report 2023

<sup>67</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023

<sup>68</sup> RGC, Strategic Framework and Programs for Economic Recovery in the Context of Living with COVID-19 in a New Normal 2021-2023

economic sectors, REFORM measures for growth, diversification and competitiveness and RESILIENCE to improve the wellbeing of Cambodians.

#### **14.1 Strengthening and expanding Social Protection Systems**

The RGC implemented 10 rounds of intervention measures to support affected firms, laid off workers, SMEs and vulnerable groups aimed at maintaining socio-economic stability. However over half the households experienced changes in employment and income, and a deterioration in household food security, leading many Cambodians to adopt negative coping strategies. The growing inequality and poverty resulting from the COVID-19 crisis requires development of strong social protection programs, both in reach and scale. As a way forward the RGC has endeavoured to harmonize and modernize social protection system by taking into account the sustainability of resources and practical needs, particularly financing mechanisms, efficiency of program implementation, improving the identification processes of poor and vulnerable populations, digitalisation of allowance system and harmonization and integration of various social assistance programs, including 1) Cash transfer program for pregnant women and children under the age of 2 living in poor and vulnerable households, 2) expand coverage of scholarship and school feeding programs using community-based agriculture products, 3) develop appropriate vocational training for youth from poor households to create access to skills and careers, 4) prepare to implement Social Security Schemes for Persons Defined by the Provision of the Labour Law, 5) expand coverage of the Cash Transfer Programs for disabled and poor people in communities and expand coverage of health care systems.

#### **14.2 Health Sector**

Lessons and experiences from managing and minimizing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and protecting public health safety reflect the need to develop a resilient and responsive healthcare system. The RGC will mainly focus on achieving Universal Health Coverage, ensuring equitable access to quality health services for all, and continuing to strengthen the health care system in terms of quality, infrastructure, and the development of mechanism to prepare for future risks to public health. An initiative currently being rolled out includes the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) on the provision of maternal, sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian action, while more efforts are needed to ensure GBV prevention and response systems in case of emergencies are in place.

#### **14.3 Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development**

SMEs have been identified as a driver and source for long term economic growth and decent job creation. SMEs account for around 98 percent of all business, contributing around 58 percent to the economy and providing around 73 percent of the total jobs. Women are significant contributors to Cambodia's economy, owning 62 percent of microenterprises and 26 percent of small and medium sized enterprises. COVID-19 put added pressure on SMEs compounding existing structural issues such as burden of compliance, shortage of skilled labour and markets, lack of access to finance and supporting infrastructure. The decline in activities of SMEs had a negative impact on the labour market, with employees reduced by around 30 percent and working hours and salaries reduced by 25 percent to 28 percent. In response, the RGC introduced key measures to ensure SMEs in priority sectors continue to operate, survive and be resilient, as well as to ensure the stability of the domestic labour market by providing credit support to the private sector, providing support to employees in priority sectors and continuing to set out other interventions. Examples during the recovery phase included provision of loans

at low interest rates through the SME Bank and Agriculture and Rural Development Bank, targeting sectors such as vegetable farming, animal husbandry, aquaculture, agricultural processing and ecotourism.

### III. Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

*Critical Areas of Concern: A) Violence Against Women, I) Human Rights of Women, J) Women and the Media, and L) The girl child*

15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

#### **15.1 Domestic violence/Intimate partner violence, including sexual violence and rape**

In Cambodia, women and girls continue to be subjected to physical, sexual, emotional, and economic violence, cutting across all divisions of income, culture and class. The most common types of violence against females are domestic violence/intimate partner violence, and sexual violence.<sup>69</sup> In 2021-2022, one in five (21 percent) women aged 15-49 have experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence by a current or most recent intimate partner in their lifetime, a decrease from 29 percent in 2014.<sup>70</sup> The percentage of ever married women over 15 years of age that had experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime was 9.9 percent, with 5.4 percent experiencing violence in the last 12 months, a decrease from 21 percent and 8 percent respectively in 2015.<sup>71</sup> One in ten women of any age in Cambodia are currently living with intimate partner violence and ten percent of women aged 15-29 had experienced physical or sexual violence by a non-partner.

Evidence demonstrates that inequitable social norms in Cambodia contribute to violence against women and girls placing blame on women and girls and promoting tolerance of violence. In 2021, 31 percent of women who have ever experienced any physical or sexual violence sought help, and 16 percent did not seek help but did tell someone about the violence.<sup>72</sup> This is an increase in help seeking behaviour by women affected by violence from 2015. The main reasons women cited for not seeking services for help were they believed violence was normal or not serious (40 percent), they were embarrassed or ashamed, or they feared losing their children or bringing shame to the family.<sup>73</sup>

#### **15.2 Violence against women with increased risk**

Women who are stigmatized and neglected or ignored in their communities in society occupy very vulnerable positions, which increases their risk of violence. In Cambodia, this includes women with disabilities, women living with HIV, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (LBT) women, women migrant workers, entertainment workers, sex workers, garment factory workers and other workers, women who use drugs or whose partners use drugs, women in prisons, indigenous women, and women from religious or ethnic minorities. For example, women in rural areas are more likely than women in urban areas (23 percent vs. 17 percent) to have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence by their current or

<sup>69</sup> NAPVAW III 2019-2023

<sup>70</sup> CDHS 2021-22 and CDHS 2014

<sup>71</sup> CDHS 2021-22, MoWA 2015, National Study on Women's Health and Life Experiences, Cambodia, Phnom Penh

<sup>72</sup> CDHS 2021-2022, pg. 321

<sup>73</sup> MoWA 2015, National Survey on Women's Health and Life Experiences in Cambodia, Summary report, pgs. 20-21



most recent husband/intimate partner.<sup>74</sup> Women with disabilities in Cambodia face similar rates of intimate partner violence but higher rates of controlling behaviour by partners, and significantly higher rates of all forms of violence from family members compared to all women.<sup>75</sup> Indigenous women also report experiencing all types of violence and report challenges in accessing justice, safe shelters, counselling, legal support and other services.<sup>76</sup>

Five percent of women reported having experienced at least one form of sexual harassment in their lifetime.<sup>77</sup> The most common form of sexual harassment reported was electronic sexual harassment that includes on-line harassment, or acts such as showing pornography on cell phones, followed by groping or unwanted sexual contact in public.<sup>78</sup> A CARE International study on sexual harassment in the garment industry in Cambodia (2017) showed that in garment factories nearly one in three garment factory workers report experiencing sexually harassing behaviours in the workplace over the last 12 months.<sup>79</sup> The Safe Cities for Women Study (2014) by ActionAid reported that female garment workers interviewed in Cambodia identified the places they do not feel safe. They identified the lack of safety in factory bathrooms, harassment from both factory managers and people loitering outside the factory gates, poor lighting and bad roads which exposed them to the risk of rape and sexual assault on their way to and from the factories, and a lack of support from police and factory authorities.<sup>80</sup>

The third National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2019-2023 (NAPVAW III) is a comprehensive framework developed to address and respond to violence against women (VAW) in Cambodia at the national and sub-national levels and serves as a guiding document for all stakeholders who are working to end VAW and gender-based violence (GBV) in Cambodia. Three priority issues were identified including 1) Domestic violence/Intimate partner violence, 2) Rape and sexual violence and 3) Violence against women with increased risk or in vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities, women migrant workers, indigenous women, women living in rural areas, LBT women, women marginalized by their occupation and others.

### 15.3 Child Marriage and Violence against Children

The 2013 Cambodia's Violence Against Children (CVAC) Survey revealed that four percent of girls reported at least one incident of sexual abuse before age 18 and more than 50 percent of both males and females had experienced at least one incident of physical violence prior to age 18.<sup>81</sup> Among 13 to 17 year old, one in eight females and one in six males reported multiple perpetrators as the first incident of sexual abuse. The Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence Against Children (VAC) 2017-2021 aims to reduce VAC in Cambodia and includes five strategic areas: 1) Coordination and cooperation, 2) Primary

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid

<sup>75</sup> Astbury, J., Walji F. (2013) Triple Jeopardy: Gender-based Violence and Human Rights Violations Experienced by Women with Disabilities in Cambodia. Phnom Penh: Australian Aid

<sup>76</sup> Mauney, R (2015) *Gender Based Violence in the Ethnic Minority Communities: Rattanakiri Province*, Phnom Penh: CARE International Cambodia.

<sup>77</sup> CDHS 2014; MoWA 2015, National Study on Women's Health and Life Experiences, Cambodia, Phnom Penh

<sup>78</sup> MoWA (2016) Women's Experience of Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Violence: Secondary data analysis report of Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey. Phnom Penh

<sup>79</sup> Rendell, S, Lee, H., (2017), Sexual harassment in the Cambodian garment industry: prevalence and cost. Canberra: CARE International

<sup>80</sup> ActionAid (2014) Safe Cities for Women: From reality to rights. ActionAid

<sup>81</sup> MoWA (2014). *Cambodia Violence Against Children Survey*. Phnom Penh

prevention, 3) Multi-sectoral child protection response, 4) Law and policy formulation, and 5) Monitoring and evaluation. A key action is the Positive Parenting Strategy, which focuses on building a culture of non-violence through teaching parents methods of parenting that are non-violent. There are encouraging integrative approaches identified in the prevention priorities of the VAC Action Plan and NAPVAW III.<sup>82</sup> The 2021 evaluation of the VAC Action Plan showed progress however the CDHS 2021/22 results revealed that 43 percent of children report being disciplined at home using physical violence.<sup>83</sup>

Child marriage and teenage pregnancy have far-reaching consequences for individuals, families, and communities by perpetuating cycles of poverty, limiting educational opportunities, and hindering social and economic development. The Civil Code (2007) forbids marriage under the age of 18 unless one of the parties is over 18 and the other is 16 and has parental permission. Yet two percent of girls are married by the age of 15 and 18 percent by the age of 18.<sup>84</sup> Teenage pregnancy (ages 15-19) rates were high at 12 percent in 2014 and declined to 9 percent in 2021/22, but are higher in rural areas compared to urban areas (10 percent vs 8 percent). The Northeast provinces, where the majority of indigenous people live, have significantly higher rates, at 36 percent in Ratanak Kiri and Mondul Kiri provinces in 2014 and 24 percent in Stung Treng and 18 percent in Ratanak Kiri provinces in 2021/2022.<sup>85</sup> The Provincial Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Ratanak Kiri province 2017-2021 was developed and implemented to address child marriage and teenage pregnancy in a province with high rates of both. Based on preliminary findings and progress, plans are in place to conduct further research to inform the development of a National Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy.

#### **15.4 Trafficking in Women and Girls**

ASEAN countries are considered as source, transit and/or destination places of human trafficking in which the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime, and its additional protocols, focus on prevention, protection, suppression and prosecution of human trafficking. While there is no national level prevalence data on trafficking of women and girls in Cambodia, trafficking of women and girls have been known to occur for labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and begging. Reports from the National Committee for Counter-Trafficking have identified new risk groups including women that are trafficked for marriage or organs. Other new issues raised in trafficking in persons also is the issue of surrogacy.<sup>86</sup> These issues require further understanding to ensure that women are not being exploited and their rights are protected because of the vulnerable position they hold in society.

The National Committee for Counter Trafficking in persons (NCCT) is the key mechanism to counter trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation, with structures at the national and sub-national levels. It consists of 21 ministries, five specialized units, six inter-ministerial thematic working groups, a general secretariat and 25 Provincial Committees to Counter Trafficking. The five year National Strategic Plan for Counter Trafficking in Persons 2019–2023 (NSP-CTIP Phase II), the third roadmap, was developed in line with the ASEAN Action Plan for the ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP).

