



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations




# THE IMPACT OF **GENDER** **POLICY PROCESSES** ON THE **RIGHT TO FOOD**

THE CASE OF CAMBODIA



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# THE IMPACT OF **GENDER** **POLICY PROCESSES** ON THE **RIGHT TO FOOD**

## THE CASE OF CAMBODIA

by Margherita Maffii, International consultant  
December 2015

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
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## Acronyms

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>CARD</b>	Council for Agricultural and Rural Development
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organization
<b>CCs</b>	Commune Councils
<b>CCWC</b>	Commune Committee for Women and Children
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil society organizations
<b>D&amp;D</b>	Deconcentration and Decentralization
<b>GCWG</b>	Gender and Children Working Group
<b>GEF-LDCF</b>	Global Environment Facility – Least Developed Countries Fund
<b>GMAG</b>	Gender Mainstreaming Action Group
<b>ICESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>IDPoor</b>	Identification of Poor Households Programme
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>IP3</b>	3-Year National Decentralization and Democratization Implementation Plan
<b>MAFF</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
<b>MALIS</b>	Improving Food Security and Market Linkages for Smallholders
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MEF</b>	Ministry of Economy and Finance
<b>MFI</b>	Microfinance institution
<b>MLVT</b>	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training



<b>MoEYS</b>	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MoP</b>	Ministry of Planning
<b>MoT</b>	Ministry of Tourism
<b>MoWA</b>	Ministry of Women's Affairs
<b>MoWRAM</b>	Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
<b>MRD</b>	Ministry of Rural Development
<b>NCDD</b>	National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-governmental Organizations
<b>NP-SNDD</b>	National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development
<b>NSDP</b>	National Strategic Development Plan
<b>NSPS</b>	National Social Protection Strategy
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>PADEE</b>	Project for Agricultural Development and Economic Empowerment
<b>RACHA</b>	Reproductive and Child Health Alliance
<b>TWG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>TWG-G</b>	Technical Working Group on Gender
<b>TWG-SP&amp;FSN</b>	Technical Working Group on Social Protection, Food Security and Nutrition
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>WCCCs</b>	Women and Children Consultative Committees
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme



## Executive Summary

This study was undertaken to identify possible approaches for the development of activities on the right to food in the Cambodia, using the gender policies and initiatives now at work in the country as an entry point. The analysis takes into account the Cambodian legal framework in relation to food security, national policies in matters related to food security, and social protection and gender policies for promoting the advancement and empowerment of women. It also considers the intersection between national gender policies and the ongoing process of Deconcentration and Decentralization. The study is supported by primary data obtained from various stakeholders, including institutional representatives and representatives of development organizations and civil society. Brief fieldwork was conducted to gather first-hand information from rural women and subnational authorities in charge of gender and food security.

The right to food is a fundamental human right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, entrenched in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, and further supported by United Nations summits and initiatives. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has a mandate to promote and provide guidance to Member States on how to implement the right to food and therefore make policies and legal frameworks more responsive, not only to human rights principles but also to the social and human dimensions of food security.

Women play a crucial role in food security on a global scale and are involved in all aspects of food production, processing and distribution. But despite their contribution to agricultural production and the labour force, women and girls are overrepresented among the poorest of the world's population. FAO promotes the right to food and a human rights-based approach to women's food insecurity that draws on international human and women's rights instruments, primarily the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Cambodia adheres to human rights principles that constitute the grounds for a right to food approach. These include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Cambodian government has made a commitment to eliminating hunger and food insecurity.

Despite having achieved food security at the macro level – Cambodia is now a food exporter – food insecurity still affects a significant portion of the population, particularly in rural areas. Notwithstanding the sharp reduction in poverty achieved in recent years, nutrition indicators reveal that women and children continue to suffer from malnutrition and a significant share of the population lives just above the poverty line, with a very thin margin of difference and a high degree of vulnerability. Poverty is a gendered phenomenon: 27 percent of Cambodian households are headed by women, and women-headed households are more likely to be poor.

The Government of Cambodia has adopted its Rectangular Strategy as the main instrument to ensure development sustainability and poverty reduction, and it sees gender equality, nutrition and social protection as priority areas. The National Strategic Development Plan, which articulates the strategy across all national sector policies, recognizes that despite progress made in the previous decade, the nutritional status of children and women has shown little improvement, with a significant portion of the population living just above the poverty line.

The Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD), in collaboration with line ministries, has been charged with the task of preparing national strategies for food security and nutrition and for social protection. The policies are aimed at increasing food availability, food utilization and social protection measures to support the most food-insecure and vulnerable, and they recognize women's disproportional vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition. Areas of concern remain in terms of effective implementation of the policies, which rely on strong political will and commitment to achieve goals. Intersectoral cooperation between many national entities, as well as in the full functionality of the subnational administrative and governance system, is a critical factor.

Cambodia has strengthened its legal framework for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality and entered into a process of restructuring the national machinery in charge of enacting these developments. The Ministry of Women's Affairs has evolved over the years from being predominantly an implementing entity, managing projects in different areas, into one that coordinates, facilitates and advocates for gender mainstreaming within and across government and public institutions. The transition poses many challenges: internally, by reorienting technical resources towards a more intersectoral approach; and externally, by dealing with resistance and scarce enforcement by line ministries and national and subnational structures.

The National Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, *Neary Rattanak IV*, represents the guiding policy to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia. The plan is supported by the Cambodia Gender Assessment, which provides a periodic analysis of the status of women in all sectors and the changes and advancements made, as well as the remaining challenges. The economic empowerment theme of the plan, which recognizes the role of women in agriculture and the challenges related to the sector transition, focuses on employment and models for cooperation with the private sector in order to increase the number of enterprises led by women. In the employment sector the plan looks at better working conditions and social protection for women.

In compliance with the new gender mainstreaming provisions that require sectoral gender plans, the Gender and Children Working Group within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has developed a sector policy and strategic framework for gender in agriculture. The sector analysis that informs the policy sees agriculture as the central engine for the national economy and for supporting the livelihoods of women. The gender analysis informing the plan recognizes the challenges posed to rural women by the agrarian transition and underlines the gaps in women's access to education, participation in community-based organizations, and under-representation in rural services. The plan aims to support women's access to resources and services in agriculture, and also to strengthen the capacities, resources and commitment of sector ministries for gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector.

The administrative decentralization started in 2002 with the creation of Commune Councils. At the subnational level the Ministry of Women's Affairs organized a decentralized structure comprising Women and Children Consultative Committees

(WCCCs) at provincial, district and commune levels. The role of committees is advisory and focuses on recommending, advocating and coordinating services targeted at women and children; however, their role in gender mainstreaming in relation to development planning is still limited.

The new phase of the decentralization reform will focus on management, democratic accountability, service delivery, and fiscal decentralization. It will primarily target district structures, which are called on to play a major role in the delivery of services. The plan is aimed at increasing democratic accountability; however, districts lack the dimension of direct accountability that links political representatives with their constituencies at the commune level. Gender is mainstreamed throughout the new plan, which will shift the responsibility for gender equality and women's empowerment from WCCCs to all functions of the structure. The decentralization reform opens new spaces for citizen participation, accountability and enforcement of rights.

The fieldwork allowed for the evaluation of the impact of these policies, putting them in comparative perspective with the changes and challenges faced by communities as well as subnational implementers. Vulnerable and food-insecure women in the study target areas revealed that there are significant constraints on their capacity to fulfil the primary need of securing enough food. Landlessness, difficulties in coping with the agrarian transition, indebtedness, and migration were confirmed as major causes of food insecurity. Social protection measures are in place, but do not yet fully respond to the needs of the vulnerable.

Commune structures, in spite of the deficiencies in terms of resources and budgets, have a strong commitment to improve the livelihood of their communities. Commune Councillors acknowledged the increased vulnerability of the poorest and the difficulties now encountered when involving them in initiatives, including participation in development planning. Most communes have prioritized infrastructure developments over social projects, for which they lack models for intervention, technical and financial support. This represents a constraint for Commune Committees for Women and Children in charge of social protection and intervention in health and education.

District and provincial structures, in contrast to communes, are comprehensive structures that include technical staff from main line ministries and civil servants. Districts are undergoing a process of restructuring that may result in a significant increase in empowerment. At the moment they are underperforming and lacking in resources as well as technical capacity. Provinces are well-structured entities, with significant mandates, power and budgets, which allow them to pilot programme approaches and interventions, scale them up, and deploy high technical capacity in their implementation. Their appraisal of the socio-economic situation is consistent but their practices are more aligned with central line ministry policies and priorities than with the bottom-up process of development planning. Gender interventions at the district and provincial level tend to still be focused on women's and children's services in health and education, with budgets considered insufficient.

A brief overview was made of development aid focused on programmes and interventions that were directly related to gender and the right to food. Official Development Assistance is channelled to the areas of intervention prioritized by national policies and sector plans. In the gender sector, these comprise priorities set by the *Neary Rattanak IV* plan. Until now, there have been no attempts to use CEDAW as a guiding document for the right to food or socio-economic rights, except for specific groups of marginalized women.

Programmes and projects targeting food insecurity and promoting nutrition follow the priorities set by the national strategy as well. Programmes targeting food-insecure households include emergency food assistance, climate adaptation and resilience, rural infrastructure and irrigation, resource management, rural poverty reduction through improved market access, vocational training, financial literacy, extension, and strengthening farmers' associations. Programmes aimed at improving food utilization and nutrition concentrate on maternal and child nutrition, water supply and sanitation, distribution of micronutrients, and food fortification. The social protection component is supported by programmes providing school feeding, scholarships for the poor, and post-disaster emergency assistance. Projects do not focus

specifically on gender, but in most cases have adopted gender policies and frameworks to ensure that benefits reach women. Official Development Assistance does not adopt a rights-based approach in project designs and approaches.

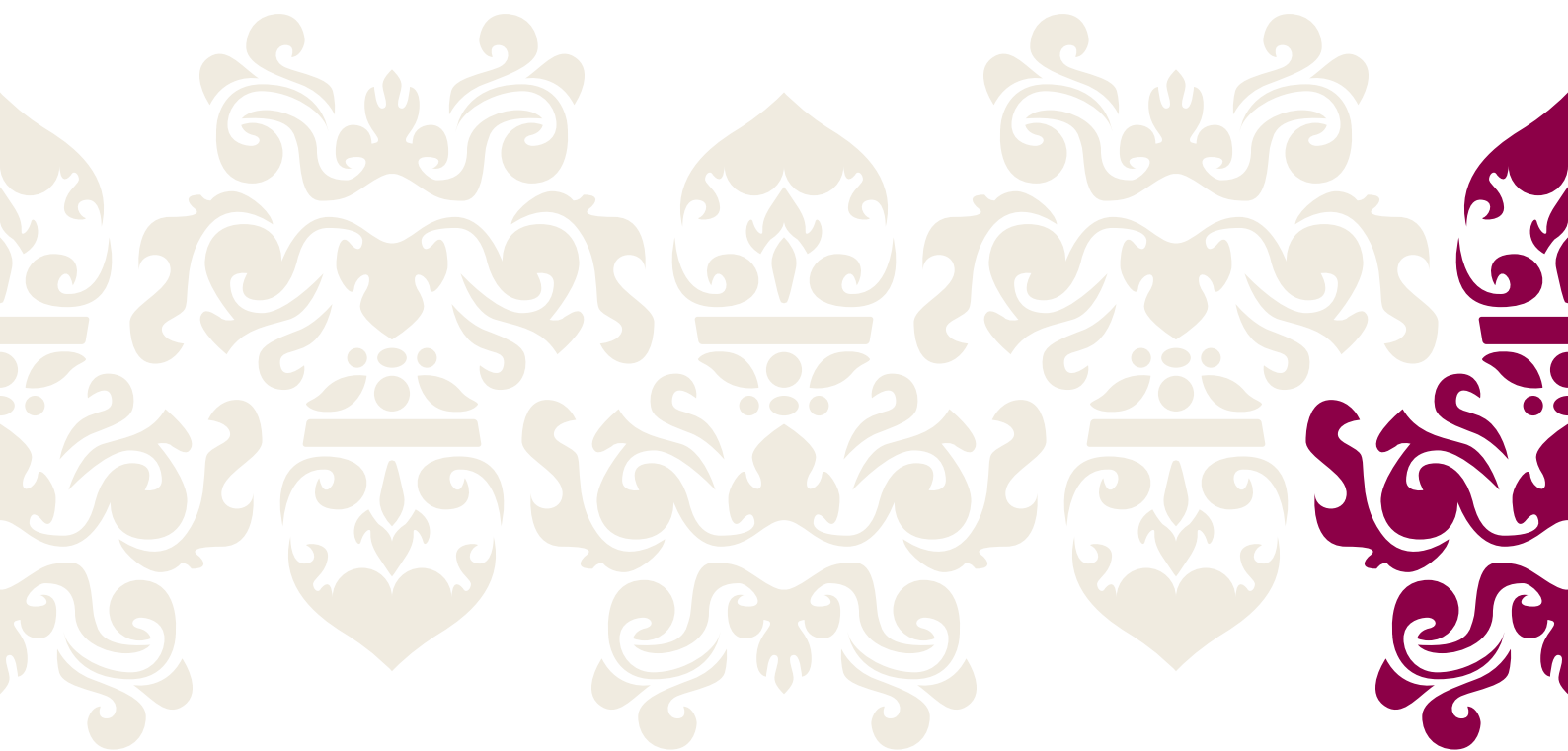
Cambodian civil society organizations have entered a process of change and evolution. From being essentially service provider organizations in sectors such as health, water provision, rural development and agricultural services, etc., a large number of NGOs have moved their interventions towards the support of community participation in development. The mobilization around land and resources access has contributed to the mainstreaming of a rights-based approach to development, changing the perspective about citizens' rights to include social and economic aspects.

The gender and women's rights sector has, at least partially, followed a similar process. It has utilized the CEDAW convention for targeting different domains, and it has moved beyond the traditional sectors of gender-based violence and political participation to extend women's right awareness to other areas more aligned with poor women's needs and vulnerabilities.

Civil society in Cambodia is moving towards being more self-reliant, with the emergence of networks and associations assembling various society groups (e.g. farmers, fishers, indigenous groups, youths, or women) who are willing to engage more proactively in the policy-making process, thus bypassing the representation and decision-making processes modelled by NGOs. Some of these approaches, especially those related to rights to resources such as land, forest and watersheds, have until now faced significant barriers. Since 2013, Cambodia has experienced shrinkage of civil spaces for dialogue and negotiation with authorities, which risks hindering the progress achieved until now by its civil society.

