



## Kingdom of Cambodia

*Sanjugta Vas Dev*

*Rhonda Sharp*

*Monica Costa*

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*(This country profile is available online at [www.unisa.edu.au/genderbudgets](http://www.unisa.edu.au/genderbudgets))*

# 1 Background

Cambodia shares its borders with Thailand, Laos and Vietnam with the Mekong river dominating the country's geography. The vast majority of its population, 94%, are ethnic Khmer and Khmer is the official language (Australia DFAT 2009). Theravada Buddhism is the dominant religion and is central to village life. Cambodia's population is rapidly growing and expected to double in the next 40 years (see table). The country is well known for its rich culture but also the genocidal rule of the Khmer Rouge (1975 – 1978) during which nearly two million out of a population of seven million people perished due to overwork, executions, starvation and disease (Sodhy 2004).

Socio-economic indicators	
Population in 2008	14.6 million
Projected population change 2008–50	108%
Percent urban (% of total population) 2008	15%
GDP per capita (PPP \$US) 2005	\$2,727
Human Development Index 2005	0.598
Human Development Index rank 2005	131 <sup>st</sup> in 177
Proportion (percent) of population below the Poverty Line (\$1 PPP a day) 2004	18.5%

Sources: UNDP (2007) Human Development Report 2007/08; *Population Reference Bureau*, (2008) World Population Data Sheet. *Asian Development Bank* (2008) Key Indicators for Asia and the Pacific 2008. (See *Explanatory Notes* for details)

Since gaining its independence from France in 1953, Cambodia has been the site of Vietnamese and American incursions, large-scale American bombing, the horrors of the Khmer Rouge administration and the resurgence of civil war (Erlanger 1990). In October 1991 the warring factions in Cambodia's decades long civil conflict signed the Paris Peace Agreement, making way for a ceasefire supervised by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) (Cristalis and Scott 2005). Democratic elections were held in May 1993 and the civil conflict ended in May 1998 after a successful peace settlement negotiated under UNTAC. A decade later, in 2008, the Cambodia People's Party won government and Prime Minister Hun Sen, who has ruled the country for the last 23 years, gained another five years in office [International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) 2008].

Cambodia remains a constitutional monarchy under King Sihamoni. Commentators have described Cambodia as a fragile and unconsolidated democracy with insufficient checks and balances between institutions (Sodhy 2004; Human Rights Watch 2008). The Western media has reported concerns with an increasingly authoritarian Prime Minister and political control over media outlets (BBC 2009).

Cambodia has been moving towards decentralisation since 2002 when the first commune (local) election, involving 1621 commune councils across the country, took place. These councils have been described by commentators as being crucial in promoting democracy and a participatory culture in local development. In 2008 the second phase, referred to as decentralisation and de-concentration, was launched with the adoption of the organic law aimed at restructuring sub-national administration. The objective has been to establish unified provincial and possibly district administrations, which have clear accountability both to the central government and to citizens through both administrative and elective mechanisms (Kimchoeun and Craig 2008). Despite the decentralisation and de-concentration reform efforts, the governance system in Cambodia is seen as remaining centralised with central ministries and agencies continuing to execute national plans and policies (izBrereton 2006).

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While Cambodia has been classified by the World Bank (2009b) as a low-income country, economic growth accelerated in 1999 from 6% to 12% in 2007 (World Bank 2009a). The World Bank (2008) observed that this growth had been underpinned by garment exports, surging tourism, booming construction and a steady agricultural expansion. However, its narrow export base, the global financial crisis and the uneven distribution of the benefits of growth have served to put the country under economic pressure (World Bank 2007; AusAID 2010).