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<sup>82</sup> Ending Violence Against Women and Children in Cambodia, UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women, 2020

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/cambodia/press-releases/evaluation-cambodias-violence-against-children-action-plan-reveals-progress-royal>

<sup>84</sup> MoWA (2018): Final 2018 CGA Legal Protection and VAWG, page 21

<sup>85</sup> NIS (2015). CDHS 2014; NIS (2023) CDHS 2021-22

<sup>86</sup> NCCT (2016) *Mid-Term Review of the National Plan of Action* Phnom Penh. NCCT

16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

### **16.1 Updated and expanded the NAPVAW III and NPS-CTIP Phase II**

Cambodia has joined regional commitments through ASEAN to protect the rights of women, including the ASEAN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Violence Against Children and the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2016-2025. The third National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2019-2023 (NAPVAW III), under the leadership of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, is the key policy framework to end violence against women and girls in Cambodia and is aligned with the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. NAPVAW III identifies three priorities: a) domestic violence/intimate partner violence, b) rape and sexual violence, and c) violence against women with increased risk or in vulnerable groups. NAPVAW III includes four strategies: 1) Prevention, 2) Legal Protection and Multi-sectoral services, 3) Laws and Policies, and 4) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).<sup>87</sup>

The Technical Working Group on Gender-Gender-Based Violence (TWGG-GBV) serves as a national level platform for government and civil society for information sharing, coordination and joint action planning, and meetings are regularly conducted. The NAPVAW III, including the coordinating mechanisms of the TWGG-GBV, GBV Working Groups (GBV WGs) and the Women and Children's Consultative Committees (WCCCs), has served as a guide for increased collaboration between government ministries and departments, CSOs/NGOs, and development partners at the national and sub-national levels, especially for mass media, campaigns and other events.<sup>88</sup>

The NSP CTIP 2019-2023, under the leadership of the National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT), aims *"to continue to promote social efforts and explore new measures and methods to prevent, and eliminate old and new forms of human trafficking, labour trafficking, sexual exploitation; to protect victims, enforce the law, and punish perpetrators of human trafficking and labour and sexual exploitation and related activities that happen in Cambodia and to Cambodian people, wherever they are."* To achieve this, four strategies identified in the previous action plan remain important: a) Strengthen cooperation in the formulation and implementation of laws, policies and legal standards b) Promote prevention of all forms of human trafficking and child sexual abuse, c) Strengthen the Criminal Justice System in response to trafficking in persons and child sexual abuse, and d) Increase the protection of victims, especially women and children.<sup>89</sup>

### **16.2 Introduced and strengthened services for survivors of violence**

A key achievement of NAPVAW III has been the significant and substantial progress in developing, approving and implementing minimum service standards and guidelines, standard operating procedures, and training packages for the prevention and response services to VAWG/GBV, including basic counselling, referrals and case management, health care services and legal services. Sub-national GBV Working Groups coordinate multi-stakeholder GBV response, address bottle necks and provide capacity development. The GBV Working Group is a multisectoral coordination mechanism that brings together state and non-state

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<sup>87</sup> NAPVAW III 2019-2023

<sup>88</sup> Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III 2019-2023; May 2023

<sup>89</sup> NSP CTIP 2019-2023

service providers in sectors such as health, police, justice, social welfare, etc.) to improve coordination and quality of response to survivors of GBV.<sup>90</sup> As of December 2022, there are 9 provincial and 39 district GBV WGs. From 2019-2022, a total of 1,280 GBV Working Group members in 6 target provinces of ACCESS were trained on GBV essential service guidelines,<sup>91</sup> while MoWA reports another 703 GBV Working Group members were trained on GBV MSS, including Basic Counselling, from 2019-2022. Through the GBV WG mechanism, capacities of 976 stakeholders from 2018-2022 were enhanced on women migrant workers' rights, skills, and coordinated, quality service provision to address violence against women migrant workers through the Safe and Fair programme in Cambodia.<sup>92</sup>

Importantly the *Manual for Health Managers: Guidelines on Health Care for Women affected by Violence*, adapted from the Essential Services Package<sup>93</sup> global document was adopted, training curriculum developed and training rolled out to health staff at all levels. This is in addition to the *National Guidelines for Managing Violence against Women and Children in the Health Sector and a Clinical Handbook for Responding to Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence in the Health Sector* developed under the second NAPVAW 2014-2018 to sensitize health officials.<sup>94</sup> The MoH in cooperation with MoWA expanded One Stop Service Centres (OSSC) to six hospitals, including five provincial referral hospitals, Kampong Cham, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear, Tbong Khmum and Battambang, as well as Phnom Penh municipality, for integrated GBV services including health, counselling, legal, referrals and short term shelter, providing a safe private space for women survivors of violence.

### **16.3 Introduced and strengthened measures to increase women's access to justice**

Significant efforts have been made to improve access to and quality legal services and legal aid for women survivors of violence. There has been extensive training for sub-national level authorities, including police, commune, district and provincial officials, and GBV WG members as well as dissemination of information to community members on GBV and the Domestic Violence (DV) Law, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and limited use of mediation, legal services and legal aid, by different stakeholders, including MoWA, UN Agencies and CSOs/NGOs. Police as frontline service providers, have been trained on GBV responses such as basic communication, coordination of services and data,<sup>95</sup> GBV response through Community Policing,<sup>96</sup> Gender Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence,<sup>97</sup> and have participated in training on the essential minimum service standards as part of the GBV Working Groups.

Through coordination of MoWA's Judicial Police Officers (JPOs) and Junior Police Agents (JPAs), women and girls experiencing domestic violence, rape or trafficking received online or direct services including mental health counselling and legal assistance. The Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia (BAKC) with support of the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW) and coordination with MoWA's JPOs

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<sup>90</sup> *Guidance Document on Procedures for Establishment and Implementation of Multi Sectoral Mechanism to Respond to Gender-Based Violence: Gender-Based Violence Response Working Group at Provincials and Districts, MoWA, 2019*

<sup>91</sup> *ACCESS, Story of Significant Change: Establishment and functioning of provincial and district GBV Working Group, 2022*

<sup>92</sup> *Safe and Fair Programme key results in Cambodia, 2018-2022, UN Women*

<sup>93</sup> *Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, Module 2: Health; UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP, UNODC*

<sup>94</sup> *NAPVAW III 2019-2023, NAPVAW II MTR, July 2017*

<sup>95</sup> *Safe and Fair programme. UN Women Cambodia Quarterly Monitoring Reports, 2020-2022*

<sup>96</sup> UNODC

<sup>97</sup> *Handbook on Gender Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence, UN Women, UN Women Cambodia Quarterly Monitoring Report, 2022*

and JPAs provided free legal services<sup>98</sup> to poor<sup>99</sup> women and girl survivors of violence, including those living in poverty. Furthermore, a group of lawyers under the directive of the Prime Minister are providing pro-bono legal services and support for GBV cases, especially for high profile cases.

17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

A key objective of Neary Rattanak V 2019-2023 is to expand the programs on public behavioural change and societal attitudes in promoting gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls in the family, community and society. Under Strategy 4: Legal Protection for Women and Girls, a key priority is the coordination, development, promotion, implementation and monitoring of the NAPVAW III 2019-2023. Under NAPVAW III, **Strategic Area 1: Prevention** includes a life cycle approach to prevention against women and girls, as well as a cross sectoral approach involving key rights holders and duty bearers. The five areas are: **1) Improved Coordination and Cooperation at all levels: 2) Education and Youth** to build gender equitable, non-violent relationships, **3) Family and Children** focusing on positive parenting to build safe, gender-equitable, non-violent families, **4) Community and Workplace** to promote safety and harassment free environments, and **5) Culture and Media** to promote gender-equitable, non-violent social norms, images, and messages and capacity of media.

#### **17.1 Raising public awareness to change attitudes and behaviours, and mobilizing community leaders to influence positive norms**

The NAPVAW III, including the multi-stakeholder coordinating mechanisms of the TWGG-GBV at the national level, the GBV Working Groups (GBV-WGs) in selected provinces and districts, and the WCCCs at the provincial, district and commune levels, has served as a guide for increased collaboration between government line ministries, CSOs/NGOs, and development partners for GBV prevention activities, especially for mass media and campaign events. For example, the annual International Women’s Day and 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women campaigns have well-coordinated messages and activities led by MoWA with CSOs/NGOs, development partners and with sub-national level authority engagement. In addition, MoWA has engaged the Ministry of Cults and Religion (MoCR) and religious leaders at the national level on prevention of GBV and VAWG through several trainings, workshops and events, and activities have been extended to religious leaders at the sub-national level and communities. Prevention messages have been integrated into their regular activities and services with community members.<sup>100</sup> In 2021-2022, fewer women (37 percent vs 50 percent) and fewer men (16 percent vs 26 percent) aged 15-49 agree that a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife under one or more specified circumstances compared to 2014.<sup>101</sup>

Promoting prevention of all forms of human trafficking and child abuse is one of the key strategies of the third National Strategic Plan for Counter Trafficking in Persons 2019–2023 (NSP-CTIP II), with over 106 major activities identified organised into 10 clusters. A focus has been on vulnerable women, girls and migrant workers. Significant prevention activities occurred in information dissemination and public

<sup>98</sup> The draft Legal Aid Policy includes descriptions and criteria for provision of free legal services.

<sup>99</sup> IDPoor identifies households living beyond the poverty line and having problems sustaining their livelihood due to special circumstances (<https://idpoor.gov.kh/en/>)

<sup>100</sup> Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III 2019-2023, MoWA 2023

<sup>101</sup> CDHS 2021-22 and CDHS 2014

awareness campaigns. Community awareness, safe migration and in-school programs have all contributed to the prevention strategy efforts. Key activities and results included research and rapid assessments on impacts of COVID-19 to inform interventions and public education advertising campaigns with anti-trafficking messages via radio, social media, public form, consultative workshops, religious forum and to returned migrants. Importantly, the content for preventing human trafficking was incorporated into various mechanisms, such as the commune/sangkat social service plan and use of commune budget, the school management committees and youth clubs in schools and communities, as well as meetings to promote the Safe Village Commune Policy and Buddhist programs under the Ministry of Cults and Religion (MCR). MoLVT disseminated lists of recruitment agencies through social media and provided pre-departure training sessions to migrant workers, while MoEYS has integrated the topic of prevention of human trafficking into the school curriculum.<sup>102</sup>

### **17.2 Promoting non-violent family relationships and positive parenting practices**

The Positive Parenting Strategy (2017) is an important element in promoting more gender equitable attitudes and non-violent approaches, and reinforces skills, knowledge, positive, non-violent behaviours and communication within families. MoWA and MoSVY have continued to expand and implement the Positive Parenting Strategy through capacity building programs with government officials for parents and caregivers in communities aimed at changing attitudes and parenting practices to promote non-violence within families and society. As a result, 46,566 parents and caregivers (44,279 women) in twelve target provinces have acquired knowledge and positive parenting skills, aimed at improving family relations and reducing the use of violence. MoWA reports that the number of parents and caregivers, especially men who have participated in the trainings, have demonstrated increased knowledge, skills and changed attitudes related to positive discipline and non-violence practices, such as listening, stress management, and non-violent communication, through pre and post training tests. A key lesson learned is the importance of more robust data collection, monitoring and evaluation system for analysing the impact and results of implementing positive parenting strategies in communities.