In terms of entry points for a gender and right to food approach, while there are opportunities for building initiatives that move in this direction, there is limited scope for clearly asserting the right to food as a guiding principle for policies and initiatives. The adoption of such principles may be problematic as people's rights and those claiming them are perceived as a challenging area for the government. Also, previous experience with mainstreaming principles in the realm of human rights at policy and legal levels has failed to produce effective changes. Much depends on where the boundary is set, between the adoption of principles and their pragmatic implementation. While the former is a sensitive and problematic field, the latter could be a more viable approach –if there is a supporting framework that endorses the principles of the right to food with the UN system, and if technical inputs, models of interventions, technical innovation, and dialogue platforms are developed in order to support the advocacy approach.

This case study about gender policies and the right to food in Cambodia has gone through a process of discussion and validation that saw all the relevant stakeholders involved in order to review, discuss and contribute to the final draft. The process, held in Phnom Penh on 22 March 2016, validated the main case study findings and provided support for the entry points identified through the research, paving the way for its implementation phase.





## Introduction

This study was undertaken to identify possible approaches for the development of activities on the right to food in Cambodia, using as an entry point the gender policies and initiatives now at work in the country.

Cambodia is a State Party to the main international instruments related to the human right to adequate food. Programmes and policies are aimed at achieving the objective of eliminating hunger and making adequate food available to the whole Cambodian population. Cambodia is also engaged in the process of mainstreaming gender in national policies and reforms, supported by a legal framework that enables women to fulfil their rights. Besides state-led policies, Cambodia has gained experience from more than two decades of development cooperation that has seen the emergence of a vibrant civil society, one that takes an active role in addressing food insecurity as well as women's aspirations for equality and empowerment.

This study is aimed at analysing the possible convergence of these different trajectories and the opportunities that this could open for a gender perspective in the implementation of the right to food.

## Structure of the report and methodology

Part 1 of the report provides an introduction to the right to food, its gender facets and a brief overview of the Cambodian legal framework in relation to it. There is also a brief overview of food insecurity in Cambodia in order to better define the groups at risk and the reasons why they are food-insecure. Part 2 provides an analysis of the national policies developed by the Government of Cambodia in matters related to food security and social protection. Part 3 analyses the national machinery for gender equality in Cambodia and the policies adopted to promote the advancement and empowerment of women. It also provides an overview of the intersection between national gender policies and the ongoing process of Deconcentration and Decentralization, as well as an analysis of sectoral gender policies that are of particular relevance for food security and the right to food. Part 4 reports and discusses primary data obtained by key informants and field interviews at the community level and among subnational governance structures. Part 5 analyses development initiatives and civil society approaches to gender and the right to food, highlighting relevant experiences that may constitute entry points for

an initiative in that sector. Part 6 includes conclusions drawn from the different data analysed and recommendations on how gender and the right to food could be approached.

The case study was conducted in Cambodia during the months of September and October 2015. It entailed a critical review of secondary data, legislation, policies, plans and results of studies and research, and a collection of qualitative data from interviews with stakeholders at the national level, including representatives of governmental entities and of development agencies and civil society organizations. Field data was collected in three provinces (Takeo, Kompong Thom and Preah Vihear) in order to gather first-hand information on gender and food security from the most food-insecure groups and from subnational structures at commune, district and provincial levels. Interviews were conducted with provincial and district government and line ministry departments of women's affairs and agriculture. At the commune level, discussions were held with commune chiefs, or councillors and gender focal points. At the community level discussions involved mainly women from the most vulnerable groups. Lists of stakeholders and informants at national and subnational levels are provided in the annexes, along with the guiding questions used for the semi-structured interviews conducted with the informants.





## PART 1

### Right to Food

The right to food is a fundamental human right recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. It is entrenched in the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966, which identifies the right to food as an essential component of the right to an adequate standard of living.

In 1996 the World Food Summit reiterated the universal right to have access to safe, nutritious and adequate food, and to be free from hunger. In 2000 the right to food became one of the areas of concern for the UN Human Rights Council, which appointed a Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, with the mandate of monitoring states' compliance with right to food principles.

Further cooperation among the FAO Council, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and different stakeholders and representatives of civil society resulted in the consensus on the Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security (Right to Food Guidelines), adopted by the FAO Council in November 2004. The Right to Food Guidelines are intended to provide guidance to member countries in order to strengthen and improve their development frameworks, especially as concerns the social and human dimensions of food security, by putting people's entitlement at the core of food security.

Most of the world's poor are food producers and live in rural areas, but despite their vital role in feeding the world they are the hungriest and most chronically malnourished. FAO has responded to their need to gain secure access to productive resources with the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, adopted in 2012 by the UN Committee on Food Security. The Guidelines affirm that secure tenure rights and equitable access to land provide a crucial foundation for poverty reduction, sustainable development, and the enjoyment of human rights.

The fulfilment of the right to food has been further reaffirmed by the United Nations with the Zero Hunger Challenge, launched by the Rio+20 Conference on sustainable development in 2012. With this initiative, the right to food is increasingly becoming a priority on the international agenda.

Through a specific programme on the Right to Food,<sup>1</sup> FAO plays a decisive role in the advancement of the right to adequate food at global, regional and national levels. It develops methodologies and analytical tools for different stakeholders, supporting the formulation of policies and programmes, legal processes, institutional capacity building, and food and nutrition security governance, as well as partnerships with civil society and assessment and monitoring.

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## Gender and the right to food

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Women play a crucial role in food security on a global scale and are involved in all aspects of food production, processing and distribution. But despite their contribution to agricultural production and the labour force, women and girls are overrepresented among the poorest of the world's population, and they are the largest population group, after children, that suffers from food deprivation and malnutrition (de Schutter, 2012b).

Gender-based discrimination acts on multiple levels to generate food insecurity and vulnerability of rural women in relation to access to adequate food. Discrimination deprives women of equal access to productive resources such as land, water, and economic opportunities; confines women in low-value production and employment; and hampers women and girls' access to education and participation in decision-making. Gender division of labour within households and societies burdens women with manifold roles and responsibilities. Women are in charge of child-bearing and child-rearing activities, but also other domestic tasks that ensure not only the biological reproduction of the household but also its care and maintenance. In addition, women engage in productive activities and in self- and wage employment, particularly in rural areas. This increases their workload, generating a critical time poverty that adds to other forms of gender discrimination and limits their educational, social, cultural and leisure activities (FAO, 2015a). When other factors are added, such as destructive weather patterns due to climate change or economic downturns affecting markets and prices, rural women (who are traditionally household food providers) tend to be the primary shock absorbers, and they react by stretching their adaptive capacities: for example, by working longer hours or taking on additional work to earn more money; reducing spending on non-food items like healthcare and increasing time spent in providing care; eating smaller or fewer and less nutritious meals to prevent other family members from going hungry; and borrowing money to buy food at the risk of falling into debt. But there are limits to their capacity to adapt, and their lives run the risk of becoming even more precarious and marginalized (Hillenkamp, 2010).

Changes in agriculture, and particularly the transition from traditional, self-sufficient farming systems towards large commercial cropping areas, tend to render access to resources such as fertile land, water and irrigation systems progressively more difficult for smallholders and particularly women farmers (FAO, 2014a). In this situation, rural women who are temporary or permanent heads of households find themselves marginalized and lacking in resources, technologies, information, and access to networks and decision-making.

Breaking this cycle of discrimination and marginalization of rural women food producers is crucial for restoring women's rights and food security. FAO promotes and encourages a human rights-based approach to women's food insecurity by leveraging on international human and women's rights instruments – primarily the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), as well as rights entrenched in national legislations and legal frameworks – to *“build the legal capacity of right holders to demand that their rights be respected and, at the same time, to build the capacity of duty bearers to fulfil their obligations”* (FAO, 2007).

## Right to food in Cambodia

Cambodia's adherence to human rights principles is stated in the Constitution promulgated in 1993. In addition, Cambodia is State Party to the main international instruments that provide the legal framework for recognizing access to adequate food as a basic human right under international law.

Article 31 of the Constitution states that:

*The Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognize and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women's and children's rights.*

Articles 45 and 46 contain provisions on women's equality and social protection, and set special provisions for rural women:

*All forms of discrimination against women shall be abolished... The exploitation of women in employment shall be prohibited... The state and society shall provide opportunities to women, especially to those living in rural areas without adequate social support, so they can get employment, medical care, and send their children to school, and to have decent living conditions.*

Article 48 recognizes the rights of children as stipulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while Article 52, concerning independence, sovereignty, national integrity and reconciliation, stipulates welfare and the standard of living of Cambodian citizens as priorities of the State.

Cambodia is State Party to the ICESCR and submitted its first, second and third periodic report in a single report in 2009. The CEDAW was accessed to by Cambodia without reservations and the fourth and fifth periodic reports were submitted in 2011. Cambodia is also State Party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Government of Cambodia was among the countries which agreed to the Right to Food Guidelines adopted by FAO Member States in 2004. In 2015 Cambodia, in collaboration with the United Nations, adopted the Zero Hunger Challenge, whose National Action Plan is being prepared and finalized (with technical and financial support from FAO) with the aim of successfully eradicating hunger by the target year 2025.

## Overview of food insecurity in Cambodia

Despite having achieved food security at the macro level – Cambodia is now a food exporter – food insecurity still affects a significant portion of the population, in particular in rural areas and among those whose primary occupation is food production (Diepart, 2015a).

According to the data provided by the FAO *State of Food and Agriculture 2015*<sup>2</sup> (FAO, 2015b), 10.1 percent of the population live below the US\$1.25 per day poverty line, while 41.3 percent live below the US\$2 a day line. National statistics, however, show the share of the population below the poverty line at 19.8 percent (CARD, 2014). In 2013 the Cambodian Ministry of Planning introduced new poverty lines calculated on the food and non-food consumption of the poorest households, which showed a significant reduction of the level of poverty in the country (MoP, 2013b) from over

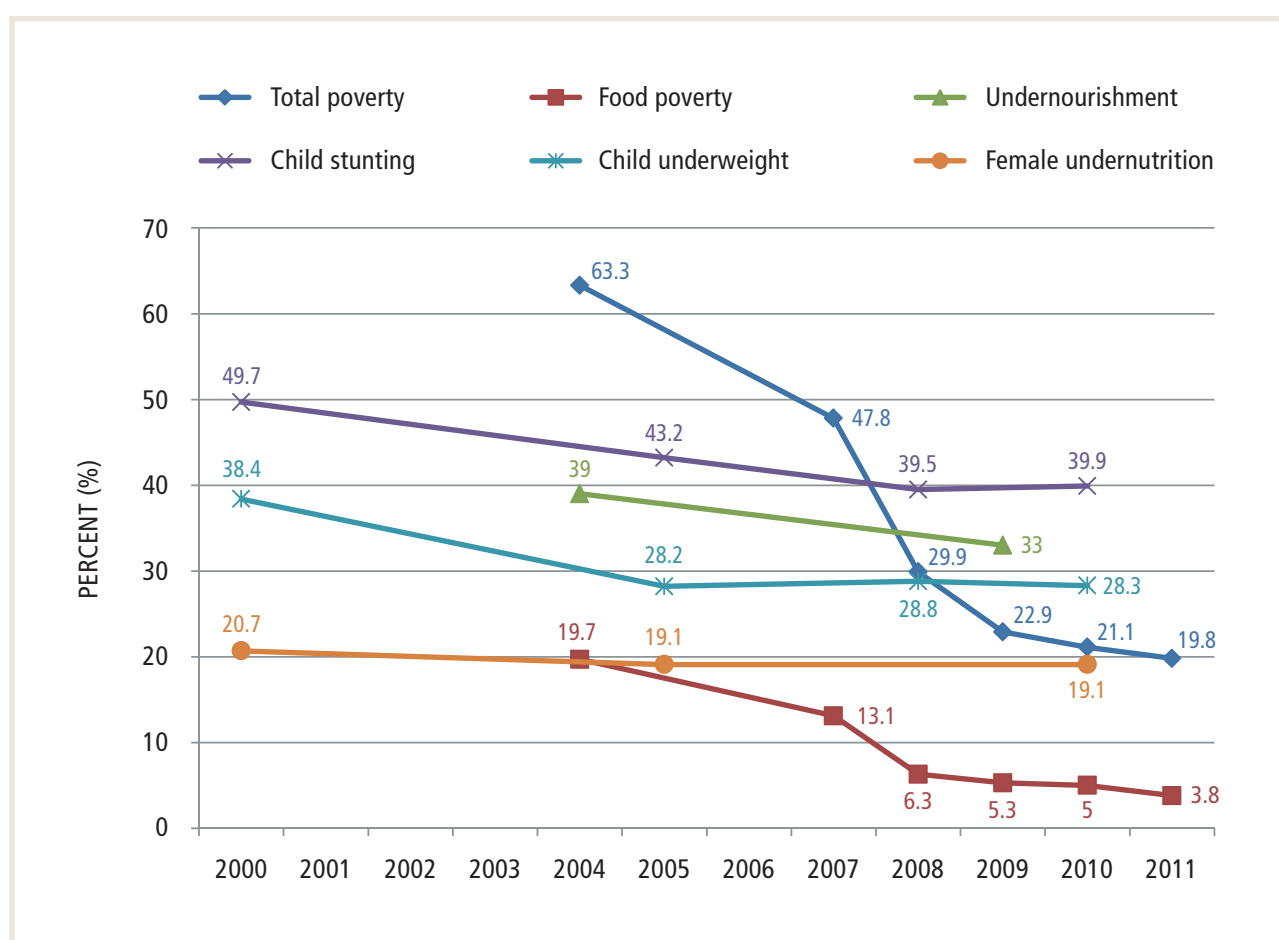
2 For more information, please visit: [www.fao.org/publications/sofa](http://www.fao.org/publications/sofa)

40 percent of the population in 2007 to 19.8 percent in 2011.<sup>3</sup> However a significant share of the population lives just above the poverty line, with a very thin margin of difference and a high degree of vulnerability. It has been estimated that the loss of 1 200 riels per day, the equivalent of US\$0.30, would double the number of people living below the poverty line, to reach almost 40 percent of the population (ADB, 2014).

