

Cambodia

- Population Sex Disaggregation: 51.5% female to male 48.5%¹
- Population Age Disaggregation: <15yrs 29.4%; 15-64yrs 65.6%; 65yrs+ 5%¹
- Average household size: 4.6¹
- Female headed households: 27.1%¹
- Infant Mortality rates: 33 per 1000 live births¹ (9 in urban, 38 in rural)
- Maternal Mortality rate: 170 per 100,000 live births²
- Child Marriage: 25% of women are married by age 18
- Adolescent Pregnancy Rate: 12% of women aged 15-19²
- Disabled population 2.1%: Females 1.9%; Males 2.2%; ¹

Gender in Brief

Cambodia has a population of approximately 14.67million and is one of the most populous countries in Southeast Asia.¹ While Cambodia has made significant progress after more than two decades of political unrest, it still remains one of the poorest and least developed countries in Asia; nearly 20% of all Cambodians continue to live below the poverty line.¹ The majority of Cambodia's population is rural (82 %)³ and engaged in the agriculture sector, which has been recognized as inefficient, undiversified, highly vulnerable to climate change and subject to natural resource degradation.⁴ While ongoing reforms have led to significant advances in gender equality and women's empowerment, Cambodia continues to rank relatively poorly on the Gender Inequality Index (104 out of 155 countries in the 2014 index).⁵ Many of the challenges facing women and girls in Cambodia relate to poverty and its impact on women, who constitute the majority of those beneath the poverty line. Contributing factors include: high rates of illiteracy and gender-based violence, as well as a lack of economic opportunities and security. Cambodia is also a receiving and sending country and a major focal point in the regional sex trade. This, in addition to widespread child labour, poses challenges to child protection.⁶

Gender roles and responsibilities: Cambodia has traditional moral codes for women (Chbab Srey) and men (Chbab Pror). The Code of Conduct for Women states that women are of lower status than men and should serve and respect them, particularly their husbands under all circumstances, even in violent relationships. In the home, women primarily hold responsibility for household, childcare and caring work. Young girls are prepared for a life as a good wife and mother at an early age and are also expected to take on their mother's responsibilities and help with the family business. Some traditions encourage women to stay inside their houses, particularly when they reach puberty.⁷ Men are expected to provide an income for the family and make decisions as the head of their family. And while married women participate in household decision-making¹, men are viewed as the final decision-makers in the household.¹ Cambodian society accepts the practice of men pursuing additional sex partners beyond their wives. Many people believe that men cannot control their sexuality and the pursuit of sexual pleasure enhances their masculinity. Recent times have seen the adoption of a more flexible approach to the abovementioned "moral codes", particularly among urban populations and younger people. However, these codes have been taught in schools across the country and are reinforced by older generations who are taking up child-care and farming responsibilities as parents increasingly migrate away from their villages to seek employment opportunities.⁸

Education and Economic Empowerment: UNICEF reports that primary school enrolment rates are now almost equal among boys and girls. However, twice as many women than men have had no schooling (13% of women versus 6% men) and literacy rates remain a major issue, especially for adult women.¹ There is also a significant drop in secondary level education for Cambodians with a lower wealth quartile and those residing in rural locations who often have to migrate to access schools. Secondary education is often not seen as an option for daughters. A larger proportion of teenage girls are in the labor force than boys, however, few women own economic assets by themselves. There is a trend of young people migrating from their home villages to urban areas or internationally to seek "off-farm" employment in "low-skill" sectors. Young women often find employment in the garment industry, the entertainment industry or in domestic care work in neighboring countries.⁶ However, following such migration young women are often exposed to unsafe and insecure working environments and are increasingly vulnerable to less secure work, without legal, economic and social protections. They are also increasingly at risk of sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. Young men often find employment in the construction industry, which lacks appropriate

safeguards. All young migrant men and women, including lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender (LGBT), face a greater number of risks, including exposure gang behaviour, drug use, labour exploitation, and sexual violence.⁶