### **17.3 Promoting gender-egalitarian values in primary and secondary education, including comprehensive sexuality education**

First launched in 2016-17 as a life skill curriculum, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) has expanded the implementation of the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Tool Kit, which includes gender-based violence, in the private and public school curriculum (Grades 5 to 12) and with out-of-school children and communities. The curriculums for each level include: basic reproductive, sexual and health education, including HIV/AIDS, hygiene and gender concepts (Grades 5–6); gender roles, sexuality and gender expression (Grades 7–8); human rights, gender equality, gender roles, sexual harassment and gender-based violence (Grades 10–11). Training of Trainers and teacher training has been conducted with 1,529 teachers (752 women or 49 percent, 777 men) trained in 532 public schools nationwide from 2020-2022. The CSE lessons were rolled out by MoEYS in the school year 2023-2024. The CSE is a long term effort by the government to integrate gender equality and GBV prevention with support from development partners into the education system and will continue as a key GBV prevention activity for children, youth and future generations.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> NSP CTIP 2019-2023, Mid-Term Review, 2022 NCCT

<sup>103</sup> NAPVAW III Final Evaluation Report, MoWA, May 2023

18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. *online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images*)?

### **18.1 Awareness raising initiatives and research on Technology Facilitated GBV**

The final evaluation of NAPVAW III 2019-2023 highlighted concerns raised by stakeholders of online and ICT facilitated VAWG and the potential risks of trafficking, sexually explicit images, child pornography and grooming aimed at women, girls and children and how to address these risks. Several ministries, including MoWA, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MoCFA), MoPTC and the Ministry of Information (MoINF) have organized and collaborated on workshops and forums to discuss the risks of pornography that are readily available in the media and to develop measures to address them. This includes further research on the protection of women and children online to prevent the spread of pornography and other forms of technology facilitated forms of GBV in digital media. The MoPTC has also participated in disseminating education messages to mobile devices on high-risk issues and violence against women.<sup>104</sup>

The Cambodian National Council for Children (CNCC) developed an Action Plan to Protect and Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Exploitation Online (2021-2025).<sup>105</sup> Key actions have included participating in the global research on “disrupting harm” on online child sexual abuse and exploitation, including girls, to gather data and generate new evidence. The MoPTC collaborated to conduct the Child Online Risks Awareness Campaign that covers online sexual exploitation and violation against young girls.

### **18.2 Monitoring of negative images of women on the Internet**

The technical working group of the MoPTC has regularly monitored negative information and images of women on the Internet, including pornography, and has taken action to close the accounts and remove pornographic content from social media and other communication technologies.<sup>106</sup>

19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women’s organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

Through the Australian Government funded Australia-Cambodia Cooperation for Equitable Sustainable Services (ACCESS) program in support of the NAPVAW III 2019-2023 and in collaboration with the Ministry of Woman’s Affairs, several local women’s organisations were provided with grants or sub-grants to work on prevention and responses to GBV. These included women-led organisations such as the Cambodian Women’s Crisis Center (CWCC) which supports women and girls survivors of GBV, including women with disabilities, to access essential services, and Women Peace Makers (WPM) who works to address violence against women through promoting gender sensitive mediation mechanisms.

Civil society organisations, NGOs and other local women’s organisations, including Gender and Development Cambodia (GAD/C) and Banteay Srei, are actively engaged in the Technical Working Group on Gender-GBV (TWGG-GBV) which is the coordination platform for NAPVAW III, and contribute substantially to the work on ending violence against women in Cambodia through programs, advocacy

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<sup>104</sup> CNCW CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020-2023

<sup>105</sup> Cambodia UPR National Report 2024, pg 8

<sup>106</sup> CNCW CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020-2023

work and networking. The ACCESS End of program evaluation final report noted that women's organisations have been regarded as the single most important factor in achieving progress on a national GBV response, and the greater involvement of these groups is vital.<sup>107</sup>

20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

### **20.1 Media communication strategy promoting positive gender norms**

The Ministry of Women's Affairs developed a media communication strategy for the national and sub-national levels to promote positive social and gender norms, using different social media and communication platforms, such as Telegram, Facebook, YouTube, and the MoWA website. There have been numerous joint targeted media campaigns conducted by MoWA in collaboration with development partners, CSOs and other stakeholders addressing violence against women and girls. From 2020, media campaigns through digital platforms were expanded to engage with public audiences, especially young people, and disseminate GBV prevention messages and information about COVID-19 reaching almost 1 million viewers annually in 2020, 2021, 2022.<sup>108</sup> The Ministry of Information, in collaboration with other ministries, institutions, private sector and NGOs, has promoted public awareness of women's rights and gender equality through national radio programs such as "Our Life, Our Society", "We Can Do It" and "Youth Voices."<sup>109</sup> Lessons learned are that more systematic data collection and monitoring of social media and campaign messaging are warranted to measure the effectiveness of interventions and attitudinal change towards GBV and gender norms.

### **20.2 Voluntary Media Code of Conduct**

The Inter-ministerial Media Code of Conduct for Reporting Violence Against Women (Prakas No. 271, 20 July 2017) serves as a roadmap for journalists on standards of reporting on VAWG in the news outlets and provides sanctions. The Media Code Conduct continues to be disseminated to journalists and media companies through training sessions and workshops, including 12 registered online and print media, state radio, newspaper / print and TV companies and the Club of Cambodian Journalists. The joint MoWA and MoINF working group on monitoring the Media Code of Conduct noted some improvements in compliance, such as reporting in line with Article 3 and in presenting information that educates the public on the harmful impact of violence against women. For example, the National Television of Cambodia in cooperation with MoWA aired several programs related to prevention and response to violence against women, including positive parenting.

Lessons learned from the joint MoWA and MoINF monitoring working group include the importance of a more robust monitoring and enforcement mechanism, as well as the need for ongoing awareness raising for journalists and media agencies on respectful reporting on violence against women, especially for survivors/victims, to ensure women receive the privacy and confidentiality they deserve.<sup>110</sup> A UNESCO study in 2023 found that GBV news stories were rare, (only 1 percent) but 23 out of 49 news stories about people affected by GBV invaded people's privacy.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> ACCESS End of Program Evaluation, 2023

<sup>108</sup> CNCW Follow up report on COBs 19, 25(b), 47 (d) to CEDAW , March 2022

<sup>109</sup> CNCW CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020-2023

<sup>110</sup> MoWA NAPVAW III Final Evaluation Report 2023, May 2023

<sup>111</sup> UNESCO 2023, Who makes the Cambodian News? Phnom Penh, December 2023



21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

MoWA established a special Working Group on the Inclusion of Vulnerable Women and Girls among the leadership of MoWA to strengthen internal coordination and for collaboration with other relevant agencies to ensure Neary Rattanak V strategies were inclusive, mainstreamed and responsive to different vulnerable groups of women and girls, including women with disabilities, Muslim women, elderly women, lesbians, indigenous women and girls. In addition, the Disability Action Group of MoWA organised a capacity development program related to advocacy and gender and people with disabilities for relevant partners and collaborated with relevant ministries, institutions and NGOs/CSOs to advance the roles and rights of women and people with disabilities.<sup>112</sup>

### **21.1 Women with disabilities**

There is heightened awareness of government officials and CSOs/NGOs of the intersectionality between GBV and different groups of vulnerable women and women at risk of violence. The integration of Gender Equality and Disability Inclusion (GEDI) training packages for service providers is an example of effective and efficient collaboration between MoWA, MoSVY and NGOs/CSOs to address the intersectionality between GBV and disability. At the end of December 2022, GEDI trainings had been delivered to 350 relevant GBV stakeholders, including GBV Working Groups, ACCESS Implementing partners and national level government officials in collaboration with the NGOs Action on Disability and Development (ADD) International and the CWCC. Overall results showed that 88 percent of training participants increased their knowledge related to the topics.<sup>113</sup> Another 1,146 persons, including 927 persons with disabilities, were reached through various GBV, gender equality, social inclusion, and disability inclusion awareness-raising sessions through several NGOs, including ADD International, CWCC and the Cambodian Disabled People's Organization (CDPO).<sup>114</sup>

### **21.2 Girls, Adolescents and younger women, including indigenous women/girls**

Progress has been made in ending child marriage nationwide, down from 19 percent in 2014 to 18 percent in 2022.<sup>115</sup> To address high rates of child marriage and teenage pregnancy in the Northeast regions of Cambodia, which is home to the majority of indigenous peoples, the Ministry of Women's Affairs provided technical support to the Ratanak Kiri Province Women and Children's Consultative Committees in piloting the Prevention of Child Marriage and Adolescent Pregnancy Action Plan in Ratanak Kiri province (2017-2021). The action plan has been incorporated into the provincial development plan by the Ratanak Kiri Provincial Administration, and budget has been allocated for implementation.<sup>116</sup>

### **21.3 Migrant Women**

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<sup>112</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI, 2024-2028

<sup>113</sup> ACCESS, *Annual Report Year 4 (July 2021-June 2022)*, Co-water International/Clear Horizon

<sup>114</sup> NAPVAW III Final Evaluation, MoWA 2023

<sup>115</sup> UNICEF COA Report 2023; CDHS 2014 and CDHS 2021-2022

<sup>116</sup> Cambodia UPR National Report 2024, pg 9

Through the Safe and Fair Programme<sup>117</sup>, in collaboration with the MoWA, MoLVT and CSO partners, women migrant workers and their family members have greater access to information through innovative applications (Apps) and multiple media campaigns regardless of their literacy levels. From 2018-2022, over 500,000 people were reached via social and mass media campaign to change attitudes and behaviours towards women migrant workers and violence against women, over 65,000 community members engaged through community-based and women-led online platforms and peer networks on VAW, trafficking and prevention. Furthermore, 5,849 women migrant workers received migration, VAW psychosocial, health and social services and information from migrant worker resource centres and VAW service providers.<sup>118</sup>

#### IV. Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

*Critical Areas of Concern: G) Women in power and decision-making, H) Institutional Mechanisms for the advancement of women, I) Human Rights of Women, J) Women and the media and L) The girl child*

22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

##### **22.1 Provided opportunities for capacity building and skills development**

Under Neary Rattanak V 2019-2013, the objective of Strategy 5: Women in Public Leadership and Politics is to promote the participation of women in decision-making positions at all levels and to promote gender responsive leadership at all levels. Virtually all line ministries through their GMAPs have incorporated training and capacity development programs aimed at increasing the skills and number of women to take on leadership roles within their ministry. For example, the Ministry of Civil Service (MSC) committed to organize leadership trainings for 30 percent of female civil servants in decision-making positions of selected ministries and institutions by 2023. MoWA, in partnership with the Royal School of Administration provided a 120 hour women and leadership management training for 164 women leaders holding positions from Deputy Director General up to Secretaries of State. MoWA, in collaboration with the National School of Local Administration provided leadership training courses for 190 female governors and deputy governors of municipalities, districts and khans. From 2021-2023, MoWA, in collaboration with the MSC, Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Environment (MoEn), and MoSVY, conducted leadership programs for 367 female leaders and civil servants holding positions from Director General, Inspector General and Deputy Inspector General.<sup>119</sup>

##### **22.2 Gender mainstreaming and targets for increasing women in leadership**

The majority of line ministry GMAPs have capacity development programs for increasing women in decision making positions and have set targets to increase women in leadership positions at both the sub-national and national level. Under the National Program for Public Administration 2021-2030, ministries are implementing the Ministry of Civil Service guidelines to recruit between 20 to 50 percent of women

<sup>117</sup> *The Safe and Fair: Realising Women Migrant Workers' Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN Region programme is part of the Spotlight Initiative to eliminate VAWG by 2030, a global, multi-year initiative between the European Union and United Nations. Safe and Fair is implemented through a partnership between the ILO and UN Women, in collaboration with UNODC.*

<sup>118</sup> *Safe and Fair Programme key results in Cambodia (2018-2022)*

<sup>119</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak V 2019-2023, MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028; CNCW CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020-2023

in the civil service to reach the target of 44 percent women civil servants by 2023 and a target of 27 percent of women in decision-making positions. This requires an annual increase of at least 1 percent. The total number of female civil servants increased to 42 percent in 2024 and the number of women in positions from Vice-Chief of Office to Director General and similar ranks increased to 27 percent in 2024.<sup>120</sup>

Under the new 7th mandate 13.60 percent of the National Assembly are women (2023), one woman is President of the National Assembly and two women chair the legislative body's specialized commissions. The number of female senators increased from 14.75% (1999) to 17.74% (2024) with two women chairing the Senate's specialized commissions. Currently, there are three female Ministers, one female head of National Audit Authority and one female governor of the National Bank of Cambodia (with the rank equivalent to a senior minister). At the sub-national level, there are two female provincial governors (8 percent) and 7 women are municipality, district and khan governors (3.43 percent). There were 130 female commune/sangkat chiefs (7.89 percent) in 2017 and this increased to 176 (10.65 percent) in 2022, and the number of female commune councillors increased from 17.7 percent in 2017 to 22 percent in 2022. Cambodian women also play crucial role in the justice system: there are 57 female judges and 649 female lawyers.