Cambodia remains a poor country with 18.5% of its population living on less than US \$1 a day in 2004 and a GDP per capita of less than USD \$3000 in 2005 (see table). It ranked 131/177 on the Human Development Index in 2005 (see table). Ninety percent of Cambodia's poor live in rural areas (World Bank date unspecified), thereby creating important challenges for the Cambodian government with respect to alleviating rural poverty and reducing inequality to ensure that economic growth is distributed across all regions (UNDP 2008c; World Bank 2007). Compounding this challenge is the large number of disadvantaged groups, including internally displaced people, refugees, widows, orphans, and child combatants generated by 30 years of conflict. In addition, Cambodia has the highest proportion of amputees in the world (1 in 384) and 1 in every 250 people is disabled (World Bank date unspecified). The country faces severe challenges to its development including organised crime, trafficking of persons, the impact of climate change on the Mekong region and infectious diseases undermining the country's human resource capacity (AusAID 2010).

At the same time, some of Cambodia's Millennium Development Goal targets are on track. In particular, primary education (MDG2) has expanded, advances have been made in reducing extreme poverty (MDG1) and there has been a significant reduction in HIV/AIDS (MDG6) resulting in the 2015 target being surpassed (UNDP 2008c). However, child mortality (MDG4), maternal mortality (MDG5) and violence against women (MDG3) remain serious challenges (AusAID 2010).

## 2 Gender equality

Gender equality indicators	
Gender Development Index (GDI) value 2005	0.594
Gender Development Index (GDI) rank 2005	113 <sup>th</sup> in 157
Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) value 2007/08	0.377
Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) rank 2007/08	83 <sup>rd</sup> in 93
Gender Gap Index (GGI) value 2007	0.6353
Gender Gap Index (GGI) rank 2007	98 <sup>th</sup> in 128
Seats in parliament held by women (% of total) 2007	9.8%
Population Sex Ratio (males per 100 females) 2005	94.76
Maternal Mortality Ratio (per 100,000 live births) 2005	540
Adult literacy rate, female (aged 15 and older) 2005	64.1%
Adult literacy rate, male (aged 15 and older) 2005	84.7%
Gross secondary enrolment: Ratio of female rate to male rate 2005	0.69
Gross secondary enrolment: Female ratio (% of the female secondary school age population) 2005	24%
Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (% of total employment in the sector) 2004	51.9%
Ratification of CEDAW (year)	1992

Sources: UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report 2007/08*; World Economic Forum (2007) *The Global Gender Gap Report*; UN Statistics Division (2008) *Millennium Development Goal Indicators*; United Nations Population Division (2008) *World Population Prospects*. (See Explanatory Notes for details).

According to the Cambodia's Ministry of Planning (2007) the country has progressed in promoting gender equality. The constitution fully acknowledges equal rights of women and men and a number of laws have been adopted protecting women's interests including the 2005 domestic violence prevention law and the 2001 land law [Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) 2008]. Cambodia is a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, ratified in October 1992 without reservation (see table). The government (2004) acknowledges in its CEDAW report that while there are entrenched cultural and social patterns constraining women's access to public life, new opportunities for women in the economic and political spheres are emerging. These include promoting women's participation in training courses on leadership and encouraging women to stand as candidates for local elections (Royal Government of Cambodia 2004).

Cambodia exhibits the highest female labour force participation in the region, at 73.5% (Royal Government of Cambodia 2004). In addition, women's integration into the labour market is occurring at a higher rate than men – a result of the expansion of the garment and agricultural export industries (UNIFEM et al 2004: 4). In 2004 the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector was 51.9% (see table). However, women's employment opportunities exist largely in the informal sector and remain in low paid and unskilled positions (Royal Government of Cambodia 2004: 58). UNIFEM (2004) has noted that while the garment sector has created significant opportunities for paid employment for women, workers are stigmatised and face difficult work conditions. Compounding women's unequal employment status is the observation that men's wages are on average 33% higher than women's wages (UNIFEM et al 2004: 46).