Notwithstanding the sharp reduction in poverty achieved in recent years, nutrition indicators reveal that women and children continue to suffer because of malnutrition. Although poverty is not the only reason for food insecurity, it is a major cause, and poverty and food insecurity are deeply interrelated (CARD, 2014). Figure 1 below shows a positive trend for all nutrition indicators during the interval 2000 to 2006–2008; after that only small improvements were made in underweight children, while female malnutrition remained stable and child stunting showed a reverse trend.

FIGURE 1

Trends in food poverty and malnutrition (CARD, 2014)



Source: CDHS, 2000, 2005 and 2010; CSES, 2004 and 2009 Food Security Trend Analysis Report NIS.

3 The new national poverty line is set at US\$0.93 per day. The International Poverty Line of US\$1.25 a day, which also shows a significant decline in 2011, adopted a conversion rate of 2 292 riels per US\$1 PPP, which represents 55 percent of the official exchange rate; other measures, such as the UNDP multidimensional poverty index, provide different figures, where poor represented 45.9 percent of the population in 2010; in 2009 49.6 percent of the population fell below the poverty line at US\$2 per day PPP, and 74.9 percent below the threshold of US\$3 per day PPP (ADB, 2014).



Undernutrition is highest among the poorest quintile of the population, reaching 51.1 percent, but is also present in the richest quintiles, 23.1 percent. The prevalence of undernutrition among the richer quintile tends to be interpreted as a lack of nutrition education and cultural attitudes that cross-cut all social sectors, rather than the result of scarce food availability and affordability.

Cambodian households purchase on average 49 percent of their food from markets including in rural areas; the cost of purchasing food doubled between 2004 and 2009, due to the increase in global food prices that occurred in 2008 (World Bank, 2015).

Poverty is a gendered phenomenon: 27 percent of Cambodian households are headed by women and are more likely to be poor than households headed by men (NIS, 2013). Households headed by women tend to own smaller plots of land. While women's participation in the workforce is very significant in Cambodia, the majority of women (70 percent) are in vulnerable employment, like own-account work, other forms of household work, or work in sectors characterized by inadequate earnings, difficult work conditions, and lack of social security and representation (ADB, 2014).

The agricultural sector, which contributes to 34 percent of national GDP and employs 63 percent of the labour force, grew at a very high rate during the years 2004–2012. But the latest figures show a sharp decline in agricultural growth, from an average rate of 5.3 percent in 2004–2011, to 1 percent in 2013–2014 (World Bank, 2015). The agrarian transition shadows the difficulties and obstacles faced by smallholders, who represent 48 percent of Cambodian rural households and have struggled to cope with changes (ADB, 2014).

A large proportion of rural families are in debt, with a significant percentage of borrowers in debt to more than one lender. Recent data show that 51 percent of surveyed microfinance borrowers struggled to repay their debts and 49 percent had made some sacrifice to meet their repayments (Liv, 2013). The most frequent coping strategy adopted by borrowers was to reduce the quality (48 percent of borrowers) and the quantity (44 percent of borrowers) of food. Microfinance institutions provide loans using a typical monthly based repayment scheme, with average interest rates set at 2.5–3 percent per month. Loans are released on collateral such as land titles. Poorer households and women-headed households, lacking the collateral needed to borrow from microfinance institutions, tend to borrow more from private lenders whose interest rates are higher – up to 15 percent per month – but who do not require mortgages and allow more flexible repayment schemes.

Money borrowing and migration are being used by rural households as coping strategies to supply the increasing need for capital for agricultural production and livelihoods (Bylander, 2014). In recent years, migration in Cambodia has followed an unprecedented trend, with outmigration resulting in an average loss of 4 percent of the population in a recent survey, and exceeding 10 percent in some villages (MoP, 2013a). Migration from rural areas is not clearly gender-skewed: pulling factors are attracting both women and men towards employment within the country, such as in the textile industry, employing mostly women, and the construction sector, employing mostly men. Similarly, overseas work attracts women as domestic workers and both women and men as agricultural labourers and unskilled workers in neighbouring countries. An increasing number of households in rural areas are now composed of children left behind by migrants who are being cared for by grandparents; these households, described as the “skip generation”, are the most at risk in terms of poverty and food insecurity (MoP, 2013a).

The livelihoods of rural households rely on access to natural resources, land, forests and water, but access to land and resources has become a problematic issue for rural communities (ADHOC, 2013). The areas most at risk in terms of land alienation are the new frontier uplands, characterized by forest coverage with fertile soils and where important resources such as minerals and watersheds are available. Lowland areas, characterized by high population density, have seen a fragmentation of land property, which has resulted in disparities in land tenure, land concentration, a high number of smallholders with less than 1 hectare of land, and landless families (Diepart, 2015b).

Cambodia is considered highly vulnerable to climate change, which will entail important changes in weather patterns: wet seasons will be shorter with more concentrated and intense rainfall, while dry seasons will be longer and drier (MoE, 2013b). As around 80 percent of rice cultivation in Cambodia is rainfed, the impact of climate change will be significant (de Silva, 2013). Women are disproportionately vulnerable, and several important factors contribute to impair their adaptability and reliance (Solar, 2010).

In the months following the preparation of this report, the final results of the first Census of Agriculture of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2013 (NIS, 2015) were released. The document is the result of a long-term and intensive data-gathering exercise involving 98 000 households all over Cambodia, and provides comprehensive data on agricultural activities by different typologies of agricultural holdings related to the main agricultural systems in the country. The report shows the predominance of rice production, which remains the key agricultural product in Cambodia, but also the relevance of livestock, fishery and forest products, therefore pointing at the dominance of the integrated small farmers' production model in Cambodia that relies on differentiated means of production. Female heads of household account for 21 percent of the sample. Concerning food security, 16 percent of the households reported food shortages during the last 12 months, and 80 percent experienced food shortages due to low crop yields. Among the factors contributing to low yields, 39 percent of households were exposed to floods in the five years prior to the census, and 38 percent experienced drought.



## PART 2

## Cambodia's National Policies and Food Security

The Government of Cambodia has adopted the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency as the main instrument to ensure development sustainability and poverty reduction (Royal Government of Cambodia, 2013). The third Rectangular Strategy released in 2013, which covers the five-year time path of the legislature, sees gender equity, nutrition and social protection as key engagements for the government.

The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP, 2014), which organizes and articulates the sector plans and policies of line ministries and other implementing agencies to operationalize the Rectangular Strategy, recognizes that despite progress made in food security in the last decade, the nutritional status of children and women has shown little improvement, and a significant portion of the population above the poverty line remain vulnerable. The persistence of malnutrition is blamed on socio-economic reasons, primarily food insecurity, high food prices stemming from economic downturns, and shocks related to climate change and natural disasters. To address these issues, the government has developed the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014–2018, approved in 2014, and has updated the National Social Protection Strategy developed in 2011, to 2016–2018.

### The Council for Agricultural and Rural Development

The Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD)<sup>4</sup> is the advisory and coordinating body that supports the agricultural and rural sector in achieving national development objectives concerning social protection and food security and nutrition. CARD works in collaboration with line ministries (in particular the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, of Rural Development, and of Water Resources and Meteorology) and coordinates policy development and monitoring on the cross-cutting issues of social protection and food security and nutrition. It also assists the executive branch (the Council of Ministers) in the development of policies addressing the priorities set by the Rectangular Strategy and the NSDP.

4 For more information, please visit: [www.card.gov.kh](http://www.card.gov.kh)

The Cambodian government has created a number of sectoral Technical Working Groups (TWGs) that gather together government agencies, development partners, and civil society. These act as facilitation and coordination bodies in the formulation of policies, legislation, and strategies, and also work to strengthen aid effectiveness and coordination. CARD is the chair of the government TWG on Social Protection, Food Security and Nutrition (TWG-SP&FSN), which is in charge of preparing national strategies for social protection and food security and nutrition.

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### **The National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014–2018**

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The National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014–2018<sup>5</sup> (CARD, 2014) is a broad document that provides an analysis of food insecurity and nutrition in Cambodia. It proposes a number of priorities and interventions, as well as implementing steps and monitoring and evaluation processes. CARD, in cooperation with relevant line ministries, provides coordination and technical support in its operationalization, and also ensures the monitoring and evaluation process. The policy sets three objectives:

1. Increased availability and access to food in food-insecure households through more productive and diversified agriculture and livestock production, sustainable fisheries and forestry, and from non-agricultural employment and income opportunities.
2. Improved use and utilization of food resulting in reduced child and maternal malnutrition and enhanced human and economic development.
3. Improved food security-related social protection and enhanced capacities of poor and vulnerable households to cope with risks and shocks, and increase the stability of their food supply.

The policy covers the essential aspects of food security and nutrition and is ambitious in its scope and aim. It intersects key national sectors such as agriculture and water management, land and environment, health and social affairs, planning, and economy and finance. It also cross-cuts the decentralization reform aimed at strengthening the devolution of budgets, decision-making, and service provision at the subnational level. Its implementation will represent a huge challenge in terms of coordination, technical capacity and governance, and will mobilize resources from all state sectors.

Women's vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition is mentioned in the policy, and a number of measures specifically target women and children. However, the strategy is not informed by a sound gender analysis or theory of change.

While the second and third objectives are tied to existing social protection strategies, the first objective, related to food availability and accessibility through sustainable resources usage, will require a review of the current national policies on agricultural and natural resources management to make them consistent with the objectives and priorities of improving food security and nutrition.

The strategy is very recent, and therefore no information is available concerning its implementation.

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5 For more information, please visit: [www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/KHM\\_0101\\_NSFSN2014-2018.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/KHM_0101_NSFSN2014-2018.pdf)



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## CARD Food Security and Nutrition Training Initiative

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Since 2006, CARD has engaged in initiatives aimed at mainstreaming food security measures at the subnational level, in particular within local development plans. A pilot project was implemented in Takeo province, which highlighted important opportunities as well as significant challenges in the process of mainstreaming food security in local plans (Masa Kato *et al.*, 2011). This experience was used by a pool of trainers from different institutions to develop a Food Security and Nutrition Training Manual, with the aim of providing training to government officials at central and subnational levels. The manual provides analyses of food security, nutrition and malnutrition, and a general approach on how to mainstream food security and nutrition in local development plans; however, it does not seem to address the challenges highlighted by the pilot project supported by FAO.

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## The National Social Protection Strategy

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The National Social Protection Strategy for 2011–2015 (CARD, 2010), approved by the government in 2010, is the result of work conducted by CARD TWG-SP&FSN with the collaboration of development partners. The policy represents the first attempt by the Cambodian government to adopt social protection measures. The policy recognizes, *de facto*, the right of poor and vulnerable people to receive support, including food, water and shelter, in times of emergencies and crises. It also institutionalizes social safety nets to reduce poverty and food insecurity, targeting children and mothers in particular and providing free access to health care for the poor and vulnerable.

The key interventions include: targeted food distribution; distribution of farm inputs and other emergency support operations; food vouchers or other in-kind transfers for women and children; distribution of fortified food to pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children; school feeding, take-home rations and social welfare services for out-of-school youth; national labour-intensive public works programmes, as food-for-work and cash-for-work schemes; expansion of health equity funds for the poor; and social welfare services for special vulnerable groups, like social transfers and social pensions for the elderly and for people with chronic illness or disabilities.

A key condition for the implementation of the policy is the identification of poor households, who receive cards and are entitled to receive benefits from social protection. The identification process, conducted through the Identification of Poor Households Programme (IDPoor), is carried out on a rotating basis every three years in groups of eight provinces. Currently all provinces have undergone at least one identification.

IDPoor cards entitle holders to the provision of free or discounted medical services and reimbursement of other associated costs; to education and vocational training scholarships and other financial support for poor children; to agriculture-related services, such as distribution of agricultural inputs (fertilizers, seeds, livestock) and training on agricultural and animal husbandry techniques, when available at the commune level; to the allocation of land made available by social land concessions; and to supplementary or emergency distribution of food and basic necessities.

Free medical care to the IDPoor is channelled through Health Equity Funds, supported by development partners that reimburse health facilities for exempting poor patients. Poor and vulnerable women receive a package of materials and food of the approximate value of US\$30 after delivering their babies in a public health facility.

The school feeding programme and the cash and food scholarship for poor students, both supported by the World Food Programme, have reached 20 percent and 60 percent of the schools respectively. Cash-for-work programmes, also supported by WFP, have been integrated at the commune level in order to respond to commune investment plan priorities established through community consultations.

Social protection measures targeting the poor in Cambodia are relatively recent and represent a step in the direction of effective social protection coverage, but government funding for social protection remains low (World Bank, 2014). Most of the social protection measures depend heavily on external donors.

According to the stakeholders interviewed during this study, there are other areas of concern that deserve further attention. Communities are not fully aware of their entitlements and not enough empowered to demand for accountability. Communes are at the core of the social protection policies but are limited in their actions by low budget allocations and in particular by delays in the release of funds by the national treasury (Masa Kato *et al.*, 2011).

CARD has been charged by the government with developing a new social protection strategy to extend social protection measures to the most vulnerable population. Among the initiatives promoted by CARD in the realm of food security and nutrition is the Fast Track Road Map for Improving Nutrition (MoH, 2015), released in 2015. The Fast Track plan addresses nutritional deficiencies of pregnant and lactating women and severe malnutrition of children, focuses on decentralized nutrition services provided by communes, and provides detailed budget estimates for the activities and financial coverage indicators in order to facilitate rapid and informed decision-making by government and implementers.

In December 2015 the results were presented of the Emergency Food Assistance Project, an initiative funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of Cambodia. It is chaired by the Ministry of Economy and Finance, and implemented by the Ministries of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, of Rural Development, of Water Resources and Meteorology, of Interior, and of Women's Affairs, with the participation of CARD and the National Committee for Disasters Management. The project has targeted 11 provinces and provided a package of interventions that include subsidized agricultural tools, rehabilitation of infrastructure, rice distribution, breakfast for pupils and rice for teachers in selected schools, plus capacity building for subnational officials. In terms of realization, outputs have matched and in some areas surpassed planned targets; in terms of food security and nutrition, there were not specific indicators to allow verification of the impact on national nutrition statistics (MoEF, 2014).

Also within the realm of CARD activities, it is worth mentioning a pilot project which aims at disseminating nutrition information and gardening techniques to school-age children. This is geared towards improving the nutrition status of schoolchildren and ultimately influencing the nutrition status of the whole family, through behaviour change in terms of food production (in home gardens) and food choices. The project is supported by FAO and sees the involvement, besides CARD, of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Environment, and local authorities.