Those missing some targets, there were some gains in women's representation in politics and decision-making. In the National Assembly, one woman serves as vice-president, two women serve as chairs on expert committees and four women serve as vice-chairs on expert committees. This reflects the ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in Cambodia's political landscape despite various initiatives and policies aimed at promoting women's participation in leadership roles

### **22.3. Collected and Analysed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions**

The Ministry of Civil Service (MCS) regularly produces sex disaggregated data of civil servant statistics and by position and by institutions for public usage and reports to the Prime Minister annually. This could help for informing the progress and gap in any sector which the Prime Minister can suggest and recommend for the further actions.

MoWA Gender Statistic Booklet has been developed annually and distributed publicly, which women's political participation chapter is included.

23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

Both the Ministry of Information and Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication, key ministries involved in the ICT sector, have gender mainstreaming actions plans with dedicated activities to promote participation and provide opportunities for female civil servants in their ministries to take on decision-making roles. Through the MoPTC GMAP 2029-2023, ICT Development Strategy 2020 and the Gender Promotion Guidelines in the Cambodia Academy of Digital Technology (CADT), female students are encouraged to acquire ICT skills through scholarships and outreach programs by the Cambodia Academy of Digital

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid

Technology (CADT). The MoPTC in collaboration with MoWA also organizes the “Outstanding Women in Technology Awards” as recognition and motivation to encourage more women in the field of ICT.<sup>121</sup>

The Ministry of Information’s data shows 3,201 press cards have been issued in 2023, of which 269 were women, accounting for 8.7 percent of the total number of journalists.

24. Please describe your country’s national women’s machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe measures your country taken over past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

The national machinery for gender equality and women’s empowerment includes the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA), the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW), and is strengthened through the Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G) and the Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) in line ministries and institutions.

The MoWA, established in 1997, has the responsibility to promote and protect the rights of women and their families, with the mission to lead, partner, and cooperate with line ministries and partners to lead the way towards achieving gender equality and eliminating discrimination against women and girls in society. Through its five year strategic plans (Neary Rattanak), MoWA acts to expand the scope of gender mainstreaming in national policies and programs, as well as promote gender responsive policies, strategic plans and programs. MoWA acts as a catalyst to advocate and encourage public institutions, civil society and the private sector to integrate gender into their policies and programs and serves as a coordinator and facilitator for gender mainstreaming across government. MoWA spearheads the efforts to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in key policy documents, including the National Strategic Development Plan and the CSDGs, as well as on-going government reform efforts including the Public Administrative Program, Decentralization and De-concentration (D&D) program, Public Financial Management and Legal and Judicial Reform.

MoWA consists of three general directorates and 11 line departments, and oversees the provincial and district Departments of Women’s Affairs and 13 Women Development Centres. At the sub-national level, Provincial and District Departments of Women’s Affairs implement MoWA’s five-year strategic plan, Neary Rattanak, and work with line departments, offices and other relevant units under their respective jurisdiction.

Measures to strengthen MoWA’s role are captured in Neary Rattanak’s V Institutional Support Strategy for Capacity Development and Efficiency, which is in line with the Government’s priority of reforming and strengthening the capacity of ministries and institutions as well as improving the efficiency of its work. The objective is to enhance the capacity and public administrative reform of the MoWA and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation in the performance of work, as well as to expand the management and dissemination of information for gender responsiveness. Furthermore, MoWA has developed an institutional cross-cutting approach to ensure an inclusive and equitable response to women and girls with disabilities as well as vulnerable groups of women and girls, and prioritized eight strategies aimed at strengthening, promoting and implementing gender-responsive programs,

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<sup>121</sup> CNCW CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020-2023

coordination mechanisms and information management systems. Efforts have also been made to digitalize institutions at the national and sub-national level, and support digital modernization in day to day work and public service delivery.

The CNCW, established by Royal Decree in 2001 and recently updated in 2024, is an inter-ministerial mechanism, whose members include Secretaries of State and Senior Representatives from 35 line ministries, institutions and councils. CNCW is led by Her Majesty the Queen Mother as the Honorary President, the former Prime Minister as the First Honorary Vice-President, the Prime Minister as the Second Honorary Vice-President, the Minister of Women’s Affairs as the Executive Chair, with six Secretary of States serving as Vice Chairpersons. The CNCW Secretariat is a permanent member. The CNCW is mandated to assist the “Royal Government to coordinate, follow up and evaluate the implementation of national policies, laws, orders and measures relating to the promotion of status, roles and social welfare of women.”<sup>122</sup> CNCW is also responsible for following up on the implementation of international conventions in relation to women’s rights, providing recommendations to the government and compiling national periodic reports on CEDAW implementation.

To further strengthen CNCW mandate on promoting women in Cambodia, an updated Royal Decree for CNCW was approved in 2024 by the Council of Ministers, thereby expanding membership to formally include all government ministries and several national councils, national authorities, national committees and the National Bank of Cambodia. In the past 5 years, a key activity to strengthen the role of CNCW and its members was the development of the first CEDAW Concluding Observation Action Plan 2020-2023 to respond to CEDAW’s recommendations in 2019, involving all TWG-G members. The CNCW also established a Technical Working Group on Gender, consisting of two persons from all member line ministry and institutions, who meet on a quarterly basis to plan, monitor and report progress on CEDAW implementation and recommendations. The TWG-G members participate in capacity building on CEDAW from the CNCW Secretariat and join regular monitoring visits at the sub-national level, engaging with government officials, local authorities and communities on CEDAW implementation and women’s rights.

25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors?

Under Neary Rattanak’s Gender Mainstreaming Framework, and in addition to the women’s national machinery described above, there are several national and sub-national mechanisms for mainstreaming gender equality and promoting women’s rights.

At the national policy level, the Technical Working Group on Gender (TWGG), comprised of 33 ministries, 18 development partners and 20 NGOs serves as a national information sharing platform on gender equality and women’s rights. Three TWG-G sub groups exist which function as multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms with government, development partners, NGOs/CSOs and the private sector, including the TWG-G sub-working group on Gender-Based Violence, (TWGG-GBV) comprised of 17 line ministries, 6 development partners and 30 NGOs/CSOs; the TWGG- Sub-working group on Women’s Leadership (TWGG-WL) comprising of government ministries/institutions, development partners and NGOs/CSOs and the TWGG sub-working group on Women’s Economic Empowerment (TWGG-WEE) which

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<sup>122</sup> RGC, Royal Decree, SN/Roy Kr/0201/036, On Creation of Cambodian National Council for Women (2001)

includes government ministries/institutions, development partners, NGOs/CSOs, and private sector businesses. While the TWGG-GBV has proven to be well organised and functioning with regular meetings in line with the NAPVAW, both the TWGG-WL and TWG-WEE require revision and strengthening to deliver on coordination and partnerships for gender mainstreaming.<sup>123</sup> All TWGGs are multi-stakeholder platforms and include participation of several women organisations.

Another key mechanism at the national level is the sectoral Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) established in line ministries and institutions, which serve to ensure gender mainstreaming in institutional policies, sectoral plans and programs, through Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) and Gender Equality Disability Social Inclusion (GEDSI) Mainstreaming Action Plans. Each GMAG comprises of 8-12 persons from different sections and programs within the ministry/institution. By 2018, 28 of 30 line ministries or institutions had developed GMAPs in line with their ministry's or institutions 5 year sectoral strategic plans. By 2023, 17 ministries-institutions had updated their GMAGs, 19 ministries-institutions had reviewed and updated their GMAPs, and 11 ministries-institutions had implemented sectoral capacity development programs on gender-mainstreaming. A promising development over the past few years has been the development of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) or gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) trainings, groups and plans in line with the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda of leaving no-one behind. A remaining challenge facing many of the GMAGs is that the commitment and expertise in gender mainstreaming and implementation of gender-sensitive policies, guidelines and procedures at relevant ministries-institutions and authorities are still limited,<sup>124</sup> and require further and on-going technical assistance and capacity building, including formulating operational guidelines on sectoral gender mainstreaming.

At the sub-national level, Provincial/Capital and District/Municipal/Khan Women and Children's Consultative Committees (WCCC) and Commune/Sangkat Committees for Women and Children (CCWC), operational nationwide since 2004, provide suggestions and recommendations to the council, boards of governors, and other council committees on issues related to gender equality and women's and children's issues that fall within the authority, function and duties of the council. These committees function to coordinate important multi-sector and multi-ministry representation on women and children's issues, and can have a positive impact on planning, providing support, awareness-raising and responding to issues related to women and children. The Ministry and Provincial Departments of Women's Affairs routinely provide technical support and capacity development programs to WCCCs and CCWCs on gender mainstreaming, social inclusion and the empowerment of women.<sup>125</sup>

26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

The Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC) is the national human rights institution in Cambodia. It is responsible for ensuring that Cambodia fulfils its human rights obligations and for the implementation of the recommendations under the Universal Periodic Review. The CHCR is composed of all line ministries and working groups. The main mechanism for input on women's rights and promoting gender equality is from the MoWA and the CNCW. CNCW is responsible for following up on the implementation of

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<sup>123</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak V and VI, page 36

<sup>124</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak IV, page 4

<sup>125</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak V 2019-2023

international conventions in relation to women’s rights, providing recommendations to the government and compiling national periodic reports on CEDAW implementation to the CEDAW Committee.

Following the CEDAW Committee’s issuance of the 57 Concluding Observations (COBs) to Cambodia in November 2019, CNCW proceeded to publish and disseminate copies of the COBs in English and Khmer at the national and sub-national levels, with government ministry officials, sub-national level authorities, commune and local authorities as well as with communities and society at large to promote women’s rights and gender equality.