In the political sphere, women remain under-represented in decision-making. In 2007 women held only 9.8% of seats in parliament and its GEM ranking was 83/93 in 2007/08 (see table). Progress has been made in expanding primary education to boys and girls but the gap between boys and girls increases markedly as they progress to higher levels of education and drop-out rates for girls at secondary school remain high. Adult female literacy rate was 64.1% in 2005 while the ratio of female to male gross secondary enrolment rates was 0.69 (see table). Maternal mortality (see table) rates remain high in comparison to other countries in the region (UNDP 2008c). Furthermore, domestic violence and trafficking of women and children into neighbouring countries has increased in Cambodia (UNIFEM et al 2004). Cambodia is ranked low relative to most other countries (113/157) in relation to the Gender Development Index (GDI) (see table).

In a more positive light, Cambodia's women's machinery is strengthening and its attempts to incorporate gender mainstreaming at various levels have met with some success. In 1993, when Cambodia introduced increased democratic rule, a Secretariat of State for Women's Affairs was established. In 1997 full ministerial status was granted to the rebadged Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), which was represented in inter-ministerial committees such as poverty reduction, education and health. The Ministry's basic mandate is to influence and guide the line ministries and lower-level administration units to mainstream gender concerns. At the provincial and local levels, this mandate is exercised through the Provincial Department of Women's and Veterans' Affairs and Women and Children Focal Points attached to the commune (local) councils (UNIFEM et al 2004).

When the MoWA initiated gender mainstreaming, gender was a little known concept within Cambodia's development context (Brereton 2006). UNIFEM (2004: 145) has noted the significant challenges facing gender mainstreaming given that the MoWA is almost entirely funded by international project support, rather than national funds and that:

*most line ministries have no gender analysis capacity; and the system of gender focal points will require considerable institutional leadership and support in order to influence policy and leverage change in the ministries.*

However, the MoWA has succeeded in making progress in fulfilling its mandate at the national and local levels. UNIFEM (2004;149) has reported that the MoWA played a role in influencing crucial national planning instruments, namely the Second Social and Economic Development Plan and the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS), and an increasing number of line ministries are developing gender equality policies. Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups have been established in 23 of 26 Ministries. These groups have come to substitute for the Gender Focal Points, which were recognised as inefficient and appointed at very low levels (Ferguson, Ladbury and Watkins 2008; Kusakabe 2005). Brereton (2006) argues that gender mainstreaming efforts have also had a significant impact on systems and procedures at the commune council level. In 2003 a decree was passed to include a Women and Children Focal Point (WCFP) in every commune, although in communes with no elected women councillors, there are none. Nevertheless a rising number of women are represented in the commune Councils (UNDP 2008c; Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Planning 2005). Between 2002 and 2007 the total percentage of women elected for the Commune Councils increased from 8.8% to 14.6% (UNDP 2008b).

By 2008 Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups have developed Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans in 11 ministries (Ferguson, Ladbury and Watkins 2008). Gender equity and mainstreaming have also been described as an element of the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010 (Royal Government of Cambodia 2006). This plan stipulates an overarching requirement that 'poverty reduction and gender concerns' be factored into all activities during 2006-2010 and largely reflects the successful work of the Minister of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and her strong working relationship with key people in the Ministry of Finance. The Minister's credibility with donors and politicians has provided the MoWA with a solid foundation for the extension of gender machinery into sector ministries (Ferguson, Ladbury and Watkins 2008).

Within the context of decentralisation and de-concentration, local NGOs have also been identified by the government as playing an increasingly active and important role in promoting women's equality through micro credit programs, vocational training, and income generating activities (Royal Government of Cambodia 2004). Although the first Cambodian NGO, Khemera, was only established in 1990, in 2008 the World Bank identified 24 Cambodian and 31 international NGOs focussing specifically on women's and gender issues. Many other NGOs – including human rights organisations – have also organised gender training, sent their staff to gender training or targeted women as beneficiaries (World Bank 2008). Cristalis and Scott (2005: 152) highlight the relevance of the close collaboration between local NGOs and the MoWA, mainly around awareness-raising in the public arena and advocacy with government, to the successes achieved.