## PART 3

## Cambodian Gender Policies

The legal framework for the advancement of women and the promotion of gender equality in Cambodia is supported by the accession without reservations in 1992 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Two main laws referring to women's rights and protection were approved respectively in 2005 and 2008: the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, and the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation.

Cambodia's national mechanism for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is led by the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA). Other government bodies like the Cambodian National Council for Women, an interministerial coordination body that gathers high-ranking representatives from all line ministries and government agencies, provide a synergy of support and reinforcement.

The Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G), chaired by MoWA, is the coordination body for the formulation of policies, legislation, strategies, and aid effectiveness. Gender is mainstreamed through each specific sector by Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs), whose role is to provide sector gender plans and strategies.

MoWA has evolved over the years from being predominantly an implementing entity, managing projects in different areas related to gender equality and women's empowerment, to taking on the role of a coordinating, facilitating and advocating agency to promote gender mainstreaming within and across government and public institutions. In this role, MoWA is responsible for monitoring and evaluating policy and programme compliance with the government's goals of promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. Development agencies provide technical support and resources to the process.

MoWA is also actively involved in the design, planning and implementation of the Deconcentration and Decentralization (D&D) process in the public administration and financial reforms, and in other cross-cutting processes such as climate change related policies. In this role MoWA acts directly, or through the GMAGs, in cooperation with development agencies and civil society.

MoWA is in charge of compiling periodic national reports on the status of women in Cambodia for the Cambodian Gender Assessment, which offers overviews of gender in all sectors and provides the foundation for policies and processes

aimed at addressing gender inequality. The assessment is based on a review of existing information from government, donor and Non-governmental Organization (NGO) sources, and also from consultations with various stakeholders. However, not all the sectors, nor all the issues described by the gender assessment, are addressed by MoWA gender policies.

MoWA, through the TWG-G, is mandated to develop the national indicators for the Cambodia Millennium Development Goals that also inform national strategies and plans. Within MoWA a number of committees are active on special issues. The National Committee for Upholding Social Morality and Women and Khmer Family Values is in charge of promoting national culture, social morality, and family happiness. The Program-Based Approach Committee responds to the framework launched by the government in 2010 to promote sector policies and core reforms. The Gender and Climate Change Committee set up in 2011, which coordinates information on gender and climate change with relevant institutions, researches the impact of climate change on women and children, and develops capacity within MoWA and other institutions regarding climate change impacts, mitigation and adaptation. MoWA is directly implementing 13 Women's Development Centres at the provincial level, which provide technical skills and vocational training.

The transition from an implementation structure managing projects in different domains, towards a structure supporting gender mainstreaming in numerous government sectors, poses many challenges for MoWA. The focus of the ministry action was on women and children identified as vulnerable social subjects, more than on gender discrimination itself and its repercussions throughout society. The new role of MoWA requires a change of perspective able to provide gender analysis on manifold domains, and to translate them into technical advice to other government sectors. Significant technical resources are needed to engage in such processes. For these reasons MoWA is currently in a hybrid phase, where part of the old structure is maintained while the new one is being developed. The transition is difficult: line ministries are reluctant to adopt internal gender policies or fund them with coherent budgets, or to engage in internal changes by including women in decision-making positions –thus requiring a structural and cultural change within the Ministry and the government.

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## The National Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

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*Neary Rattanak IV*<sup>6</sup> is the National Strategic Plan for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment which represents the guiding policy plan to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Cambodia (MoWA, 2014). The plan was released in 2014 and covers the period 2014–2018. It sets a number of priority areas in order to promote gender equality and women's empowerment:

- Promoting favourable conditions for increasing women's access to skills training, employment, productive resources, social protection, and decision-making in the economic sector;
- Increasing women and girls' access to education and vocational training by promoting participation, awareness and favourable conditions;
- Promoting the provision of and access to quality and affordable health services according to women's specific health needs;
- Ensuring safety for women and girls in the family and society through awareness raising and by implementing relevant action plans, laws and regulations to prevent gender-based violence;

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For more information, please visit:

[www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/KHM\\_0701\\_%20NearyRattanakIV2015-2018.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/KHM_0701_%20NearyRattanakIV2015-2018.pdf)

- Promoting the participation of women in decision-making at all levels by increasing the number of female civil servants and elected leaders, as well as strengthening their capacity and opportunities for promotion;
- Improving aid effectiveness and development sustainability through institutional capacity development, ownership and partnership.

The plan identifies a number of themes and subthemes: Economic Growth, addressed through Women's Economic Empowerment; Access to Social Services and Protection, including Education of Women and Girls, and Behavioural Change; Health, HIV and Nutrition of Women and Girls; and Legal Protection for Women and Girls. Women in Public Decision-Making and Politics, Gender Responsive Government Policies and Reform Programmes, and Gender and Climate Change, Green Growth and Disaster Risk Management stand out as cross-cutting themes; Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Development toward Gender Equality is a stand-alone theme.

Among the areas that have a direct link to the right to food is the economic empowerment theme, which looks at models for cooperating with the private sector in order to increase the number of enterprises led by women – particularly “green enterprises” that can benefit women, increase their income or offer them employment. A series of initiatives will support micro, small and medium women's enterprises in cooperation with the private sector and in partnership with private associations like the Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Association, a network of rather wealthy business women.

In the employment sector the plan looks at better working conditions and social protection for women. A subtheme concerns poor and vulnerable women, supporting the acquisition of skills through training programmes, financial literacy, innovative technologies, and access to information and knowledge. The plan doesn't contain specific provisions concerning rural women. The female share of wage employment in agriculture, industry and services stands as an indicator of economic empowerment.

The health and nutrition theme is mainly concerned with gender mainstreaming in action plans at the subnational level; capacity building of subnational resources to respond to health-related gender gaps; and information, education and communication concerning services related to health, food security and nutrition. The plan doesn't elaborate on social protection, safety nets or other specific measures to support the most vulnerable and food-insecure. Indicators are provided only for health, and include maternal mortality rates, antenatal care, and prevalence of contraceptive usage.

The needs of vulnerable women are addressed by the thematic area concerning climate change. The objective is to increase the representation of vulnerable women in consultation processes, networking, and advocacy on climate change, disaster preparedness and responses at national and subnational levels. The indicators include the number of women-headed households benefitting from climate change programmes, and number of households with access to clean water year-round.

The Cambodia Gender Assessment, a comprehensive analysis document that was prepared with the Strategic Plan and should set the ground for the strategy, has a special chapter on Rights. Rights do not refer here to socio-economic vulnerability but to special groups, like women and girls with disabilities, elderly women, women and girls with HIV, widows and women heads of household, women and girls from indigenous groups or ethnic and religious minorities, lesbian and bisexual women, women survivors of gender-based violence, women in prison, and women engaged in prostitution. The policy recommendations stress the need for inclusion of vulnerable groups in gender equality policies, affirmative legal measures, legal protection, participation in decision-making, economic empowerment, education, health, and social benefits, and may open opportunities for a gender and human rights-based approach.



## Sector gender policies and strategies

### Women's Economic Empowerment MDG Acceleration Framework

Cambodia has embarked on the process of developing an MDG acceleration framework for Goal 3, with the support of UNDP (MAF-MDG, 2015). The process, completed in 2013, aimed at providing a framework for women's economic empowerment. The framework focuses on the strengthening of Women's Development Centres in providing vocational training adapted to the market in order to create employment opportunities. It also pursues the creation of a favourable environment to support women entrepreneurs by strengthening their capacities; providing business services and expanded access to credit; and providing income generation for poor rural women in off-farm activities such as handicrafts, microbusiness, services and food processing. The main instrument for the achievement of these goals is the strengthening of Women's Vocational Training Centres, located in the provinces and managed directly by MoWA provincial branches.

### Gender and Climate Change Strategy

In line with the Cambodian Climate Change Strategic Plan, and with the support of the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance, MoWA has developed a Gender and Climate Change Strategy. The plan focuses on strengthening institutional capacity and cross-sector coordination with a focus on women's role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. The plan pursues capacity building, knowledge, and awareness of adaptation and mitigation to reduce vulnerability to climate change of disadvantaged women and vulnerable groups. Actions are essentially oriented towards gender mainstreaming in line ministries and governmental bodies in charge of climate change policies. MoWA will develop research on gender and climate change and pilot projects in this sector in the future.

### Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework in Agriculture 2016–2020

The Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Strategic Framework 2016–2020 was developed by the Gender and Children Working Group (GCWG), within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). The policy is the result of intensive consultation between the GCWG and MAFF central and provincial officers, line ministry representatives from the Ministry of Planning (MoP) and MoWA, and development partners, including FAO.

The sector analysis that informs the policy sees agriculture as central to the national economy, accounting for 28.7 percent of GDP in 2013: a crucial sector for the livelihood of smallholders (both men and women), representing the majority of Cambodia's population. According to the policy, women's significant involvement in agriculture presents new opportunities but is not without challenges. It recognizes women's role in food production, processing and commercialization, and increasingly in agricultural wage labour.

The gender analysis informing the plan also recognizes the problems now facing rural women, as they are confronted with the rapid process of agricultural modernization that threatens to leave them behind. Further, the analysis acknowledges the significance of migration from rural households that often leaves women to care for farms by themselves.

Among the challenges identified is the gap in literacy rate between rural women and men, with 29 percent of Cambodian rural women aged 15 years or more being illiterate, compared with only 15 percent of men, and literacy rates among female-headed households at 42 percent, compared with 80 percent among men. Women are under-represented in community-based organizations, especially in chair positions, and the quality of their participation has seldom been evaluated. In many cases they are unable to influence decisions or mainstream agendas and priorities. Women are also under-represented in MAFF at the national and subnational level, in particular in extension services. Other challenges for women include the lack of access to mechanization and technologies, to credit, and to resources, primarily land. Women-headed households have less access to land than those headed by men, and in general own smaller plots.

Opportunities for rural women may come from contract farming by large-scale agribusinesses, facilitated by legislative measures to regulate the sector. Cooperatives may represent an entry point for women's collective action.

Climate change is seen as a challenge for rural women, but women farmers play important adaptive roles as sources of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation. Climate change responses must be gender-specific and find technological solutions for sustainable food and product processing, reduction of agricultural waste and chemical fertilizers, renewable energies for irrigation, and better soil management.

The plan also aims to support women's access to resources and services in agriculture. Furthermore, it aims to strengthen the capacities, resources and commitment of MAFF for gender mainstreaming into the agricultural sector, by integrating the needs of rural women and men into policies, regulations and legal frameworks within technical services, projects and budgets. This will be achieved by increasing women's representation within MAFF, including at the leadership level, as well as in academia and professional groups. The mainstreaming process will also reach development partners, as adherence with the gender policy will be mandatory for projects with MAFF.

The implementation of the policy is the responsibility of MAFF senior levels, subsectors and subnational levels, with the support of the Gender Working Group. The Gender Working Group will take responsibility for the development of gender standards, such as handbooks, checklists and other inputs that can guide gender analysis and mainstreaming into subsectors; for gender capacity development within MAFF; for monitoring and evaluation and gender-related accountability; and for partnership building with stakeholders, including line ministries, MoWA and women's rights organizations, to agree on outcomes and to coordinate efforts.

The Gender Working Group in MAFF is decentralized at the provincial level, with focal points who have actively participated in the drafting and validation of the document. Even if the right to food is not clearly mentioned and spelled out within the document, the plan opens many opportunities for interventions in the sector, especially considering its extension at the subnational level where many services, including those related to agriculture, are going to be decentralized and reshaped. It may also open opportunities that are much less available while cooperating with MAFF decision-makers. The working group has also drafted the Policy and Strategic Framework for Childhood Development and Protection in Agriculture Sector, with the support of FAO. The two policies are in many respects complementary and mutually reinforcing. The child policy specifically targets food-insecure households; promotes food security and access to food through diversified and sustainable farming, livestock and fishery; and calls for mainstreaming of gender and child protection simultaneously to create synergies.

Other gender plans and strategies are developed by different line ministries within the framework of institutional gender mainstreaming.

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## Gender mainstreaming in the decentralization reform

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The decentralization process is of particular relevance for the analysis of Cambodia's gender policies because subnational structures are going to assume an increasing role in governance at all levels. With the decentralization of decision-making power, financial and administrative responsibilities, and to a certain degree also regulatory power, the subnational level is going to become the focus for the implementation of social policies, social dialogue and negotiation.

The administrative Deconcentration and Decentralization (D&D) reform started in Cambodia in the late 1990s and went through a complex series of legislative measures and policies. Cambodia is divided into provinces, or municipalities in the case of important urban centres, which constitute the first subnational level. Districts, or *Khan* in urban areas, represent an intermediate level, while communes, or *Sangkat* in urban areas, are the most decentralized layer.

Commune Councils (CC) are elected by commune constituents called to choose their representatives from party lists. CCs have five-year terms and are currently in their 3<sup>rd</sup> mandate. They have a chair, a deputy chair and 5–11 members, according to the size of the population within their jurisdiction. The CC represents the state and addresses basic local needs such as security and public order, essential public services, citizen well-being, social and economic development, preservation of the environment, and the resolution of conflicts.

Provincial and district councils were established by the Organic Law on Administrative Management of Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts and Khans in 2008. Their mandate is to manage legislative and administrative decisions, development plans, investment programmes, and budgets. Provincial and district councils are elected indirectly by the Commune Councillors, with a five-year mandate. Electors choose a party symbol, and cannot express preference. Notably, at the provincial and district level, governors, boards of governors, vice-governors, and directors of administration are appointed by the central government through the Ministry of Interior. Province and district resources also include line ministries technical staff. The roles and functions assigned to these different bodies, elected councils, line ministries staff, and appointed governors are not well defined. Governors and boards of governors should play an advisory role, but *de facto* they exert a leadership role, and also gain power and high status (Niazi, 2011).

The National Committee for the Democratic Development of Sub-National Administration, chaired by the Ministry of Interior, includes members of the main line ministries and governmental bodies. It is charged with implementing the D&D administrative reform and designing a ten-year National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development. The first phase three-year plan, IP3-I, prepared in 2012, was aimed at developing the subnational authority operational systems and procedures. It provided the regulatory framework for structures and systems, including the district and commune funds, and for the development planning processes at commune and district levels. Communes have to prepare development plans for their five-year mandates, which are translated into three-year priority investment plans and reviewed annually for funding. Commune priority investment plans are the key processes that allow the participation of constituents in local development. Communities are consulted to set priorities and provide inputs for the plan, which is then discussed and integrated with other commune plans at the district level for integration and funding support by development partners.