CNCW has provided two services of legal assistance to poor women and girls affected by violence: 1) intervention services provided by the Ministry/Department of Women’s Affairs and 2) legal defence services at all courts. In addition, the Samdech Techo Sen Volunteer Lawyer’s Group, the CHCR, and the Bar Association of the Kingdom of Cambodia (BAKC) have provided free legal services to poor women and girls victims. In the last five years (2019-2023), the BAKC conducted free legal consultations on 2,376 cases and assigned lawyers for the poor to defend 23,565 cases, with a total of 36,610 clients (12,353 women and minors).<sup>126</sup>

The CHCR was tasked in 2019 by the Royal Government to re-draft the law on the establishment of a national human rights institution, as per 2019 UPR Recommendations 34-44. With technical support from the OHCHR and the Asia-Pacific Forum of the Australia-based National Human Rights Institutions (APF), and following multi-stakeholder consultations on the first draft law in 2021, the CHCR submitted the final draft law with 8 chapters and 32 articles to the Office of the Council of Ministers in September 2023 for the National Assembly’s approval in the future. The CHCR, the OHCHR and the APF have concluded that the final draft law is in accordance with the Paris Principles.<sup>127</sup>

Cambodia continues to engage with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia since 1993, including visits to Cambodia. From 10-20 January 2023, the Government facilitated the visit from the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition, Cambodia has organized bilateral dialogues on human rights, including rights of women, with Japan and the United Kingdom.<sup>128</sup>

## V. Peaceful and inclusive societies

*Critical Areas of Concern: E) Women and armed conflict, I) Human rights of women, and L) The girl child*

27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

### 27.1 Cambodia’s leadership role in ASEAN Committee on Women

<sup>126</sup> Cambodia UPR National Report 2024; A/HRC/WG.G/46/KHM/1

<sup>127</sup> Cambodia UPR 2024; A/HRC/WG.G/46/KHM/1

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

The ASEAN Regional Study on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda highlighted many Cambodia initiatives to build and sustain peace and to promote a peaceful society for sustainable development. Implementation of a cross-sectoral WPS Agenda was recognised at the Regional Symposium on Implementing the WPS agenda in ASEAN on August 2019 in Phnom Penh, which was hosted by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in Cambodia in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW), ASEAN Commission on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC), with support from USAID and UN Women, and further supported at the ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Strengthening Women’s Roles for Sustainable Peace and Security in September 2020. MoWA is active member of the ASEAN Committee on Women (ACW) and played a significant leadership role in advancing the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security which was launched in December 2022 in Phnom Penh. MoWA played a leading role in developing the Localisation Tool Kit and Guidelines for the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on Women, Peace and Security, which was finalized in December 2023.

Nearby Rattanak VI 2024-2028 includes plans for the development of a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security Agenda for Cambodia, in line with the ASEAN Regional Plan of Action on WPS and the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent resolutions. Starting in 2024, plans are underway to conduct a situation analysis on the WPS agenda in Cambodia as a step in the planning process to develop a NAP on WPS in Cambodia. The MoWA has recently formed an internal working group to coordinate the initial planning process with the plans form an inter-ministerial coordination mechanism to support the development and implementation of the NAP on WPS for Cambodia.

## **27.2 Conflict resolution mechanisms and women’s participation**

The RGC has made considerable efforts to tackle the issues of land disputes, which have long been a source of conflict in the country. As of November 2023, the Ministry of Land, Management and Urban Construction had solved a total of 12,746 cases of all types of land disputes, and was in the process of solving another 2,636 cases.<sup>129</sup> Approximately 40 percent of land dispute cases resolved included women as primary or secondary parties, with the MLMUC taking efforts to ensure their rights and interests are protected throughout the resolution process. Several initiatives aimed at fostering greater social cohesion and community engagement have been launched with government support, such as the Community Peace Building and Conflict Mitigation, led by the Alliance for Conflict Transformation.<sup>130</sup> The project recognizes the critical role that women play in building and sustaining peace and aims to create an environment where their contributions are valued and supported.

As part of on-going judicial reforms, Cambodia established the National Authority for Alternative Dispute Resolution (NAADR) in 2023 and gender equality and women’s issues are addressed through several key initiatives and frameworks.<sup>131</sup> The NAAADR 1) has integrated gender perspectives in its policy framework and operational guidelines, 2) conducts specific training programs to sensitize mediators and other personnel on gender issues, 3) ensured participation of women as mediators and decision-makers, 4) provides specialized support for disputes involving gender-based issues, including offering safe, confidential spaces for women to report cases, 5) conducts public awareness campaigns on gender

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<sup>129</sup> Cambodia UPR National Report 2024

<sup>130</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023

<sup>131</sup> Royal Decree NS/RKT/1123/2381



equality, women's rights and availability of services to reduce stigma and encourage women to seek help, and 6) collaborates with women's organisations and CSOs to provide comprehensive support to women involved in disputes. The inclusion of gender equality and women's issues reflects a commitment to creating a more equitable and supportive environment for all individuals seeking dispute resolutions services.

28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

### **28.1 Cambodian Women in UN peacekeeping operations**

Cambodia is committed to achieving and exceeding peacekeeping targets set out in UNSCR 1325. Cambodia women have been involved in UN peacekeeping missions under the National Center for Peacekeeping Forces, Mine and Explosive Remnants of War Clearance. From 2006-2023 Cambodia has deployed 9,281 peacekeepers, 763 of them women, on 12 missions to 10 different countries. Women have served as medical personnel, security personnel, civil engineers and mine clearance experts. Cambodia is currently ranked 9th out of 123 countries that dispatch women to UN Peace Keeping Operations. Among ASEAN Member States, Cambodia is currently ranked first with 9.6 percent being women. The participation of Cambodian women peacekeepers is 17.2 percent, exceeding the UN target of 15 percent. Cambodia has conducted specific training initiatives to increase the number of women in leadership roles in peacekeeping. In 2018 and 2019, orientation on the Women Peace and Security Agenda was provided to trainee UN Military Observers.

### **28.2 Promoting women participation and leadership**

The Cambodian military has established a Gender Mainstreaming Group, and key actions include increasing the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions. Women serve as Secretary and Under Secretary of State in the Ministry of National Defence. These are both good indications of Cambodia's growing policy commitment to gender equity. At a more local level, policies mandate that at least one woman should hold a position at the 1) provincial, capital, municipality, district and khan level, 2) the commune or sangkat level as the focal person with the CCWC, and 3) at the village level.

### **28.3 Gender-responsive approaches to conflict resolution and protection at local level**

Cambodia's Safe Village/Commune policy is a valuable approach to addressing gender inclusive protection at the local level on underreported and often overlooked issues such as domestic violence, sexual abuse, child marriage and discrimination. The policy aims to combat a range of forms of GBV including human trafficking and domestic violence and their connection to transnational crime. The Safe Village/Commune policy combats and prevents trafficking of women and children, domestic violence and other forms of violence against women through awareness raising activities such as TV and radio, billboards, posters, leaflets, booklets, radio spots, special events, peer education and community awareness. At the sub-national level, provincial and district Women and Children's Consultative Committees have regular meetings with the Board of Governors on women, children and youth issues. Commune Committees for Women and Children are important mechanisms at the local level raising concerns and taking action on issues related women, children and youth.

29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

### **29.1 Strengthened institutional capacities to counter trafficking**

Under the leadership of the National Committee to Counter Trafficking in Persons (NCCT), the National Strategic Plan to Counter Trafficking in Persons 2019-2023 was launched.<sup>132</sup> The NCCT has strengthened cooperation with relevant institutions, national and international NGOs, signing about 19 memoranda of understanding and agreements with various partners from 2019-2023.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore the Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth Rehabilitation finalized the guidelines on the mechanism for referrals of victims of trafficking in December 2022. The guidelines include provisions for 1) identification and referral, 2) coordination, 3) support services and 4) training and capacity building, are part of the Cambodia's broader efforts to combat human trafficking and support victims through a multi-sectoral approach.

Through law enforcement from 2019 to mid 2023, competent authorities cracked down on 936 cases related to trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation, arrested 1,258 suspects and sent them to court, and rescued 3,138 victims. Over the same period, the courts had 1,616 cases, involving 1,793 victims and 2,543 defendants, 847 cases were handled, 791 offenders sentenced to prison and 769 cases were in the process of being dealt with. In addition, 5,579 vulnerable victims of all forms of trafficking participated in rehabilitation programs and 1,063 persons had reintegrated into their communities.<sup>134</sup>

### **29.2 Strengthened regional cooperation on anti-trafficking efforts**

The NCCT plays a key role in facilitating cooperation with relevant countries in the sub-region, region and the world to implement the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, (UNTOC) ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons (ACTIP), ASEAN Program Plan, Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) and the Working Group for Cooperation Against Trafficking in Persons in the Greater Mekong Subregion.<sup>135</sup> As chair of the inter-ministerial International Relations Working Group of the NCCT, the Minister of Women's Affairs, has actively engaged in the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), contributing to anti-trafficking efforts of the government. Through this framework, an amendment of a Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation on Actions Against Human Trafficking in Greater Mekong Sub-region was drafted and assigned core trainers from members of each COMMIT country. The Standard Operating Procedures on Case Management of Repatriation and Integration of Trafficked Victims between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Royal Government of Thailand was disseminated for official use by MoSVY.<sup>136</sup>

### **29.3 Measures taken to combat illicit drugs**

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<sup>132</sup> NCCT, NSP CTIP 2019-2023

<sup>133</sup> Cambodia UPR 2024

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Cambodia UPR 2024

<sup>136</sup> Mid-Term Review of NSP-CTIP 2019-2023

Since 2018, Cambodia intensified its efforts to combat drug trafficking and use, with the government implementing a new drug control strategy that focuses on cross border cooperation, public awareness campaigns, drug treatment and rehabilitation, and law enforcement. The National Authority for Combatting Drugs has several accomplishments including 1) increased seizures of illegal drugs, 2) arrests and convictions of drug related offenders, 3) expansion of drug treatment and rehabilitation services, and 4) enhancement of cross border cooperation).<sup>137</sup> The RGC has also increased the coverage and access to comprehensive, community-based, voluntary, counselling and mental health services, and drug detoxification. As of September 2023, 454 locations provide mental illness and drug addiction examination and treatment services, and over a 9-month period in 2023, 2,754 drug addicts were examined and treated<sup>138</sup>, including women who use drugs and whose partners use drugs.

30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

### **30.1 Promoted Gender Equality in Education**

The MoEYS has developed an updated Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan 2021-2025, and has incorporated the CEDAW Committees 2019 recommendations for the education sector in Cambodia into the plan.<sup>139</sup> The overall objectives of the MoEYS GMAP are to a) Ensure gender equality, equitable, and inclusive access to education and good quality learning outcomes at all levels in formal, non-formal and non-formal education, b) Ensure the increase of women’s participation in delivering education services, c) Ensure the establishment of a gender-sensitive educational environment and social behaviour. Specific targets related to equal access to education measured by the gender parity index, have been met. The training manual for youth on gender equality and human rights titled as “Package of tools for youth has been used at public schools which is part of the Ministry of Women’s Affairs effort to seek support to increase understanding on the importance of participation of girls in social, economic and political life.

### **30.2 Strengthened girls’ access to quality education, skills development and training**

The RGC has continued several initiatives aimed at increasing girls’ access to quality education. The policy to provide scholarships to outstanding and poor students, of which at least 60 percent are female, has reached 110,156 students in primary school (54 percent female), 72,418 students in lower secondary school and 10,967 upper secondary school students, (60 percent female), include girls with disabilities. Separate toilets for females and males have been built in schools to support the learning environment for female students to attend school more regularly. The MoEYS has increased the number of colleges and lycées in cities, districts and Khans to 2,049 secondary schools (2020). In secondary education, life skills education has been improved and vocational counsellors have been trained to provide career guidance and counselling services in general secondary school. In higher education, there are 23 dormitories with 1,480 female students, provide a safe environment for girls to continue their education. MoEYS has also created a new training program and new higher educational institutions focusing on STEM to respond to the needs of the labour market and to reduce the skills gap, and actively encourages female students to enrol in STEM education.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023

<sup>138</sup> Cambodia UPR 2024

<sup>139</sup> MoEYS (2021): *Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan in Education 2021-2025*. Phnom Penh

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

### 30.3 Implemented policies and programmes to eliminate violence against girls, including early marriage

The RGC has strengthened implementation of two key action plans aimed at reducing violence against children, especially girls, and to prevent child marriage and teen pregnancy. The RGC has implemented the Action Plan to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children 2017-2021, and extended to 2023, composed of seven strategies of the Global Alliance for ending violence against Children in line with Cambodia's and ASEAN's responses to violence against children. The 2021 Mid-Term Review found that gender considerations permeated virtually all programmes, and that prevention and response to VAC programming were responsive to gender issues in materials design, messaging, reach, and tailored programming to meet the varied needs of girls and boys and females and males. It was recommended to extend the Action Plan for 2 years, to 2023, and for further action planning.

The Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy in Ratanak Kiri 2017-2021 is an excellent example of an initiative that targeted a remote area in a poorer, more isolated area in the Northeast part of Cambodia. Promising results with fewer child marriages and teenage pregnancies in this region have led to considerations to further expand the initiative nationwide and develop a National Action Plan to Prevent Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy (2024-2030).

## VI. Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

*Critical Areas of Concern: I) Human rights of women, K) Women and the environment, and L) The girl child*

31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

Promoting climate change resilience and green development is a priority of the RGC through the Rectangular Strategy 2019-2023 and the NSDP 2019-2023. According to the Cambodia VNR 2023, the percentage of communes/sangkats that are vulnerable to climate change dropped from 36.3 percent in 2019 to 34.2 percent in 2022. Gender equality and women's empowerment has been prioritised in the climate change agenda, including green growth. Strategy 6: Women and Climate Change of Neary Rattanak V 2019-2023 prioritises gender mainstreaming and programs that support women, girls and vulnerable groups social groups in climate change adaptation, green growth and disaster risk reduction.

MoWA has been instrumental in advocating for the successful integration on gender mainstreaming into environmental and climate change adaption policies, especially through the formulation and coordination of the Master Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2018-2030 in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and the Department of Climate Change. Key policies and plans developed and implemented include the Climate Change Strategic Plan for Gender and Climate Change 2013-2023 and the Action Plan on Gender and Climate Change 2019-2023. Gender mainstreaming and climate change has been incorporated into strategic plans and policies of relevant and priority ministries including environment, rural development, agriculture, health, water resources, and public works and transportation.

### **31.1 Supported women’s participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance**

Cambodia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and Long Term Strategy For Carbon Neutrality: Progress Report 2022 revealed that there were a total of 60 NDC actions implemented using the technology and know-how available in the country and ministries reported gender equality related results in 43 NDC actions. Women engagement rate varied between 10-64 percent in 2022. Women engagement during the year included development of horticulture and other food crops, trainings on climate resilient agriculture and business development, socio-economic and environmental data collection, and development of rice soil and ecosystem maps. Women were also involved in development of community fisheries. In the education sector, undergraduate and postgraduate studies on climate resilient agriculture were provided, and climate subjects were integrated into the curriculum of schools, and trainings of education officials. In the health sector, women were involved in the development of resilience in health service delivery, participated in rural road rehabilitation and improvement and in promoting integrated public transport systems in the main cities. Women were also involved in the development of resilient and adaptive rural water supply system and increasing access to energy in rural areas.<sup>141</sup>

The Environmental and Natural Resources Code of Cambodia was adopted on 29 June 2023, replacing the 1996 Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management legislation. It includes significant provisions to strengthen the conservation of natural resources and wildlife, build climate resilience promote the use of renewable energy and build sustainable urban environments with the capacity to effectively deal with waste management and pollution. It includes references to gender equality, participation of women and a commitment to non-discrimination, ensuring particular attention is given to vulnerable groups or those at risk of potential impact of decisions. The Code of Environment and Natural Resources Strategic Plan for Local Community Development 2024-2028 includes the establishment of Community Protected Areas (CPA) and AC Local Community Women's Network.

In addition, MoWA, PDoWA, relevant provincial departments, sub-national administrations and 249 people (124 women) from the target areas have been trained in value-added calculation and consideration for gender-responsive economic returns in climate change adaptation through women’s economic empowerment, promotion of rural sanitation, water resource management, access to clean water and agricultural production capacity to enhance the resilience of rural communities in 4 provinces. In addition, 296 officials (251 women) from the Provincial Department of Women’s Affairs and Provincial Women Development Centres received training on gender and climate change adaptation, green growth, and disaster risk mitigation, especially the linkages with family economic development for women on saving and renewable energy.<sup>142</sup>

### **31.2 Enhanced women’s access to sustainable time-and labour-saving infrastructure (e.g. access to clean water and energy) and climate-resilient agricultural technology**

The government with support of development partners have implemented several national programs and projects aimed at improving women’s economic empowerment, through gender-transformative approaches and innovative climate change adaptation initiatives. Several projects and innovations have

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<sup>141</sup> Cambodia’s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and Long Term Strategy For Carbon Neutrality: Progress Report 2022

<sup>142</sup> MoWA NR IV 2024-2030

introduced new modern and labour saving technology for small holder farmers to reduce the overall workloads for women engaged in agriculture and have incorporated gender into the planning frameworks. Examples include the National Smart Agriculture Program, the Economic Empowerment Project for Women through Agriculture Business School (WE/FBS), Agriculture Services Programme for Innovation, Resilience and Extension (ASPIRE) 2015-2022, the Agriculture Services Programme for an Inclusive Rural Economy and Agricultural Trade (ASPIRE-AT) 2023-2030, (MAFF, MEF, IFAD and The EU Bank), the Integrated Natural Resource Management Project (MoEn and UNDP) and Water and Sanitation Project of the Ministry of Rural Development.

Specific examples of time and labour saving technology for women include DRIP irrigation technology which reduces the time women spend on collecting water and watering vegetables, while increasing yields, reducing pest problems and saving water; net houses for chickens and longer lasting charcoal brisquets for warming chicken coops which also saves women's time in tending to chickens.

32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

The National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) is overall responsible for implementing the National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2019-2023 in accordance with the Law on Disaster Management (2015) and the 2019 Decision No. 001. Women are mentioned in Article 18 of the DM Law, where it states that in the event of a disaster, relevant authorities need to 'pay high attention to the needs of women, children, elderly, handicapped, and disabled persons.' Articles 35-37 of the DM Law 2015 describe the rights and obligations of individuals to protection, information, resources and participation in DRR and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) activities.

### **32.1 Gender-responsive laws and policies related to DRR and climate and environmental resilience**

The Law on Disaster Management and the National Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction 2019-2023 as the key policy instruments for disaster management in Cambodia have enhanced vulnerable social groups' awareness of and resilience to disaster risks and increased the accessibility of early warning systems for these groups. The policy instruments also mandated the socially representative participation of groups vulnerable to the impacts of disasters, such as women, youth, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities in the National Forum on Disaster Risk Reduction.

Several key gender-responsive strategies, plans and guidelines on DRR and CCA have been introduced and implemented during this period, building on and strengthening the implementation of the Law on Disaster Management 2015. The Guideline for Mainstreaming Gender in Inclusive Disaster Management 2021 developed by the NCDM and MoWA with support of development partners covers the integration of gender and social inclusion across the entire disaster management cycle, including prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response.<sup>143</sup> The National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020-2024 supports needs of women and girls by fully incorporating the Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) on Reproductive Health in Crisis Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) on the provision of maternal, sexual and reproductive health services and preventing and managing the consequences of gender-based

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<sup>143</sup> NCDM 2021, Guideline for Mainstreaming Gender in Inclusive Disaster Management 2021

violence in emergencies.<sup>144</sup> To strengthen implementation, the MISP curriculum was developed for in-service healthcare providers and MISP elements are integrated into the midwifery pre-service curriculum.

### **32.2 Strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness about the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls to the impact of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters**

Several studies and assessments on gender and climate change and disasters have been conducted over the past few years and findings used to develop new and improve existing policies, plans, strategies and programmes. The Assessment of gaps, needs and priorities for gender-related data on climate change and disasters in Cambodia (2019) provided recommendations on developing a national set of guidelines and tools for collecting, monitoring and reporting on gender statistics in climate change and disasters and on improving the availability of gender related data and information through existing platforms, such as CamDi, CamStat and PRISM.<sup>145</sup> The State of Gender and Climate Change in Cambodia 2021 analysed the gendered impacts of climate change in the key adaptation and mitigation sectors and provided recommendations on how to enhance gender responsive policy implementation and the integration of gender equality in climate relevant policy areas.<sup>146</sup> Overall recommendations included enhancing coordination and facilitation, conducting research and capacity development, improving sex disaggregated data on climate change impacts, and strengthening the M&E framework while a set of policy recommendations for the energy, agriculture, rural development and forestry sectors were also developed. Other studies conducted that have informed policy and programmes included the Participatory Research on Gender-based vulnerabilities to climate change in Cambodia (2021) by the EmPower project which recommends addressing structural, social and resource barriers which prevent some women from taking action towards building resilience,<sup>147</sup> and the Cambodia Country Climate and Development Report by the World Bank Group (2023) which provides analysis and recommendations on how Cambodia can achieve sustained development while responding to climate change and the low carbon transition.

In response, MoWA developed a guideline on the methodology to integrate gender in statistical management related to climate change and disaster management in Cambodia moving towards inclusive economic development, and continued to provide capacity building to GMAGs in relevant line ministries.

Further actions and priorities, in 2024 the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) with MoWA will work to promote gender responsive and environment statistic ecosystem, the National Committee on Disaster Management (NCDM) to promote gender policy intervention in disaster management agenda, and MoWA will support directly to line ministries to institutionalize gender and promote the role of women in climate change.

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<sup>144</sup> UNFPA Cambodia 2021

<sup>145</sup> Assessment of gaps, needs and priorities for gender-related data on climate change and disasters in Cambodia, EmPower Project, UN Women, 2019

<sup>146</sup> UNW and CDRI 2021, State of Gender and Climate Change in Cambodia 2021

<sup>147</sup> UNW and UNEP, Participatory Research on Gender-based vulnerabilities to climate change in Cambodia, 2021

## Section Four: National institutions and processes

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33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs Five Year Strategic Plan for Strengthening Gender Mainstreaming and Empowering Women and Girls 2019-2023 (Neary Rattanak V) focused on gender mainstreaming as the core and cross-cutting strategy with six sectoral strategies, and was supported by the Institutional Support Strategy on Capacity Development Efficiency. The Gender Mainstreaming Framework focused on Legal and Policy Frameworks, National Programmes and Strategic Plans and Public Behaviour Change with six priority sectoral strategies including 1) Women's Economic Empowerment, 2) Education of Women and Girls, 3) Health of Women and Girls, 4) Legal Protection for Women and Girls, 5) Women in Public Leadership and Politics, and 6) Gender and Climate Change.