### **3 Budgetary context**

Cambodia has limited revenue-raising capacity (see table) and is highly dependent on external funding. In 2004 development assistance represented 12% of Cambodia's GDP (Sodhy 2004; Urashima 2007a: 1). Eighty percent of the country's development programs are financed by aid with donor-funding channelled through centrally directed programs (Kimchoeun and Craig 2008)

Budgetary indicators	
Central Government tax revenue (% of GDP) 2006	8.18%
Central Government total expenditure (% of GDP) 2006	8.59%
General Government public expenditure on education (% of GDP) 2002–05	1.9%
General Government public expenditure on education (% of total expenditure) 2002-05	14.6%
General Government public expenditure on health (% of GDP) 2004	1.7%
General Government public expenditure on health (% of total government expenditure) 2005	12%
Central Government military expenditure (% of GDP) 2005	1.8%
Central Government public expenditure on defence (% of total outlays) 2007	---
General Government total debt service (% of GDP) 2005	0.5%
Open Budget Index: Overall Score	11% Government provides the public with scarce information on the central government's budget and financial activities during the course of the budget year.

Sources: UNDP (2007) *Human Development Report 2007/08*; UNESCAP (2008) *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific*; IMF (2007) *Government Finance Statistics*; Open Budget Initiative (2008). (See Explanatory Notes for details).

Some reforms have been introduced to improve Cambodia's national budgeting system since 2000. A Priority Action Programme (PAP) was developed to provide protection for the implementation of agreed priorities for 2000-2005 (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization – Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology 2003). In 2004 a broad reform program – the Public Financial Management Reform Programme (PFMRP) was initiated around four stages: 1) building budget credibility; 2) improving financial accountability; 3) improving budget-policy linkages; and 4) improving performance accountability (Moniroth 2008; Urashima 2006). In 2006 steps toward introducing programme budgeting were taken with the piloting of this approach in several key ministries (Royal Government of Cambodia, Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) and Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) 2008). Other ministries continue to use line item budgeting with current expenditure and capital expenditure.

In December 2008, the Cambodian Secretary of State of the Ministry of Economy and Finance - Dr. Aun Porn Moniroth (2008) highlighted the successes of stage 1 of the PFMRP namely: improved and expanded revenue policy, forecasting, management and collection; improved budget preparation including calendar, plan and budget classification; improved budget implementation and efficiency and finally, strengthened individual and institutional capacity.

To some degree, progress has been validated by external sources which have maintained that Cambodia has achieved some success in modernising its public expenditure management system (PEM). Under the 2007 Budget Law a calendar for budget preparation has been made available. Urashima (2007a) reports that although still relatively weak, the government is taking an increased lead in the development of policies, processes and strategies and co-ordinating development actions. It has (as noted above) in place a National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010; a Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum and a Government-Donor Coordination Committee.

Notwithstanding these advances, several persistent constraints continue to hamper progress. Urashima (2007a) identifies poor alignment of the annual budget, the Public Investment Program and the Medium-term Expenditure Framework. The Economic Institute of Cambodia (2004: 13) argues that the national budget has not played an instrumental role in achieving development goals in Cambodia, because the budget suffers each year from ineffective implementation. Provinces receive only about 30 percent of recurrent funding and virtually

none of the development budget. They enjoy very minimal discretion over their small entitlement, and correspondingly hold little real responsibility for the overall operations of lower level government public management and finance.