At the subnational level (provincial, district and commune), MoWA has organized a decentralized structure comprising WCCCs at the provincial and district level, while at the commune level the same role is provided by a Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC), established in each commune and providing inputs to the CC on women and children's issues. The experience of the CCWCs served as the inspiration for the district and provincial women and children consultative committees, which were set up later. The network of committees receives direct technical support from MoWA and its provincial and district branches.

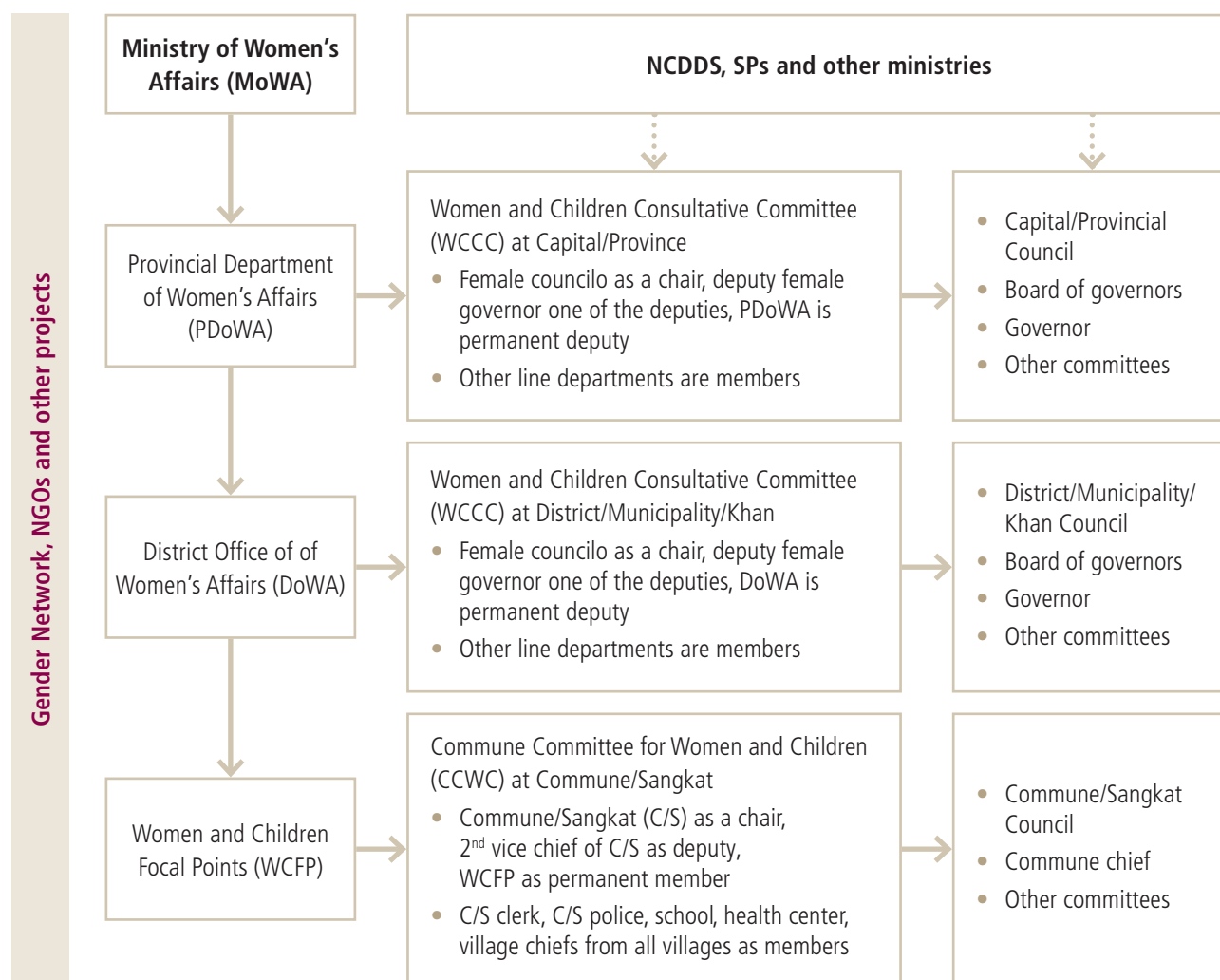
At provincial and district levels, appointed female deputy governors are assigned the role of bringing forward gender issues. The role of WCCCs at provincial and district level is advisory and focuses on recommending, advocating and coordinating services targeted at women and children; their role in gender mainstreaming in relation to development planning is still limited, as are opportunities to highlight and address gender concerns in other sectors.

CCWCs were created during the first phase of the D&D process: located at the commune level, they represent a direct interface for community women to address problems and needs. Elected female Commune Councillors (CCs) and CCWCs support each other mutually. Furthermore, CCWCs have an important role in influencing CCs in their priorities and actions in favour of women and children (COMFREL, 2013). Figure 2 shows the MoWA and women and children committee structures at the subnational level.



FIGURE 2

MoWA decentralized structure (MoWA, 2013)



Source: MoWA. 2013. *Gender in First Decentralisation Plan*.

The second phase IP3 plan (IP3-II) released in 2014 (NP-SNDD, 2014) focuses on reform management, democratic accountability, human resource management & development, service delivery & functions, and fiscal decentralization (NP-SNDD, 2014). The IP3-II aim is to continue with the democratic reform and set targets for citizens' participation in development, as well as duty bearers' accountability. The IP3-II background and justification considers that political incentives for reform are now stronger in Cambodia, with an improved political space and increased political competition to demonstrate results to citizens. According to the plan, the public sector is increasingly expected to move toward social accountability and equity as well as transparency. It also includes a strong demand for openness and provision of information to citizens.

The plan primarily targets district structures; these are called on to play a more significant role in particular in the provision of services, as the IP3-II plan vision is to provide more and improved services to citizens. The plan's programmatic outcomes are: reform management, democratic accountability, human resource management and development, service delivery and functions, and fiscal decentralization. Service delivery is expected to improve through the decentralization of the core services from central ministries to provinces and districts, and through enhanced local decision-making and accountability. The document does not yet provide details of the kinds of services that are going to be decentralized at the district level.

The document states that inclusive and equitable development is justified and rooted in the Cambodian legal framework, its policies, and in the ratification of international conventions (Annex 4). The key international instruments mentioned in the document include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform of Action, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, no reference is made concerning the ICESCR, accessed to by Cambodia and including within its provisions a wide set of economic and social rights that would stand as a clear basis for accountability and citizens' entitlement. Important references to people's rights are made by the plan, as spelled out in one of the goals to

*Improve the welfare and quality of life of all local residents of SNAs; to locally empower citizens (from all social groups) through political and other processes to ensure equality, fairness and the protection of basic rights.*

A social accountability plan which links service providers to citizens' rights was developed with the support of the World Bank, submitted to government decision-makers and the NCDD Chairman, and then approved. The plan includes a set of training materials to provide citizens with information on their rights, service delivery standards, budgets, and performance.

The *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the Social Accountability Framework*, addressed to NGOs and civil society organizations, provides guidance to implement social accountability in the provision of services. However the relationship that underlies this accountability is not one between right holders and duty bearers; rather it has been replaced by a "demand-side" versus "supply-side" market formula, which is not without consequences.

The guidelines seem to go in the direction of "governing" accountability through a series of mechanisms, including contractual relations that will govern the relationship between the government bodies and the other actors, NGOs and local NGOs who are called on to implement the framework. Citizens' rights are arranged in a packet called "Information for Citizens", which has not yet been released, and whose content will be developed by the NCDD and mainstreamed by NGOs throughout the process.

Gender in IP3-II has been mainstreamed since the elaboration phase, and a gender audit has been conducted to assess its strength and correct weaknesses (NCDD, 2014). The audit dug into the previous plan to assess different components of the policy and provide recommendations for the new plan. The IP3-II's gender approach sees the responsibility for gender equality and women's empowerment not limited to women and children committees but mainstreamed over all the functions and capacities of the structure. A strong emphasis is given to human resources capacity building, quotas for female administration staff enrolment, and gender equality among the criteria for inclusiveness. Monitoring and evaluation foresees systematic reliance on sex-disaggregated data collection and gender audits.

The IP3-II, especially its principles and goals, establishes a foundation for citizen participation and local governance accountability in the area of service provision, and represents a step forward in terms of democratic participation. Nevertheless the plan shifts the focus and resources from the lowest subnational structure, the CCs, to the intermediate level represented by districts. This is not without consequences, as CCs are elected directly and represent a crucial interface

between citizens and representatives bound by direct democratic mechanisms. The relationship between constituencies and districts is only mediated through indirect representation mechanisms, which weakens the process of accountability. On the other hand, the plan is also aimed at strengthening the position of elected councils in relation to governors and boards of governors, who are currently appointed and usually gain important decision-making power.

The process of gender mainstreaming in the subnational administration presents opportunities and risks: on one hand, if enough technical support is provided to sector and line ministry resources, there is the opportunity for gender mainstreaming in a wide set of interventions.

On the other hand, the network of structures set up by MoWA, at the moment the only reference for women's issues, is at risk of being disempowered by the process.

In terms of a gender and right to food synergy, the plan may represent an important and unavoidable foundation. If service provision moves forward to include food security and social protection measures at the local level, there are plenty of opportunities for conceiving forms of social accountability in these realms, influencing policies and planning processes, and moving towards right to food implementation measures at the local level.



## PART 4

## Gender and the Right to Food: A View from the Ground

The fieldwork has allowed the evaluation of the impact of these policies, putting them in perspective with the changes and challenges faced by communities as well as subnational implementers. The discussion with community groups in Takeo, Kompong Thom and Preah Vihear highlighted a series of factors that allowed for an understanding of who the most vulnerable are, where they are located and why they are vulnerable. The group discussions gathered mostly women from the poorest households with food insecurity as a significant concern. While as a group they did not represent the majority of the population (generally between 20 and 25 percent of the households), their difficulties appeared to be serious and in most cases had been left unresolved. Because women are overrepresented among the most food-insecure echelons of the population, they made up the majority of the participants.

In the communities located in lowland rice-producing areas, participants described their struggle to provide even three meals per day. Some women could only afford two meals, which they considered insufficient for their household's well-being.

“ We eat two meals per day because of food shortages. The rich can buy food and good quality rice at the market, while the poor, especially children, collect fish in rice fields. Mostly we go to sleep hungry, we eat bobor [rice porridge] and we drink a lot of water to fill the stomach. We cannot buy food on credit because we are afraid not to be able to pay back, then we cannot go back to the sellers. — Community women, Takeo

Middle-aged or elderly women, caring for their grandchildren left behind by migrant adults, were the most destitute participants. Some of the women attending the discussions were caring for the grandchildren of different daughters and sons, and shared their exhaustion and worries, especially when children were sick (which happened quite often) or food was scarce. Despite the justification that migration was for gaining income, the remittances sent back by migrants, between US\$10 and US\$20 per month, were often insufficient to cover household expenditures. This new phenomenon reverses completely the traditional care system typical of Cambodian society, where elders are cared for by adult children.

Many women facing food scarcity were landless or had very small plots of land. Landless women appeared generally to rely on remittances from children, agricultural labour, or microbusiness such as preparing sweets at night and selling them during the day. Small plots of land are cultivated with very little inputs, and shortage of manpower affects productivity. Land fragmentation within families causes a reduction of the land plots available to each member, such that they are largely insufficient to support a household and can result in landlessness. The owners of these small land plots tend to sell their land to finance migration. Another major reason for landlessness is indebtedness. Debt can be contracted in years of bad harvests or to cope with shocks such as health care emergencies, and result in the household being unable to repay.

Households with only grandmothers and children who own land resort to drastic reductions in agricultural labour by reducing land preparation, fertilization and weeding, at the expense of productivity. Surpluses are rare and lack of weather predictability increases the risk of bad harvests. Dry season rice gives higher yields, but costs are very high.

*At least 250 kg of fertilizers per hectare, and pesticides, and now there is a pumping station and to get water for my fields I have to pay to the Ochna [Khmer term for rich and influential people] 350 000–400 000 riels per hectare, for each harvest. – Farmer, Takeo*

Climate change was mentioned by all the participants as a current problem, adding to their difficulties and livelihood vulnerability. Drought, more than floods, was considered the most important threat to their livelihood. The delayed rainy season in 2015 caused important losses to farmers relying on rain for wet season rice, and impeded the growth of home vegetable gardens. Water provision was also difficult for household consumption, a task traditionally performed by women.

Most of the vulnerable women who participated in the discussions were food buyers in contexts that offered few opportunities for income generation. Women resorted to wage labour whenever available, working in other people's rice fields, or engaging in small day-to-day activities such as preparing cookies at night and selling them during the day. However, even for these activities women needed small amounts of capital, which they borrowed from moneylenders and paid back when they gained some income.

The coping strategies for vulnerable households included borrowing money to invest in small businesses or to finance the rice production cycle at the beginning of the season, as well as migration. The extent of outmigration of young adults from rural communities is exponential. Brokers go to villages to hire new migrants, and those who succeed in sending home remittances encourage others to leave; then, when only a few young people remain, nobody wants to stay.

*Villages are very quiet now, everybody has left. – Community woman, Takeo*

There are many different kinds of migration: temporary, permanent, towards urban centres within Cambodia or abroad, legal or illegal. Most depend on the financial capability of the household. Migrating legally to the Kingdom of Thailand costs around US\$500, while through illegal networks it is around US\$250. Therefore migration quite often starts with a debt. Migration can improve livelihoods but can also cause more insecurity. Some migrants cannot find work, or become unemployed after a while; some are cheated by brokers who organize their migration; some engage in work that is dangerous or unsafe and come back with health problems. In those cases, households struggle to repay the debts contracted to finance migration.

Another important aspect that emerged from these meetings was the very scarce participation in community projects, meetings and initiatives.