Policy and Participation: From a policy perspective Cambodia continues to work towards gender equality and improving women's empowerment, with the implementation of CEDAW and with the strengthening of its Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) and the Cambodia National Council for Women (CNCW), which act as the National Women's machineries. However, positive steps at a high-level are often undermined at the point of implementation, for instance, despite amendments to the Land Law, which give rights to women to register and own land, discrimination continues, as women are often excluded from land distribution decision-making, or have their land confiscated by private companies with impunity. Similarly, the amended Marriage and Family Law offers poor protections, as cultural norms continue to obstruct women's rights to freely enter into marriage or seek divorce. In addition, women's participation in decision-making positions at all levels remains low and there remains a widespread belief that women are unsuitable in high positions. As such, women tend not to be involved or consulted in planning and decision-making processes and policies and programs largely neglect the needs and rights of women. Measures have been taken to ensure each province appoints one female Deputy Governor. However, at the local government level, women comprise 12 per cent of district and provincial councils* and only four per cent of the commune or *sangkat* chiefs*. Women's NGOs in the country are well organised, and work on specific issues, namely violence against women and trafficking. Yet, despite the introduction of legal provisions, such as the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims in 2005, in practice, gender and protection issues for women, girls and boys continue to be of critical concern.

Gender Based Violence and Protection: Trafficking of women and children, the use of women and children in exploitative prostitution, the increasing number of children living in orphanages (according to UNICEF 75% of whom have parents), child labour, and violence against women—particularly domestic violence—are major concerns in Cambodia. As a receiving and sending country, Cambodia is a major focal point in the regional sex trade. The rights of children are also unevenly upheld as evidenced by widespread child labour. Domestic violence is widespread and despite legal protections (2005), the DHS 2014 recorded 31% of ever-married women age 15-49 experienced violence at; 6% of Cambodian women age 15-49 have ever experienced sexual violence.¹ In addition, gang rape (often of sex workers) is widely recognized as a recreational sex activity among youth, particularly in urban areas.⁹ Sex workers and migrant women and men are at particular risks of gender-based violence both in the workplace and at home. They are also at particular risk of being exposed to labour exploitation. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual people and the disabled are further marginalised by society and subsequently also face many forms of violence and exploitation.

Gender in Emergencies: Humanitarian emergencies can impact women, men, boys and girls in different ways and can rapidly change their needs and vulnerabilities. Understanding these gendered differences is important to strengthening humanitarian responses and will help deliver more targeted assistance and programming. In May 2016, CARE Cambodia conducted a Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) in three areas affected by drought during the 2015-2016 El Niño phenomena. This research found that women's and children's social and economic vulnerability was significantly heightened as compared to men. This was largely a consequence of their responsibilities within the household, which often depend on the use of water, such as to washing clothes, preparing and cooking food, cleaning and bathing and also their use and need for more water than their male counterparts, particularly for hygiene and sanitation. Among other things, women reported that they faced increased workloads and further barriers to access water as they had to travel longer distances in search of water or shoulder the increased financial burden in order to purchase water from suppliers, including the transport to attain this. Many women, especially older women reported having limited or no access to transport (a motorbike) and many stated that they feared for their safety and health when leaving their villages to collect water. As men usually have access to a motorbike, it was reported that they were coping better than women. However, male and female groups reported that more men were now helping women to collect water and firewood. although, in some families, men do not assist and sleep or drink wine when they return from work. Men were also found to increasingly search for labour outside of the village to earn an income.

¹ National Institute of Statistics, MOP Cambodia, Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey 2013, Final Report.

² Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2014

³ MAFF, Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework in Agriculture, 2016-2020

⁴ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 2014.

⁵ UNDP, Human Development Report 2015: Work for human development Briefing note for countries on the 2015 Human Development Report: Cambodia

⁶ UN Women, Situation on Women- Overview: Cambodia Factsheet

⁷ Violence Against Women Baseline Survey 2005: Cambodia

⁸ Cambodia Common Country Assessment (CCA) United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2016-2018

⁹ Fulu E, Warner X, Miedema S, Jewkes R, Roselli T and Lang J, (2013), *Why Do Some Men Use Violence Against Women and How Can We Prevent It? Quantitative Findings from the United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific.*