Neary Rattanak V objectives and strategies are well aligned with the SDGs, including the targets under SDG 5, and have been contextualized as the Cambodian SDGs (CSDGs). Overall the Neary Rattanak is aligned with SDG 5c target (CSDG 5c.1 and 5c.2); Strategy 1: Women's Economic Empowerment is directly aligned with SDG 5.4, SDG 5a (CSDG 5a.1 and 5a.2); SDG 1.4 (CSDG 1.4.1 and 1.4.2); Strategy 2: Education of Women and Girls is directly aligned with SDG 4 targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5., 4.6, 4.7 and 4a (CSDG 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.6.1, 4.a.1, 4.a.2); Strategy 3: Health of Women and Girls is directly aligned with SDG 5.6 targets (CSDG 5.6.1, 5.6.2) and SDG 3.1 and 3.8 (CSDG 3.1.1, 3.8.1, 3.8.2); Strategy 4: Legal Protection for Women and Girls directly corresponds to SDG 5 targets 5.1, 5.2, 5.3; (CSDG 5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1); Strategy 5: Women in Public Leadership and Politics is directly aligned with SDG 5.5 (CSDG 5.5.1, 5.5.5) and SDG 16.7 (CSDG 16.7.1) targets and Strategy 6: Gender and Climate Change is directly aligned with SDG 13.1, 13.2 and 13.3 targets in support of other institutions efforts to mainstream gender and climate change.<sup>148</sup>

Resources to implement Neary Rattanak V include the national budget and contributions from partnerships, and is defined by MoWA's three year Public Investment Program and Annual Action Plan and Budget, and does not include sectoral gender-responsive budgets in relevant sectors and programmes.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on Cambodia's economy, society, health and well-being. The Government introduced measures and mechanisms, including the provision of cash flow and emergency assistance to its citizens and poor families, especially vulnerable women, affected by COVID-19, in order to protect their lives, health and living standards. The Government reallocated some Ministry budgets to address the COVID-19 public health crisis and emerging social issues, which resulted in reduced budgets for several ministries and institutions involved in the promotion of women's rights in 2021.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> NRV 2019-2023; CSDG Revised Targets and Indicators 2023

<sup>149</sup> CNCW Follow up Report on COBs 19, 25(b), 47(d) to CEDAW, 2022



34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

Since 2002, the government has made concerted efforts in conjunction with international donors to progress towards Gender Budgeting in Cambodia. This has included MoWA Gender Budgeting (GB) guidelines used to train GMAGs from MEF, Ministry of Planning (MoP) and 10 line ministries from a program budgeting pilot group (2014), a national gender workshop on increasing public investment in gender equality (2016) leading to MoWA and MEF discussing the way forward for gender budgeting, and a UNESCAP project to institutionalise GB with MoEYS (2017-18). In 2021 and 2022, IMF held a workshop with officials from MoWA, MEF and line ministries to create capacity for GB and a capacity development mission on Strengthening the Gender Budgeting Framework in Cambodia. In 2022, MoWA finalised a draft roadmap to introduce GB in Cambodia, with next steps to revise it with MEF input and define specific institutional coordination mechanisms for GB between MEF, MoWA and line ministries.<sup>150</sup>

Performance informed budgeting is a key element of Cambodia's Budget System Reform Strategy 2018-2025. The development of Budget Strategy Plans (BSPs) is a core mechanism by which performance is assessed for programs within the budget. This approach aligns well with gender responsive budgeting which seeks to ensure that gender is a factor in defining programs and in identifying the impact of programs, as reflected in performance metrics, which then informs policy development and funding decisions. In line with the IMF recommendations, the government recognises the need to strengthen and clarify the legal, institutional and Strategic Framework for Gender Budgeting, to introduce new tools to support GB and to integrate GB tools into the budget process, in line with PFM reform plans to support GB implementation.<sup>151</sup>

35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Within the framework of the Government-Donor Coordination Committee to implement the Paris Declaration, harmonize results-based action plans and strengthen leadership and ownership of the government, 19 Technical Working Groups were set up in key sectors, including the Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G). The TWGG, set up in 2004, includes representatives of 31 government agencies, 14 development agencies and 15 civil society organizations, and is a forum for discussion and inputs into gender related policies, laws and strategies.

Under MoWA leadership, three technical working groups (TWG-G sub-groups), the TWG-G on Gender-Based Violence (2012), TWG-G on Women's Economic Empowerment (2014) and TWG-G on Women in Leadership and Decision-Making (2015) serve as information and coordination platforms around MoWA's main thematic programs. The working groups play an important role in formulating, implementing, facilitating and monitoring MoWA's thematic programs for gender equality and women's empowerment

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<sup>150</sup> Strengthening the Gender Budgeting Framework, Technical Assistance Report, IMF, November 2022

<sup>151</sup> Ibid

to achieve the CSDGs, and include representatives from various government agencies, development partners, NGOs/CSOs and the private sector.

GMAGs have been established in line ministries and institutions and are responsible for developing GMAPs, which provide a mechanism for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming into sectoral policies and programmes. MoWA convenes annual meetings involving all GMAGs in line ministries to review the progress of the GMAPs. CNCW holds an annual congress led by the Prime Minister to review progress and achievements on gender equality and women's empowerment in line with the National Strategic Development Plan and CSDG commitments.

Cambodia presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2019, detailing its commitment to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal Agenda and adapting to the national context. Cambodia's second VNR in 2023, led by the Ministry of Planning (MoP) with support from development, assessed the country's progress and identified gaps in various sectors. The methodology of the VNR involved a participatory approach that engaged various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organisations, the private sector, development partners and academia. The MoP organised three workshops to initiate the process, to collect data and inputs, and validate findings. A separate workshop was conducted with CSOs to collect their inputs for VNR 2023.<sup>152</sup>

### 36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the national report.

The national review and report has built on the government's regular consultative planning processes of developing multi-year sectoral strategic and action plans for each ministry and institutions, following the development of the Royal Government of Cambodia's Pentagonal Strategy – Phase 1. This national report also draws from various government reports, documents and processes that have involved government agencies and institutions, development partners and NGO/CSO consultations, including but not limited to the UPR Report 2024, VNR Report 2023, NSDP Mid-Term Review 2021, 2023 Final Evaluation of NAPVAW III, as well as other government surveys, reports and various NGO, UN and donor program reports and studies.

A small committee under the leadership of MoWA drafted the national report with the technical assistance of UN Women using various government reports, plans and strategies, national census data and surveys, research reports and studies, and administrative data, combined with other studies from development partners, academia and NGOs/CSOs. A multi-stakeholder consultation workshop was held on May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 with over 150 persons from government ministries at the national level, NGOs/CSOs including women and youth led CSOs, academic institutes, media agencies, and development partners as well as representatives from all the Provincial Departments of Women's Affairs.

The one day workshop was an opportunity to orient and update participants on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the national review process on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary in 2025. Presentations included an overview of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, especially the 12 critical areas of concern, and synergies with the SDGs, CEDAW and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (UNSCR 1325) and an overview of the progress and challenges in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment over the past five years. Participants were given the opportunity to reflect on

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<sup>152</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023, MoP 2023

achievements, challenges and ways forward in small group discussions and to provide additional evidenced-based information and data to incorporate into the final national report.

37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the CEDAW, or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

Cambodia's 6<sup>th</sup> periodic report on CEDAW implementation was reviewed by the CEDAW Committee with the Cambodian government delegation during the constructive dialogue in October 2019 in Geneva, and the CEDAW Committee then issued 57 Concluding Observations (COB) to Cambodia on November 14, 2019. The Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW) and its Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G) with CNCW's members, with technical support from UN Women Cambodia, then developed a comprehensive CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020-2023 through a series of consultations and meetings in 2020 and 2021, involving 33 ministries and institutions, including the Council of Ministers. Each ministry and institution developed concrete actions and activities to be implemented corresponding to the relevant COBs, with CNCW coordinating the planning and monitoring of the CEDAW implementation and the COB Action Plan 2020-2023. Many of the planned activities of the CNCW CEDAW COB Action Plan 2020-2023 were incorporated into line ministry sectoral plans or separate line ministry gender mainstreaming action plans (GMAPs).

In March 2022, Cambodia through the CNCW, submitted a Follow-up Report on steps taken to Implement the three recommendations contained in paragraphs 19, 25 (b) and 47 (d) of the COBs to the CEDAW Committee. In mid-2022, Cambodia agreed to the new simplified reporting procedures of CEDAW (known as the replies to the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR)), and in 2024, CNCW has started the process of preparing a Progress Report on the COB Action Plan 2020-2023 as preparation for the next periodic report to CEDAW, expected in 2025.

The CNCW holds an annual congress of over 100 participants presided over by the Honorary Vice President, the Prime Minister and the Chairperson, the Minister of Women's Affairs, involving all six Vice-Chairpersons and 30 government ministry members, as well as CNCW TWG-G members, sub-national level authorities and other stakeholders to review achievements, challenges, and plans on the implementation of CEDAW and the recommendations. Annual reports are also produced and circulated on CNCW activities, CEDAW implementation and progress on the COBs.

Cambodia submitted its 4<sup>th</sup> cycle national report to the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council in February 2024<sup>153</sup>, which includes information on government plans, strategies, and results in response to recommendations on Gender Equality and Sexual Discrimination (Recommendations No. 45, 46, 50, 53,54, 173-179), Violence against women and children (Recommendations No. 132, 180, 182-186), Marriage of Women and Children (Recommendations No. 172, 190), Human Trafficking (Recommendations No. 69-77, 171, 191), Land Reform (Recommendations No. 20-23, 49, 130, 131, 148), Access to health-care services (Recommendations No. 140, 142-143, 147, 154-155, 157-158), and Rights of persons with disabilities (Recommendations No, 181, 195-198).

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<sup>153</sup> A/HRC/WG.6/46/KHM/1

## Section Five: Data and statistics

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38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

Under the National Strategy for Development Statistics (NSDS) 2019-2023, the Government prioritized strengthening national gender statistics in the following areas over the past five years: 1) Statistical capacity building of users to increase statistical appreciation on and use of gender statistics, 2) Increased use of more gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects, and 3) Conducted new and improved surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics, inclusive of gender related statistics.

Significant areas of progress have included strengthened implementation of the NSDS 2019-2023, inclusive of gender statistics, in planning as well as national surveys and strengthened the collection and use of key gender related data through census, surveys and administrative records, including the CSDGs Revised List of targets and indicators by Goals (2022), and expanding the use of the MoWA guidgender monitoring in line ministries as part of monitoring the CSDGs.

Under the leadership of the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning and with relevant line ministries, several major national surveys and census were conducted over the past 5 years to inform national policy, planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, inclusive of improved information and data related to gender statistics. These included the General Population Census 2019, Cambodia Labour Force Survey 2019, Cambodia Intercensal Agriculture Survey 2019, Cambodia Agriculture Surveys 2020 and 2021, Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2021-2022, the Cambodia Economic Census 2022, Cambodia Socio-economic Surveys 2019-2020, 2021 and 2023, and with the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2023 and Cambodia Agriculture Census 2023 results forthcoming.

### **General Population Census of Cambodia 2019 and Thematic Series Reports**

The National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning with support from development partners conducted the General Population Census of Cambodia 2019, incorporating strong gender data and statistics, to further inform the development of national policy, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation from 2019 onward. Further in-depth studies based on the census results and on other topics of interest were planned, with as many as 18 thematic reports, but some were delayed due to COVID-19. The Population Projection Thematic Report 2021 includes sex and age disaggregated data on a range of topics, essential for development planning. These include life expectancy, fertility rates, sex and age structures, urban and rural population by sex, selected socio-economic functional age groups by sex, and further disaggregated by age groups, sex and provinces. The Population Projection 2020-2033, Based on Age Structure of the National Population Projection 2019-2050 and CDHS 2021-22 conducted by NIS in collaboration with the MoH to inform public health decision-making. Key gender related information and statistics captured include projections on infants by sex, pregnant women and married women at national and provincial levels.

### **Cambodia Agriculture Surveys, with disaggregated data**

The National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries with support from development partners, conducted the Cambodia Inter-censal Agriculture Survey 2019, the Cambodia Agricultural Surveys in 2020 and 2021, and the forthcoming Cambodia Agriculture Census 2023, with improved systematic integration of gender related statistics and analysis, to further inform the development of national policies, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation from 2019 onward. Information, largely disaggregated by sex and important for rural women's economic empowerment, was captured on key areas of agricultural and land tenure, crop cultivation, livestock and poultry, aquaculture and capture fishing, supplemental economic activity in agricultural households, agricultural households and demographics, labour household dwelling and assets.