*/// We participate in meetings if we can receive something; if there are no gifts it cannot compensate for our time loss. – Community woman, Takeo*

Time poverty is without doubt a problem for the most insecure households. The scarce participation is also due to interventions that do not respond to participants' needs, or don't take into consideration their difficulties and barriers. The training organized by the District Office of Women's Affairs in Takeo, aimed at improving children's nutrition through the preparation of fortified rice porridge, seemed worthwhile, but left the participants quite indifferent. While women did not contest the value of more nutritious food for young children, they found its implementation unrealistic. Ingredients such as eggs and fish are costly, not all households have the opportunity to grow their own vegetables, firewood is rare and costly, and time cannot be diverted from income-generating activities.

This scarce participation also affected projects that were supposed to target the most vulnerable households, such as the FAO-supported project PADEE. Unless they were confident of getting tangible results that could justify their withdrawal from day-to-day income-generating activities, women would not dedicate their time to training or other initiatives.

In Preah Vihear and the upland Northern areas of Kompong Thom, different dynamics were at work concerning food security and vulnerability. In general, households in upland areas, where population density is lower, have access to larger land plots. Soils in upland areas are more fertile than in lowland paddy rice areas, especially forestlands recently converted into arable land.

In an indigenous village inhabited by the Kuy ethnic group, the lack of self-sufficiency came from the discontinuation of shifting cultivation, a widespread farming system traditionally adopted by indigenous groups in Cambodia. Land concessions and the inflow of new migrants have reduced the forestland available for rotating fields, and non-timber forest products such as vegetables, fruits, fish and small animals are less available. The conversion of upland swidden fields to permanent cultivation reduces productivity and yields, and increases the workload of women for weeding.

*/// Before, we used to grow rice and vegetables in our farms and change the fields every two or three years. But since the companies came we had to stop this kind of farming. Now upland fields are permanent, so they are less productive. Fertility decreases and rice yields are low. Keeping the fields free of weeds requires a lot of work, much more than before. Now we cannot fish and there is no land available for animal grazing. – Kuy community women, Kompong Thom*

Soil degradation is an important factor related to migration. Households with land plots that are difficult to farm prefer to leave them idle and migrate. Men tend to work outside their communities, leaving the task of farming to women.

An important point coming out of the discussions with the women's groups was their lack of confidence in their own knowledge and skills. In part this was due to the numerous "training & education" initiatives that they had received, which in general disregarded the capacity of community women and conceptualized rural women as unskilled, uneducated and ignorant. During one of these discussions, only after having enumerated one by one all the varieties of vegetables they used to grow, was it acknowledged that they were not unskilled, but in need of improved technologies.

Social protection policies such as free health services, prenatal checks, and postnatal support packages for IDPoor were considered helpful by women, but the quantity and quality of care services were judged insufficient. Kindergartens had been established in some communities, but at the time they offered limited services. There were no school feeding programmes in any of the communities visited. Emergency relief measures, such as rice and food distribution or post-flooding packages distributed to affected households, were all channelled by commune and district authorities with the support of the Cambodian Red Cross; but this did not cover all household necessities. Emergencies added to situations of chronic scarcity and multiple threats to household livelihoods.

## Communes

Communes are generally located in one of the villages of their jurisdiction and can be considered as community structures to some extent. In the communes visited during this fieldwork, the councils were located in various structures: in new commune halls, in old buildings, and even in the private house of the commune chief. They were extremely undersupplied, with very little furniture. Human resources were limited to the elected councillors and the clerk, and some had no electricity, computers or internet connection. This last aspect is particularly surprising in view of their role as a linkage with other government bodies at the subnational, district and provincial level.<sup>7</sup> Having conducted field research in rural areas since the first Commune Council mandate, it is possible for the author to observe that little has changed in terms of supply and resources available for councillors to perform their duties.

In spite of these deficiencies, the councillors and commune chiefs appeared to have a strong commitment to improve the livelihood of their communities and their well-being. Commune Councillors were well informed about the situation in their communities; when asked about food insecurity and the causes of vulnerability, their description of the problems faced by the most vulnerable in their communities didn't differ very much from the one provided by the communities themselves. They acknowledged that the inputs now required for rice farming were out of the reach of smallholders, who could not generate enough income to cover these expenditures. They observed with concern the massive departure of the younger generation of adult men and women in search of employment in urban centres or abroad, seeing it as a new problem that risked undermining the development efforts deployed until now. The population of young children and the elderly left behind is creating a new social problem for which they do not yet have solutions. The share of population at risk is limited, according to their estimate around 20 and 25 percent, but its poverty is deepening.

Another major concern expressed by most of the councillors was related to climate change. For the second year in a row, all three provinces visited were experiencing a prolonged drought. This had resulted in losses for many farmers, and was creating a difficult situation in the everyday life of households. Planned investments had to be changed in order to cope with water scarcity. Consequently irrigation channels, water ponds, dams, and pumping stations were being planned in many communes.

Commune authorities acknowledged problems of access to resources. In Kompong Thom and Preah Vihear, communities were being confronted with problems due to land alienation, the granting of economic land concessions, and land grabbing by outsiders. The attitude of Commune Councils in relation to these cases varied. In the case of land concessions granted to companies, decisions were made at the central level, leaving little opportunity for communes to intervene. When access to resources was threatened by local events, communes could take a more proactive role, asking for intervention at the district or provincial level, even if the chance of finding solutions often remained small. Some of them complained that the weak rule of law put them in a very difficult position with their communities, something which demands sound law enforcement.

Another aspect that emerged during the discussions was the scarce participation of communities in meetings, consultations and discussions, including those concerning their community development. This was interpreted by commune authorities as a sign of time poverty of the most poor and vulnerable. Poor and vulnerable women tend to attend meetings and training sessions only when they are provided with little gifts or snacks to compensate for the time spent in listening.

Commune authorities tended to disregard mechanisms generating inequalities within communities: for example, the differential impacts and benefits derived from new infrastructures such as irrigation structures, where beneficiaries

<sup>7</sup> Cambodia has reached a nearly 100 percent phone network coverage, with 24 million phone card subscriptions and nearly 4 million internet users, out of a total population of 14 500 inhabitants.

are often the owners of land near the structures. The differences in outcomes between farmers with irrigated land plots and farmers with only rainfed fields are very significant, and contribute to accelerating the divide between rich and poor.

Gender matters are generally delegated to the Commune Committee for Women and Children, and to female members of the council. CWCCs do not have decision-making power; they are only consultative bodies, and depend very much on the activism and capacity of their members. CWCCs have only small budgets available to them; the extent of their implementation and the budget allocated depend very much on the commitment and lobbying capacity of the CWCC members at the commune as well as the district level.

In two of the communes, most of the budget was spent to fund the facilitators that provide educational training on different issues, such as reproductive health, hygiene and nutrition. The CWCC vision of gender encompasses only women and children's needs, in domains limited to health, reproductive health and education, but commitment to support women is strong; members are available and willing to help women in difficulty, report cases of domestic violence, and advocate for intervention in favour of households facing crises. The participation of female councillors or CWCC members in the planning of infrastructure, or other plans that do not relate directly to women and children, is limited.

Most communes prioritize infrastructure developments for which they have clear guidelines. This reflects perhaps the fact that Commune Councils have undergone an important process of capacity development in terms of development planning and implementation, which has focused more on these kinds of interventions. Their hierarchical position at the bottom of the subnational structure gives them only moderate scope for innovation and new approaches, for which they might lack technical and financial support as well as room to manoeuvre within the upper hierarchy. Moreover, they receive directives from the upper hierarchy reflecting government priorities and policies that they tend to perceive as mandatory. This raises questions concerning the effectiveness of the community consultation process that should orient the commune development plans.

Commune Councillors expressed frustration at budget limitations and the very slow release of funds, which delayed local projects and put them in a difficult position with their constituents.

Commune Councils have a critical role in the decentralization process. They are elected directly by their constituencies and are the only subnational structure that offers a legal platform for community needs and demands to be expressed. Together with CWCCs, they offer important opportunities for the development of initiatives that concern the entitlements of vulnerable women and the right to food. They probably do not have enough political space to engage in local initiatives aimed at influencing the legal framework or establishing new principles directing local plans, but they may adopt pragmatic measures that go in the same direction. In this sense, there is a need to conceive ready-to-use project schemes that could help communes to fill the need for social interventions even in a situation of scarce technical support and incentives.

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## Districts and provinces

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Different from communes, districts and provinces are comprehensive structures that include technical staff from main-line ministries and civil servants. Provincial government facilities visited during the study were all renovated, well-equipped and well-supplied structures. District facilities varied, with some being well-equipped but others very basic and undersupplied.

Results of interviews carried out with district governors and vice-governors in charge of gender affairs and district officials of MoWA provided very different perspectives. The district vice-governors interviewed in different provinces provided a gender analysis of the factors contributing to food insecurity among rural women and acknowledged new problems such as climate change, landlessness and migration. They expressed their discontent at the lack of focus on social issues in



commune investment plans. This was generally explained as a limitation in terms of Commune Council planning capacity, due to a mentality too focused on infrastructure development projects. District officials tended to see Commune Councils as lacking education and technical skills.

The new decentralization plan was considered very positive, as it would strengthen the role of the districts. It was also considered an important opportunity for devolving the budget to women and children's issues, which may help communes to prioritize investments in gender and social services. The district vice-governors recognized that some aspects of the plan were still unclear, especially the shift in power between district officers and elected councils.

The district officials of MoWA interviewed during the fieldwork appeared to be more in tune with the traditional working method of line ministries, focusing on national programmes mainstreamed at the subnational level. Their analysis of gender in relation to food security and vulnerability appeared poor. They expressed a vision of vulnerability and food insecurity being the result of a lack of education and ideas, more than the consequence of social, economic and environmental constraints. Their solutions reflected this analysis and seemed to concentrate on educational interventions and nutrition training as the main activities developed to improve the nutritional status of women and children, even if the poorest women targeted by the training attended only the first meeting and not the other sessions. In any case, the conclusion was that targeting the poorest was not successful and might have compromised the results of the project. A certain reluctance to communicate what were considered "bad results" to the upper hierarchy was expressed. A significant portion of the women and children committee budget was spent on facilitators conducting these kinds of training, without clear monitoring and evaluation plans to help understand what the outcomes and limitations of such approaches were.

At the moment it is not clear which kind of services will be centralized at the district level: only health and education, or other key services such as land, water, and environmental resources management. What is clear is that the IP3-II will provide important resources at the district level in terms of budget, capacity building, and power. This is very relevant for the functionality of these structures, which at the moment are underperforming. But it may result in a progressive disempowerment of the Commune Councils left struggling with limited budgets, scarce resources, and technical support. It is worth noting that district structures comprise a large number of non-elected officers in powerful positions, such as governors, deputy governors, boards of governors, and administrative directors. The difference between commune and district structures, in terms of democratic representation, community participation and downstream accountability, is substantial; empowering the districts could represent a deterioration of the current participatory democratic processes.

In terms of entry points for a gender and right to food approach at the district level, a lot depends on the elucidation of many aspects of the IP3-II. For example, the gender vision informing the IP3-II suggests shifting gender issues from the exclusive responsibility of women and children committees to mainstreaming gender throughout these structures and the line ministry departments. This may open new opportunities for gender platforms and initiatives in sectors such as agriculture, land and water management, associated with the delivery of services that move in the direction of the right to food. However, if not strongly supported, gender mainstreaming may disempower the women and children structures, which at the moment are unique in their role, even if not fully performing.

Provinces are well-structured entities, gathering important expertise and technical knowledge. In all three provinces the discussions with technical line ministry staff provided a sound introduction to the provincial situation in terms of food security, agricultural production, gender plans, and development programmes. Their appraisal of the socio-economic situation was consistent, and in all provinces the same issues of concern were raised: climate change, mass migration of young adults to urban areas and neighbouring countries, and areas of social and economic distress and food insecurity difficult to address with current policies. Policies concerning food security, social protection, gender mainstreaming, and the decentralization reform were mentioned as the main instruments for dealing with these issues. At the same

time, concerns about effective implementation were raised during the discussions. In one province there had been efforts to integrate food security into development plans at the commune and district levels, but budget limitations did not allow for moving on with the project. Gender mainstreaming plans were in place and supported by provincial women and children committees, but projects tended to be limited to health and education and provision of services such as kindergartens, or to social protection measures targeting the IDPoor. Even in this case, budget limitations were raised as the main constraint.

Provincial staff recognized that Commune Councils should focus more on social projects, while in fact they allocated only small budgets to such plans. They acknowledged that while infrastructure is easy to implement and there are guidelines for it, social projects are difficult and complex; they need clear operational plans that are perhaps beyond the capacity of communes and even districts. The National Policy on Food Security and Nutrition, for example, has not yet been translated in provincial plans. This was considered to be an area where interventions from development partners might be able to fill the gap. Moreover, the technical support provided downstream by district technical staff was considered to be insufficient, both for a lack of skills and because of budget constraints.

The brief meetings with provincial governors and vice-governors in two provinces highlighted their concerns about the role of civil society. The role of many NGOs was considered to be political and not neutral, aiming at creating social tension more than solutions. In both cases the vision for the role of civil society organizations was simply one of service provision at the community level, and budget support to local decentralized government structures. Activities in the realm of human rights and entitlement, especially on issues concerning land and resources, were seen as the most destabilizing and politically motivated. This vision conflicts with the one of the IP3-II that forecasts a social and political role of citizens in demanding for accountability, and poses questions concerning the margin of autonomy and freedom left to NGOs supporting these processes.

Provinces have significant mandates, power and budgets, which allow them to pilot programme approaches and interventions, scale them up, and deploy high technical capacity in their implementation. As expressed by the technical staff, there is a need for social projects which at the moment is not being fulfilled. Food security and nutrition and gender mainstreaming are considered a priority, which leaves the door open to interventions merging the two issues and translating them into practical plans.

However, a human rights-based approach aimed at creating awareness about rights or involving communities in entitlement and accountability demand may be difficult to negotiate, especially in provinces where land and environmental issues are quite prevalent and where civil society and communities are already active.



## PART 5

### Gender and the Right to Food in Development Cooperation

This section provides a brief review of aid programmes, approaches and practices adopted by Official Development Assistance (ODA) agencies and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). The analysis focuses on aspects having direct relevance to gender and the right to food.