NGOs have also drawn attention to that actual capital expenditures differ markedly from the budgeted amounts for several Ministries. They have further observed that the government's Budget Plan for 2008 is not yet sufficiently linked to the government's objective of reducing poverty. The government does not systematically prioritise spending on health and education, agriculture, rural development, justice, women's affairs, and land management, urban planning and construction (Cambodia NGO Forum 2008). According to the Open Budget Index (see table) the government provides the public with scant information during the course of the year, making it difficult for citizens to hold government accountable. In addition, there is no mechanism to ensure that relevant gender issues are incorporated into the national budget process or that areas identified in planning, are appropriately funded. Finally, as noted by Kimchoeun and Craig (2008), the impact of decentralisation and deconcentration on wider service delivery and most of mainstream public expenditure management has been limited, in part because of limited capacity, resources and support. Such problems are reflective of poor budgetary processes generally and this may prove problematic for the success of stage 2 of the PFMRP, launched in December 2008, which is focused on improving financial accountability (Moniroth 2008).

#### **4 Gender responsive budgeting**

Since 2002 there has been a concerted effort by the Cambodian Government in conjunction with international donors to progress gender responsive budgeting (GRB) in Cambodia. In October of that year, the UNDP project Partnership for Gender Equality (PGE) lobbied the World Bank to integrate gender issues under the World Bank's Integrated Fiduciary Assessment and Public Expenditure Review (IFAPER). As a result, a chapter on gender was included in the report (Beresford and Long 2004). More significantly the Minister of Women's Affairs was invited to submit project proposals to the World Bank for gender budgeting. This led to the allocation of \$USD300,000 in funding as well as a gender budgeting specialist provided by UNIFEM. Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) staff also visited the Philippines on a study tour as part of the arrangement (Beresford and Long 2004; communication with consultant 5/02/10).

Further GRB progress was reflected in the 2003-05 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). A whole section of Cambodia's MTEF was devoted to Gender Development and the MTEF is currently being used to feed into ministry budgets and action plans (Ferguson, Ladbury and Watkins 2008). In addition, the MTEF saw the MoWA elevated to the status of a priority ministry for the purpose of budget allocations. Being a priority ministry made it eligible further funding from the national budget for 'priority mission groups' and 'program budgets' (whereas for the most part the national budget only covers basic salaries and operating cost). 'Priority Mission Groups' received salary supplements (which have been eliminated as of the January 2010) and 'program budgets' that provide funds for specific activities and services. The MoWA has had Priority Mission Groups in the gender equality, legal protection and economic development departments. It has also received 'program budgets' for economic empowerment and issues around violence against women (communication with consultant 5/2/10). Bersford and Long (2004) argue that the MoWA is one of the few, if not the only, such ministry in the world – certainly the only one in Asia – to achieve such budgetary and policy status.

In 2004, the MoWA (2004) identified that two of the most strategic entry points for mainstreaming gender relate to engendering the national statistical system and promoting gender-responsive budgeting processes. The World Bank provided support for a training

programme for staff from several Ministries including Economy and Finance, Education, Youth and Sports Rural Development and the MoWA to engender their budgets over 2005-6 (MoWA 2004). However, the degree of follow up to this initiative was limited (email communication with donor 10/12/08). In that same year, the Cambodian government established the Public Financial Management Reform Program (PFM-RP) in a bid to strengthen governance through improved public financial management. This program was analysed from a gender perspective by Cheryl Urashima (2006) in the document 'Public financial management reform from a gender perspective'. While Urashima made recommendations for incorporating GRB principles into all platforms, she also observed that GRB was not a high priority within the PFM-RP and indeed at the time was not practically viable because the required budget and expenditure information was simply not available (MoWA 2008; Urashima 2007c).

Since 2007, awareness about GRB in Cambodia has risen significantly although there has still been limited progress on the ground. During that year, Cambodia was preparing its PFM-RP which was directed at the shift towards results oriented program budgeting. In November 2007, a multi-donor supported review mission was engaged to provide input into stage 2 of the PFM-RP. Part of this mission included identifying mechanisms to mainstream gender into the PFM-RP and establishing recommendations to include reporting on the implications of budgets on poverty reduction and gender equality. The review also resulted in some recommendations around increasing the role of women in public financial management operations and leadership (MoWA 2008).