### **Cambodia Economic Census 2022 and Socio-Economic Surveys**

The National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning with support from development partners, conducted the Cambodia Economic Census 2022 and Cambodia Socio-Economic Surveys (CSES) 2019-2020 and 2021-2022 to further inform the development of national policies, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation from 2019 onward. The Economic Census provides information on types and sizes of enterprises and businesses, economic sector and ownership, sales, profitability and locations, largely disaggregated by sex and location, is used to enhance policies and programmes for women's economic empowerment. The CSES gathers statistical data about the living standards of Cambodia's population and includes sex disaggregated data on more than 13 different topics covering social and economic areas, and contributes to enhanced planning and monitoring on a wide range of issues, including gender equality and women's economic empowerment. For example, information has been used to inform of programs to enhance Micro, Small, Medium and Enterprise development for women as well as the National Strategy for Informal Economic Development 2023-2028, with an emphasis on women's economic development. Another specific outcome has been the Food Security and Trend Analysis Report (July 2022) which has been used to inform food and nutrition policies and programs, especially for women and girls. The National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries with support from development partners, conducted the Cambodia Inter-censal Agriculture Survey 2019, the Cambodia Agricultural Surveys in 2020 and 2021, and the forthcoming Cambodia Agriculture Census 2023, with improved systematic integration of gender related statistics, to further inform the development of national policies, planning, programming and monitoring and evaluation from 2019 onward.

39. Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

Based on the Pentagonal Strategy-Phase 1, MoWA through the Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028 has prioritised strengthening planning, statistics, monitoring and evaluation systems. Neary Rattanak VI recognises that "gender statistics and arguments to support gender analysis and development of policies and programs on gender and climate change are limited, and so are systems and mechanisms for information management and sharing of this work."<sup>154</sup> Furthermore, "the management and processing

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<sup>154</sup> MoWA Neary Rattanak VI 2024-2028, pg 12

system for statistics, and work performance data and outcomes of the Ministry and at the sub-national level, including gender statistics by sector, is not effective or digitalised yet.”<sup>155</sup>

The MoWA has prioritised the following areas, in coordination with other line ministries and institutions a) Mainstreaming/inputs related to the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment are included in strategic development plans, programs and goals for sustainable development in Cambodia (i.e. NSDP 2024-2028, CSDGs, VNR, ICPD Action Plan 2024-2028, etc. b) Capacity development of MoWA officers in compiling and launching gender statistics books, and c) Producing and disseminating updated leaflets and books on key gender statistics in Cambodia, at both the national and sub-national levels.

Under the National Strategy for the Development of Statistics 2019-2023, extended to 2028, the key priorities remain a) Capacity development and strengthening the Technical Working Group on Data for Development under the National Institute for Statistics, inclusive of gender statistics, b) strengthen use of gender-sensitive data in the formulation of policy and implementation of programmes and projects, and 3) Conducted new and improved surveys to produce national baseline information on specialized topics, inclusive of gender related statistics. In line with the principle of “leaving no one behind” and with support from development partners, information and disaggregated data on vulnerable groups and key populations at risk of being left, including women and girls, will be produced, analysed and utilized covering various socio-economic topics in national surveys and studies.

Under CSDG 17, Strengthen the Means of Implementation and Revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, the RGC will uphold existing priorities to strengthen development cooperation including further strengthening national coordination mechanisms on data and statistics and national capacity to produce high quality data through new technologies and upgraded ICT infrastructure as well further strengthening the national statistical system and platform to ensure that it enables the exchange and transfer of data from various data systems and sources into one coherent system that can serve the whole government through a clear national framework and action plan.<sup>156</sup>

#### 40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

Following Cambodia’s Voluntary National Review 2019, the Progress Report 2019 on the CSDGs, the Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and Cambodia’s commitments at the World Economic Forum in September 2020, the Government, led by the Ministry of Planning, underwent an internal participatory review process with line ministries and local authorities to revise the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDG) Framework originally developed in November 2018. A key reason for revising the CSDGs Framework was that during the monitoring and reporting process, it was revealed that 18 targets (20 percent) did not have sufficient data and/or lacked supporting data or data sources, while another 14 targets (16 percent) were lagging behind. As a result, the CSDG 2016-2030 Revised List of Targets and Indicators by Goals was finalized in July 2022 and comprises 18 goals, including Goal 18: To end the negative impact of Mines/ERW (Explosive Remnants of War) and promote victim assistance, 95 targets (an increase of 7) and 185 indicators (an increase of 37).<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, pg 15

<sup>156</sup> Cambodia VNR 2023

<sup>157</sup> RGC (2022): CSDG 2016-2030, Revised List of Targets and Indicators by Goals

Of the 185 CSDG indicators, 37/51 are gender-specific: **CSDG 1**: (2): 1.2.1, 1.4.1; **CSDG 3** (6/13): 3.1.1, 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.3.1, 3.3.2, 3.4.1, 3.8.1, 3.8.2, 3.9.1, 3.a.1, 3.a.2, 3.c.1; **CSDG 4** (9/16): 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.6.1, 4.a.1, 4.a.2, 4.c.1, 4.c.2, 4.c.3, 4.c.4, 4.c.5; **CSDG 5** (16): 5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1, 5.4.1, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 5.5.4, 5.5.5, 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2, 5.c.1, 5.c.2; **CSDG 10** (1): 10.2.1; **CSDG 16** (1): 16.7.1; **CSDG 17** (2): 17.18.1, 17.19.1. (Link to CSDG 2106-2030 Revised List of Targets and Indicators by Goals, July 2022 here.)

The following 9 SDG 5 and 23 other gender specific indicators have been prioritized: **CSDG 1**: (2): 1.2.1, 1.4.1, **CSDG 3** (8): 3.1.2, 3.2.1, 3.2.2, 3.4.1, 3.8.1, 3.8.2, 3.9.1, 3.c.1; **CSDG 4** (9): 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.5.1, 4.5.2, 4.6.1, 4.a.1, 4.a.2, **CSDG 5** (9): 5.1.1, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.3.1, 5.4.1, 5.5.1, 5.5.2, 5.5.3, 5.6.1, 5.6.2, 5.a.1, 5.c.1, 5.c.2; **CSDG 10** (1): 10.2.1, **CSDG 16** (1): 16.7.1, **CSDG 17** (2): 17.18.1, 17.19.1.

41. Which data disaggregation's<sup>158</sup> are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

Survey / Census	Summary Description	Frequency	Year/Date
<b>General Population Census of Cambodia</b>	Includes data on: 1) Population Size, Growth and Distribution, 2) Age Structure, Sex Composition, and Marital Status, 3) Literacy and Education, 4) Labour and Employment, 5) Migration, 6) Fertility, 7) Mortality, 8) Disability and 8) Housing, Household Characteristics and Amenities. Data is disaggregated by geographic location (provinces and urban/rural), sex, age groups, employment status, education, marital status, migratory status, disability, and household size and heads of household. Some information on religion and mother tongue.	Every 10 years with an inter-censal survey at 5 years	2019 2013 2008 1998
<b>Economic Census of Cambodia</b>	Data covers all fixed and movable establishments and entities in Cambodia. Data disaggregated by geographical location (province) and sex	Every 10 years with an inter-censal survey at 5 years	2022 2011
<b>Census of Agriculture of Cambodia</b> <b>Cambodia Agriculture Survey (CAS)</b>	Data on 1) Agricultural Holding Characteristics 2) Crop Production 3) Raising of Livestock and Poultry 4) Fishing and Aquaculture 5) Supplemental Economic Activity in Agriculture Households 6) Agriculture Households and Holder Demographics 7) Agriculture Labour 8) Juridical Holding Information 9) Food Security. Data for some topics is disaggregated by geographic zone, sex and age groups, and some categories are further broken down by educational attainment and marital status.	Every 10 years with an inter-censal survey at 5 years	2023 (forthcoming) 2019 2013  Agriculture Surveys in 2021, 2020

<sup>158</sup> As specified in A/RES/70/1, with the addition of education, marital status, religion and sexual orientation.

<b>Cambodia Socio-Economic Surveys (CES)</b>	<p>Includes data on: 1) Demographic characteristics, 2) Housing, 3) Agriculture, 4) Education, 5) Labour force, 6) Health, 7) Victimization, 8) Household Income and Liabilities, 9) Household Consumption and 10) Vulnerability.</p> <p>Recently, data is disaggregated by geographic location (Phnom Penh, urban, rural), sex, age groups, educational level, employment (occupation), and income, but varies across the different topics.</p>	About every 2 years	2023 (forthcoming) 2021 2019-2020 2012-2017, (yearly) 2009, 2007, 2004, 1999, 1997, 1996
<b>Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS)</b>	<p>Includes data on: 1) Household Characteristics and Housing Population, 2) Characteristics of Respondents, 3) Marriage and Sexual Activity, 4) Fertility, 5) Fertility Preferences, 6) Family Planning, 7) Infant and Child Mortality, 8) Maternal and Newborn Health Care, 9) Child Health, 10) Nutrition of Children and Women, 11) Child Discipline, 12) Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour Related to HIV and AIDS, 13) Domestic Violence, 14) Women's Empowerment, 15) Household Water and Sanitation, 16) Disability, and 17) Adult and Maternal Mortality.</p> <p>Data is disaggregated by sex, age group, geographic location (urban/rural and province), education attainment, wealth quintile, and marital status.</p> <p>Some information is disaggregated on disability, religion, employment status, household size and number of living children.</p>	Every 5 years	2021-2022 2014 2010 2005 2000
<b>Cambodia Labour Force Survey (CLFS)</b>	<p>Data on 1) Demographic Characteristics, 2) Working Age Population, 3) Employment, 4) Employment in the Informal and Formal Sectors, 5) Earnings from Employment, 6) Working hours, 7) Youth Employment, 8) Unemployment, and 9) Recruitment Costs of Return Migration.</p> <p>Data is disaggregated by sex, age group, and by rural and urban areas.</p>	Not consistent frequency	2019 2012

## Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

The national review process provided stakeholders involved in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia the opportunity to reflect on the importance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the synergies between the 12 critical areas of concern, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, particularly SDG 5 on gender equality, the CEDAW convention as well as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. The review process has sought to mobilise a wide range of stakeholders to join together to discuss and provide inputs on both progress and challenges in advancing gender equality in Cambodia. It has also served as a useful way to provide an orientation for the many stakeholders new to the Beijing Platform for Action and a reminder for others involved in the promotion



of women's rights of the progress to date and the many achievements realized so far in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia. It also will hopefully provide a future platform for further engagement on the Beijing Platform for Action to continue to advance women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia. In the future, there may be opportunities for the government and stakeholders to streamline the review process by strengthening engagement with the VNR, UPR and CEDAW reporting processes.

Cambodia has made significant progress in advancing gender equality in Cambodia, especially through the government's strong commitment's and leadership at the highest levels to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia. Cambodia has made huge strides in the development of laws, policies, strategies and plans promoting gender equality, as well as through increasing social protection measures for women and girls, improving education and health outcomes, and increasing women's economic empowerment. Women are participating more in social, economic and political spheres, and continuing efforts to promote more women in leadership and decision making roles in public and political life remains a priority for the government and for women and the country as a whole. Tackling underlying negative and harmful gender norms so women's rights are fully realized remains a priority of the government for the advancement of women as well as society as a whole. Further attention to the implementation through gender responsive budgeting and monitoring of gender-responsive policies, plans and programs to advance gender equality are warranted as are allocating sufficient resources, human and financial capital, so well thought out plans and policies can be fully implemented.