In the gender sector, the official assistance channelled through the TWG-G chaired by MoWA follows the priorities set by its national plan. MoWA has not taken a strong position in relation to socio-economic issues, which is also reflected in its national plan, and has not developed a framework addressing specifically rural women. Therefore, development aid follows these priorities: UN Women, among the main partners of MoWA, supports women's economic empowerment through promoting private sector partnerships, for example with women entrepreneur associations, and small producer programmes in sectors such as handicrafts. With other aid partners UN Women acts within MoWA in order to increase the recognition of social problems. One of these focus areas concerns women's decent work where, in cooperation with the International Labour Organization, UN Women is advocating for the recognition of the rights of domestic workers. The aid support to the leadership programme targets subnational structures, particularly Commune Councils, in order to strengthen women's active participation. UNDP supports MoWA in strengthening the gender mainstreaming process at the institutional level. A significant portion of the official assistance is directed to the NGOs active in women's rights and gender equality, whose projects and approaches are reported in the following chapter.

Programmes and projects funded by ODA agencies that target food-insecure households, tackle food insecurity, and promote nutrition involve the contributions of major multilateral and bilateral development agencies: primarily ADB, the World Bank, the EU, and UN agencies including IFAD, FAO, WFP and UNICEF (see list provided in Annex 4). These projects focus on emergency food assistance, poverty reduction, improved market access, climate adaptation and resilience, rural infrastructure and irrigation, small watershed management, strengthening farmers' associations, financial literacy and extension, and vocational training, among others. Programmes and projects work with institutional partners and the sector ministries at central and local levels. ODA agencies either directly implement projects or entrust CBOs with the implementation according to their respective frameworks. Beneficiaries vary in number, from very large programmes targeting multiple areas with different services or interventions, to small pilot projects focusing on only a few

communities. While many projects do not focus specifically on gender, most programmes have adopted gender policies and frameworks to ensure that benefits reach women, to enhance women's participation, and to monitor and evaluate activities with gender indicators. The IFAD programme in Cambodia began introducing gender mainstreaming in 2000, and has included specific measures to target women and increase their participation in planned activities. The EU has mandatory gender mainstreaming approaches for all development projects. ADB projects adopt a gender monitoring and evaluation framework to assess women's participation in implementation and management. According to various informants, women's participation in projects addressing food insecurity increased: women in many cases now form the majority of participants. This is due to measures adopted to increase gender inclusiveness, but also to the ongoing changes in rural communities that result in a feminization of agriculture, with increasing numbers of rural women taking responsibility for farming and agricultural activities.

In terms of a rights-based approach, this perspective is not clearly mainstreamed in project designs and approaches. According to representatives of ODA organizations active in the food security sector, this mostly results from the unresponsiveness of institutional partners and governmental agencies that see such approaches as challenging and politically sensitive. While adherence to principles of democracy and enforcement of rights are mainstreamed throughout projects, they are not adopted generally as guiding principles. Projects tackle these objectives in various ways by strengthening the following: inclusiveness, participation, access to resources, measures to tackle inequality, and technologies in support of vulnerable groups.

However, according to information collected, many problems have emerged. For example many projects, including those targeting the most vulnerable and poor households, set entry criteria (such as land ownership) that do not accommodate landless households, or that offer few opportunities for the inclusion of the most food-insecure, in particular women. Participants' consultation and participation in project designs is limited. Many implementers, including national staff, prefer not to involve the most vulnerable, whom they see as hopeless, and whose minimal performance risks compromising project outputs. Projects that involve training components, especially if provided by national line ministry staff, adopt top-down practices that disempower the most vulnerable. Without measures to support equal access to project benefits, powerful community groups tend to monopolize these benefits. Projects that include credit components but operate through MFIs—whose interest rates are incompatible with the needs of smallholders and vulnerable households and out of reach for the most vulnerable—have failed to produce significant changes in relation to vulnerability and livelihoods.

As for other programmes, subnational structures present a bottleneck, owing to being under-resourced and limited in their actions by lack of skills, and by unclear processes of funding and devolution of decision-making power.

The FAO programme in Cambodia has the following set of priorities: sustainable improved agricultural productivity for smallholder farmers; improved consumer protection and market access to agricultural and related products; improved food security; improved national resource management; climate change mitigation and adaptation; and disaster risk management. In the livelihood and food security sector, FAO is working with MAFF and other partners, predominantly IFAD, the EU, bilateral ODA agencies, and NGOs. The right to food is not explicitly entrenched in FAO activities, but FAO is among the main development partners in the Technical Working Group on Social Protection, Food Security and Nutrition, led by CARD.

It has been possible to gain direct information from the officer in charge of two FAO projects focusing on food security and improvement of livelihoods: the Improving Food Security and Market Linkages for Smallholders (MALIS) project, just concluded, and the Project for Agricultural Development and Economic Empowerment (PADEE), currently being implemented.

The MALIS project worked in two northern provinces to improve agricultural productivity and diversify rural livelihoods. It achieved significant results in terms of improved livelihoods and participation by women, even if there wasn't

a full follow-up on the results in terms of nutrition. The project, implemented with the support of local CBOs and in partnership with local authorities and MoWA subnational structures, adopted inclusiveness criteria that generated important results in terms of livelihood improvement for the most vulnerable, in particular women. Farmers' fairs, farmers' schools and access to low-interest credit, together with small-scale technologies, contributed to increasing farmers' livelihoods and diversifying their capacities. A number of farmers' cooperatives were created and supported in their market linkage. Cooperatives took the initiative to allocate funds for social protection and complementary feeding for children, highlighting the fact that social mechanisms, rather than profits, are more effective and can lead to creating community livelihood activities. As mentioned in relation to other projects, the high participation of women in the project, up to 75 percent, was also due to the changes induced by migration. Women in the target areas appeared to be 100 percent in charge of agricultural activities. But their extreme time poverty was among the reasons for the less significant results achieved in terms of nutrition. It is important to note that the project, located in upland areas, included indigenous communities in which community solidarity links are in general stronger than among Khmer communities, owing to a tradition of community self-sufficiency and autonomy.

PADEE is an IFAD-funded project, located in lowland rice producing provinces, aimed at improving livelihoods through agricultural diversification and access to financial services, and specifically targeting poor households. FAO supports the revolving funds component, with financial literacy training, auditing, and other services. Revolving funds are made available to households, together with technical agricultural support and training in financial skills. Even in this case, according to the implementers, participation of women is significantly higher than men. Credit interest rates vary but most of the groups have set it at 2.2–2.5 percent, with nothing below 2 percent— which represents quite a high interest rate for very poor households. Emergency loans are provided without interest for less than one month. The project was developed in partnership with the subnational government structure and provincial departments of MoWA and MAFF. According to the implementers, commune authorities, and commune gender focal points interviewed, the project faces many difficulties in guaranteeing inclusiveness for the poorest. Inclusion criteria, set by MAFF, exclude landless households. The project also faces difficulties related to local circumstances, in particular migration. Lack of manpower, and the fact that most of the poor households consist of elderly women in charge of grandchildren, pose challenges for participation and capacity building. As reported by local Commune Councillors, women's participation is hampered by these factors.

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## Gender, right to food and civil society

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It is estimated that there were around 300 international NGOs and 3 000 local NGOs operating in Cambodia in 2014. Since the beginning of the 1990s, when the first NGOs started to operate in the country, local and international NGOs have undergone a process of restructuring that has brought important changes to their practices and approaches (Bottomley, 2014). From being essentially service provider organizations in sectors such as health, water provision, rural development and agricultural services, etc., a large number of NGOs have moved their interventions towards the support of community participation in development. This shift was motivated by the general opinion, shared by the main international agencies and donors, that development projects lacked community ownership and active participation and were unable to make changes in people's livelihoods and access to resources and services. With few exceptions, international NGOs have changed their role from being direct implementers to acting as funding agencies operating in partnership with local organizations.

As a result of these changes, the last decade has seen the expansion of community-based organizations (CBOs) in almost all sectors. Some of these CBOs have a recognized legal status, like the Community Forestry, Fishery and Water Users Committees; others represent less structured groups, often shaped by the development objectives of the supporting NGOs, which provide technical inputs and capacity building to their members. Since the beginning of the decentralization reform,



NGOs and CSOs have cooperated with local authorities and have contributed substantially to the capacity building of communities and local authorities.

NGO umbrella organizations such as NGO Forum, the Cooperation Committee of Cambodia, and other networks have also evolved and undergone a process of strengthening coordination and representation. This development was in response to the need to coordinate areas of interventions, provide platforms for exchange and sharing, and scale up advocacy and lobbying. This has made possible the coordination of sector groups and has opened spaces for dialogue and negotiation with government and international donors.

Access to land and resources has become crucial for many Cambodian communities in rural and urban areas, and this has mobilized a large segment of civil society in recent years. As an NGO representative observed: “It is impossible to find a community development project in urban or rural areas that has not been confronted with the problem of access to land and resources”. Land issues have seen intense activity in support of communities to build awareness of land rights, which has helped communities to gain more awareness of their rights and entitlements and to demand reparation for or settlement of their disputes. During the same period advocacy and lobbying activities have been scaled up, but the response from the government has been until now quite elusive. Some NGOs have redirected their advocacy efforts regionally and internationally, and are directly engaging with the private companies involved in land alienation.

The gender and women’s rights sector has, at least partially, followed a similar process. The prevalence of gender-based violence in Cambodia and the under-representation of women at all levels in decision-making and leadership have influenced the activities of many women’s rights organizations. Gender and women’s rights NGOs have played a significant role in raising awareness about these issues at the community level as well as with decision-makers and Cambodian institutions. Gender CSOs have collaborated with MoWA to provide recommendations on national policies, and have been instrumental in raising awareness about and advocating for the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, and the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation. They have participated actively in the Technical Working Groups on Gender and in the sectoral Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups in various line ministries. Since 2001, gender NGOs have produced CEDAW shadow reports, the last in 2013, that critically analyse the official report and provided alternative input to the CEDAW reporting process (NGO-CEDAW, 2013). The CEDAW Committee coordinating this process is now comprised of 75 organizations. The *Shadow Report on Women’s Land Rights in Cambodia* covering CEDAW compliance was prepared in 2013 (STAR Kampuchea, 2013).

An important area of activity for gender CSOs has been women’s participation in decision-making. The Committee to Promote Women in Politics coordinates ten NGOs and has been the main catalyst for initiatives aimed at increasing women’s participation in decision-making bodies at the national and subnational level. The committee has engaged energetically in advocacy and capacity building, offering support to women candidates before and after the elections (with capacity building and training, support for networking and public platforms, and promoting grassroots awareness and empowerment) while at the same time lobbying political parties to open up their lists to female candidates. Despite the goal of increasing women’s participation in decision-making inscribed by the government in the MDGs, the results have been quite slow, with only 20 percent female-elected representatives at the national level and 15.6 percent at the subnational level. Moreover, the capacity of female-elected representatives to influence activities and decision-making remains quite weak (KIM and Ojendal, 2012).

Gender CBOs are actively engaged in other sectors, such as migrant’s rights, worker’s rights, and land rights, reflecting the predominance of these socio-economic issues in Cambodia. According to CBO representatives, as a result of these activities Cambodian women, including rural women, have in part overcome the barriers represented by gender norms and traditional values that had limited their role to the private sphere. Important changes to gender roles and behaviours have been attained, in terms of recognition of women’s rights and the right of women to participate, speak and engage

in public roles. Women participate more in community initiatives, especially concerning access to resources, and in many instances have taken up leadership roles. At the community level, women's leadership has been accepted and even praised. In the textile industry, where women constitute the majority of the employees, rights awareness has increased and young women are taking active roles in workers' organizations. In a recent workshop in Phnom Penh evaluating the progress made 20 years after the Beijing Conference, all of these areas of progress were acknowledged, but it was also recognized that a lot still needs to be done (HBF, 2015). Women's increased participation in local development projects doesn't yet mean that women's agendas, conceived by women participants and responding to their manifold needs, are driving development projects.

In terms of gender and the right to food, two CBO experiences deserve attention. Banteay Srei is a local organization that has promoted women's rights in Cambodia for 30 years. Its activities are based in a number of rural communities located in two provinces, Battambang and Siem Reap, and target poor and vulnerable women and women with disabilities. The vision of the organization sees time poverty and poverty in general as the main obstacles limiting women's assertion of their rights. During the first phase of activities, the organization focused on providing livelihood opportunities to poor rural women, especially the landless, by developing home vegetable gardens. However, in response to specific needs expressed by their target groups, it has engaged in the prevention of domestic violence and violence against women. This component was structured to support women victims of violence in their search for justice and redress with specific services such as legal support, but also shelter for poor women travelling to provincial centres to testify in court – a small but important service that for many women represented the only opportunity they had to get access to justice.

As soon as the decentralization reform began with the establishment of Commune Councils in 2002, Banteay Srei started supporting women candidates with training pre- and post-election. To strengthen women councillors in their role, the programme aimed to establish strong links with their constituencies and to focus on inclusiveness and participation in particular of the most vulnerable. This link enables community women to voice their priorities and needs in local development plans, but also supports women councillors in their advocacy and lobbying for resources and empowerment within the Commune Council itself and at district level.

When one of the communities in their target area was confronted with land grabbing by a powerful private group, the organization supported women in articulating their agenda, and engaged in advocacy activities.

Banteay Srei is one of the organizations launched by a group of donors in Phnom Penh that are now involved in the process of critical discussion and consultation concerning representation. The aim of the critical analysis is to support effective self-representation within communities, forgoing methodologies such as top-down training or establishment of token CBOs that usually do not represent the interests of all parts of communities, in particular the poor. The introduction of new practices in the implementation of activities, with less training and more community work and recognition of local knowledge, may reverse this trend. The experiences and approach of Banteay Srei could provide an important and realistic contribution to a gender initiative that looks at the right to food.

ActionAid Cambodia is an international NGO that is active globally and was among the partners engaged with FAO in the process that created the Voluntary Guidelines on land tenure and on the right to food. The right to food is entrenched in the organization's vision and goals at the global level. In Cambodia, ActionAid works with smallholder farmers, fishers, women, children, and disaster-affected communities. Activities are implemented by local partners in five provinces and Phnom Penh's poor urban areas. The organization adopts a rights-based approach to food security, livelihood, empowerment of women, and education and humanitarian responses to disasters. Like Banteay Srei, ActionAid recognized the priority for poor rural women to secure their livelihood before engaging in any other activity, including rights claims. Livelihood programmes were accompanied by awareness raising on basic rights, women's rights, land rights, and learning about laws relevant for rural communities. Food rights were articulated within the programmatic



approach to all activities, and in campaigns and advocacy. Being an international NGO, ActionAid has more room to manoeuvre and freedom of expression compared with local CBOs. It is a recognized actor among Cambodian organizations working on women and livelihood issues and globally on food rights. It participates in the national policy dialogue through such bodies as the TWG on Gender and GMAG in other line ministries. Its contribution to a gender and right to food approach is critical.