Further, the MoWA in 2007 undertook a parallel exercise to mainstream gender in the formulation and execution of plans and budgets including the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010. As the government moves from line item to program budgeting, the MoWA is advocating the integration of gender budgeting concepts into the guidelines and procedures for developing and presenting program budgets, rather than approaching gender budgeting as a separate exercise (MoWA 2008).

In addition, the Ministry of Economics and Finance (MEF) developed a Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan in conjunction with the UNDP and identified GRB as an area they would like to progress (email communication with donor 10/12/08). The 2007 Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan had drawn on the UNIFEM report *Mechanisms to promote and support the integration of gender into mainstream policies and programmes to achieve gender equality objectives in Cambodia: Assessment of a Royal government of Cambodia led initiative* prepared by the consultant Cheryl Urashima (Urashima 2007b; email communication with donor 10/12/08). The subsequent 2008 Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan (developed by the MEF in conjunction with the MoWA), included the principle to ensure that all projects and budget expenditures equally benefit women/men and boys/girls and that gender equality is integrated within the public finance reforms (through training and promotion opportunities for women and the enabling of their participation in decision-making) (Minister of Economy and Finance 2008: 3). In addition, as part of the Action Plan, an ongoing project titled 'Partnership for Gender Equity' has been developed by the UNDP in conjunction with the MoWA around capacity building in gender mainstreaming across society for MoWA staff and NGOs. It identifies engendering sectoral plans and budgets of selected Ministries by April 2009 as a key outcome (UNDP 2008a). In 2011 this is still in the planning stage.

GRB has been donor-driven in Cambodia and limited in its outcomes. Its limited progress can be attributed to various problems at a policy and political level. First, as previously noted, almost the MoWA's entire budget is donor based, gender mainstreaming in ministries tends to be donor-driven or carried out by the MoWA, and there is little ownership by the executing ministry. Hence UNIFEM (2004: 13) continues to hold concerns about whether there is the



political will to make these changes happen. Second, because target groups are not sex-disaggregated, data on the beneficiaries served by particular programs are either not collected or are not readily available in a useable format. As a result, it is difficult to identify the number, poverty status or sex of beneficiaries and to assess the effectiveness and impact of service delivery (MoWA 2004).

An exception is the education sector, which maintains a parallel, programme-oriented budget (MoWA 2004). To date, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has made a significant effort to address gender issues in its budget. For example, it has tried to address retention rates in primary schools by budget allocations for extra classes for children who have or who are in danger of dropping out of school – most of which have been girls (MoWA 2004).

From 2010, GRB in Cambodia will be progressed through an ADB regional technical assistance package (RETA) titled 'Gender-responsive decentralized governance in Asia'. The technical assistance seeks to identify and support promising practices for greater representation and participation by women in decentralised governance. It will engage GRB as a tool for linking government's gender commitments to actual resource allocation. A key component of the RETA (which is also being implemented in Nepal and Indonesia) will be to increase capacity amongst women's organisations to engage GRB tools as a form of advocacy and implement pilot GRBIs within a selected at the commune level. In August and September 2009 a scoping mission was conducted in Cambodia to assess the political and budgetary context for the project (communication with consultant 06/6/10).

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## Links to electronic resources for Cambodia

ADB

<http://www.adb.org/Cambodia/>

Asia Development Bank

<http://www.adb.org/Cambodia/default.asp>

Millennium Development Goals

[http://www.mdgmonitor.org/factsheets\\_00.cfm?c=KHM&cd=](http://www.mdgmonitor.org/factsheets_00.cfm?c=KHM&cd=)

Ministry of Economy and Finance Cambodia

<http://www.mef.gov.kh/>

UNDP

<http://www.un.org.kh/undp/>

World Bank

[www.worldbank.org/indonesia](http://www.worldbank.org/indonesia)