Oxfam International in Cambodia is working within a large umbrella of farmer organizations to strengthen their capacities in terms of organization, networking and advocacy. Most of the organizations actively involve women farmers and promote sustainable farming practices. Their role is steadily increasing and can contribute to a gender and right to food perspective.

Some indigenous organizations in Cambodia, set up and managed by indigenous people themselves, have discussed and adopted a gender strategy for the first time. Indigenous people in Cambodia represent a small percentage of the population but are scattered all over the upland regions, which represent an important share of agricultural land in Cambodia. Now many indigenous territories have been converted into commercial crops and plantations. In the remaining areas there is a strong need for new approaches that build on traditional farming systems to make them more viable and ensure food security for indigenous communities. The agenda is rooted in a rights approach, and even if this network is only making its first steps, it is important to include its perspective within initiatives on gender and the right to food.



## PART 6

### Conclusions

This case study has tried to critically analyse policies and processes that directly or indirectly address food security and gender equality in Cambodia, in order to find interactions and implications for the right to food through a gender-based approach. The fieldwork has highlighted some aspects of vulnerability and food insecurity now affecting Cambodian communities and tried to gather information on the attitudes and practices of subnational governance structures towards these problems. The study has also analysed the approach and interventions of civil society organizations in order to identify initiatives that are moving towards a human rights-based approach, including gender considerations/approaches.

The analysis of the policies guiding Cambodia's development process shows that the country is building strategies aimed at responding to the needs of the population in terms of food security, adequate food access, and social protection. Policies are comprehensive, cutting across line ministries and coordination entities; they cross-cut different government bodies horizontally, and through the subnational governance reforms vertically.

The institutional gender mainstreaming process has begun and is moving in the direction of more effective integration of gender issues in line ministry plans at the national and subnational level. Gender policies adopted by line ministries, like the Ministry of Agriculture, constitute a new ground for gender and food security integration.

During the second phase of the decentralization reform at the subnational level, the structures in charge of gender equality, which have until now worked through ad hoc entities and were focused on women's issues (in particular health, education, social protection services and domestic violence), will now move towards a gender mainstreaming approach. This will create new opportunities for local planning processes that respond to the needs of rural women in terms of access to resources, removal of discriminatory barriers, decision-making and leadership, and that involve sectors other than health and education.

The implementation of these policies faces significant obstacles. In large part they rely on the empowerment of the subnational governance machinery that is currently going through a process of reform, one that is supposed to give them stronger mandates and better resources, but is far from being defined. This will represent an area of concern in terms of implementation.

At the same time there is also a strong demand from subnational policy-makers for models of intervention in the social sector to be made available, which could open new opportunities.

Rural communities are facing the impact of environmental, social and economic events, which are creating new social phenomena such as the unprecedented rate of migration and increased inequalities in access to resources and inputs. The recent negative trend in agricultural growth experienced by the country is an indicator of these challenges. Rural women are at the core of these changes; the feminization of agriculture has increased, and the most vulnerable households, as well as landless households (or those at risk of losing their land), are often headed permanently or temporarily by women. Without addressing these new issues, policies run the risk of being ineffective and unable to provide an amelioration of food security and nutrition.

Development aid has been mobilized to support the government in these tasks through a wide range of initiatives targeting vulnerability, women's empowerment and equality. Even if not informed by a clear rights-based approach, some of these programmes have been effective in including the poorest and securing their livelihoods.

Cambodia's civil society has taken a more proactive approach in terms of asserting various citizens' rights. While some of these approaches seem to have been accepted by the government and have opened spaces for cooperation and partnerships, others have faced significant barriers, in particular those concerning rights to resources such as land, forest and watersheds.

Cambodia's civil society is undergoing a process of change. It is moving towards a more diverse structure and towards self-reliant forms of citizen representation in various sectors, which could represent an important ground for dialogue between citizens and institutions or other counterparts. However, during recent years there has been a deterioration of public dialogue, and the space for citizen participation is now narrower.

In terms of entry points for a gender and right to food approach, while there are opportunities for building initiatives that move in this direction – such as adopting, at least in part, principles and policy-making processes supported by development aid and civil society – the scope for a clear assertion of the right to food as a guiding principle for policies and initiatives is controversial. People's rights and those claiming them are perceived as a challenging area for the government. Also, previous experience with mainstreaming principles in the realm of human rights at policy and legal levels has failed to produce effective changes.

Much depends on where the boundary is set, between the adoption of principles and their actual implementation. While the former is a sensitive and problematic area, the latter could be more viable, especially if supported by technical inputs, models of interventions, technical innovation, and dialogue platforms.

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### **Opportunities open for gender and right to food approaches**

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From this brief and limited analysis of the many elements at work in Cambodian society that are pertinent to, or could influence, gender and the right to food, a number of observations and possible entry points can be suggested.

Opportunities are limited for a legal framework and policy-making process at the central level aimed at mainstreaming the principles of the right to food and a rights-based approach in legal instruments and policies, as highlighted in the conclusions.

Among the conditions for a step in this direction (in view of the sponsorship role that FAO will be called to play) is the endorsement of the principles expressed in the right to food by the UN Development Assistance Framework, which is coming to an end in 2015 but will be renegotiated. With a clear engagement of the whole UN system in Cambodia

to move forward with the human rights-based approach in the sector of food security and nutrition, opportunities for dialogue and negotiations are wider.

Opportunities may come from a pragmatic process that can take advantage of a number of leverages coming from the following: the urgency, expressed by national authorities, to address food insecurity and malnutrition in the civil spaces opened by the National Policy on Food Security and Nutrition; the need, expressed by local authorities, to make social project packages available to the lowest levels of the subnational structure who are able to produce change and reverse the existing trends; the process of gender mainstreaming that is moving away from a perspective centred on women and children's basic services, to one that looks at gender dynamics in sectors like agriculture; and the presence of organizations with experience and practice in adopting gender-based agendas and food rights approaches.

The presence in Cambodia of CBOs active in food rights and women's rights could be the main engine for an initiative that also gathers other actors. It is recommended to move forward with the creation of a gender and right to food working group, facilitated by FAO and led by the leading organizations in the sector. The objectives of the group may include:

- Analysing the Voluntary Guidelines to identify provisions that could be realistically mainstreamed in the process of decentralization of services related to gender, food security and social protection;
- Reviewing the guidelines developed by the IP3-II to guide citizens' accountability – as well as the guidance material that is supposed to accompany the process as soon as it is released – to identify possible entry points or make recommendations for improvement;
- Identifying partners that could join the process and set criteria for piloting approaches.

At the institutional level, the Gender Working Group at MAFF and MoWA representatives working on vulnerable women's rights, as well as other stakeholders, could be involved in an initiative aimed at promoting a clear understanding of the objectives and feasibility of the right to food. This could be done through a series of workshops where right to food initiatives are elucidated in detail, providing a clear and pragmatic picture of their aim and features. Programmes such as the Bolivian School Feeding Programme may stand as examples, fitting particularly well with the actual needs of Cambodia. For example, a visit by a Bolivian policy-maker presenting the programme would be worthwhile.

Research and development initiatives should accompany the process in order to answer the demand expressed by policy implementers at all levels within the subnational structure: the availability of social schemes, supported by feasibility and economic viability guidelines that could be implemented at the local level. The research areas that could be of particular interest for the formulation of a gender and right to food approach include:

- Inventory and analysis of traditional food processing techniques (including in urban and peri-urban contexts) that could allow the identification of specific areas of intervention for securing sources, thus improving processes and strengthening women's skills and control over production chains. This kind of study would fill a relative void concerning food processing and availability/sustainability of traditional food in Cambodia, a sector that is nearly 100 percent managed by women.
- Potential schemes that bridge food security, gender and social protection by looking at how local productive processes could integrate with social mechanisms for the redistribution of benefits (farmers' cooperatives in the MALIS project could stand as an example). Schemes should be accompanied by a socio-economic viability and ready-to-use implementation framework.
- Applied research in the field of renewable energies for local food production and processing, with the aim of improving processes while reducing women's labour.

In the second phase the working group and institutional partners could come together with the aim of adopting a draft road map, informed by the processes listed above, for the mainstreaming of measures resulting from the Voluntary Guidelines into the services provision framework at the local level.

Guidance and facilitation by FAO on the right to food could facilitate the analysis of the Right to Food Guidelines, making them more approachable and supported by visual tools in Khmer language. FAO could also provide a platform for information on innovations made available by research and development in various sectors, such as renewable energies, water provision, post-harvest processing, seed banks, etc., especially if aimed at providing a social, not just market-oriented, added value.

Highlighting the relevance of gender and right to food issues in an integrated manner to innovation and new technologies is important to break the aura of backwardness that surrounds women farmers. An example is the opening of internet services to rural women for networking, coordination, organization and information, which has already been attempted with some success in the Republic of India. Such approaches can overcome the obstacles that women face in their mobility and empower them with access to information and knowledge.

The annual celebration of Rural Women's Day on 15 October, and World Food Day on 16 October, could stand as a benchmark for consolidation of these activities and provide a natural platform for the validation of these initiatives with rural women's groups, as well as for exchanges with other countries in the region where initiatives in this domain are more advanced.



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## ANNEX 1

### Methodology outline

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#### Guiding Questions for Key Informants Interviews

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The questions listed below, besides the introduction, are flexible, as every informant will be allowed to expand or discuss specific issues more in depth.

- Overall introduction of the consultants' team, the study aim, and prior informed consent on sharing information and permission to use quotes or stories.
- The informant's structure mandate, principle of action, policies, approach, vision and action in relation to gender, food security, vulnerability, entitlement, and rights.
- The informant's perception about gender in relation to food security, including changes occurring in food security, vulnerability and gender-specific vulnerability (positive, negative, challenges, opportunities).
- How the above is mainstreamed within activities and policies, at the national and subnational level, including coordination and integration with other structures, institutional bodies, development agencies, etc.
- The informant's perception of entitlement and food security as a right: strengths and weaknesses, gender as a facilitating approach, workability in the Cambodian context.

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#### Guiding questions for national and subnational authorities

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- Overall introduction of the consultants' team, the study aim, and prior informed consent on sharing information and permission to use quotes or stories.
- The national/provincial/district/commune mandate and the informant's role within it in relation to gender, food security and vulnerability.
- Structures and processes for gender and food security mainstreaming within national/provincial/district/commune plans and policies: Who does what? How are actions coordinated?

- The informant's perception of changes occurring in gender, food security, vulnerability and gender-specific vulnerability (positive, negative, challenges, opportunities) at the national and local level.
- The responses planned (national and subnational planning processes) and implemented to restore equal access to food security and the right to adequate food and nutrition (short term: social safety nets, food distribution, cash distribution, others; long term: land distribution, extension services, development projects, access to resources, environmental protection, women's empowerment and inclusive participation, etc.).
- The informant's perception of entitlement: Is food security a right? How can it be enforced? Are there mechanisms by which communities can voice their concerns and demands? Do women have a voice/role in these processes?

The aim of these interviews is to understand how gender is mainstreamed, how food security is integrated in the decentralized planning process, and who does what and how. The informants' perception on entitlement rights in relation to food security will also be solicited.

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### Focus groups within communities

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The study will include meetings and discussions with beneficiaries, intended here as community members in the selected target areas. The discussions will cover perceptions about changes occurring in terms of food security, coping mechanisms, community demands and women's roles, and responses by local authorities. They will also discuss the concept of entitlement and the right to food. Questions will be tested and possibly readapted.

- Overall introduction of the consultants' team, the study aim, and prior informed consent on sharing information and permission to use quotes or stories.
- What about food security in the community? Who are the most insecure and why? Are women more or less insecure and why? Is food security better or worse than before?
- Was food security an issue when you discussed development plans with the CC? If yes what did you suggest? Was it considered in the final plan?
- What to do in case of food insecurity? What do individuals, women and men, households or community groups do? Where do they bring their demands? With what results? Examples (IDPoor, social security nets, cash transfers, food for work, land distribution, access to resources, training and extension, credit, etc.).
- What do you think about food security as a right? Can it be enforced as other rights (those of women, children, disabled persons, etc.) are? May women play a significant role in it?



## ANNEX 2

### List of informants

Governmental bodies/agencies	Informants
CARD Technical Working Group on Food Security and Nutrition	H.E Mr SOK Silo, Deputy Secretary General, Head of Food Security and Nutrition Coordination Unit silosok@yahoo.com.au Dr Mr UNG Say, Director of Health, Food Security and Nutrition sauncard@gmail.com
Ministry of Women's Affairs	Mr TE Chhunhak, Deputy Director General at Ministry of Women's Affairs of Cambodia chhunhak@gmail.com Mrs HOU Nirmita, Director of Women and Health Department hnirmita@yahoo.com Mrs SOTH Sithon, Director of Economic Empowerment sithonsoth@yahoo.com
Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	H.E Mrs HOR Malin, Secretary of State Mrs MOM Thany, Under Secretary of State thany.mom@gmail.com Ms KAING Kim, Fishery Administration Gender Group kaingkhim@online.com.kh
FAO	Mr Etienne Careme, Gender Focal Point Etienne.Careme@fao.org Prof. Ilean Russell, MALIS Project Chief of TA ilean.Russell@fao.org



Governmental bodies/agencies	Informants
FAO	Mrs Nina Brandstrup, Country Representative Nina.Brandstrup@fao.org Mr OUM Kosal, Assistant FAO Representative (Programme) kosal.oum@fao.org Mr VONG CHIM Vannak, PADEE Project Rural Finance Coordinator
WFP	Ms Francesca Erdelmann, WFP Deputy Country Director Francesca.erdelmann@wfp.org
IFAD	Mr MENG Sakphouseth, Pro-Poor Policies Approach; Rural Livelihoods Improvement m.sakphouseth@ifad.org
UNICEF	Mr Arnaud Laillou, Child Maternal Health and Nutrition; Child Rights Program alaillou@unicef.org Mr Tomas Jensen, Chief of Local Governance for Child Rights tjensen@unicef.org
UN Women	Mrs Sandra Hopkins, Women's Economic Empowerment Officer sandrahopkins@unwomen.org
OHCHR	Mrs CHOU Vineath, Legal Advocacy Officer vchou@ohchr.org
UNDP	Mr UNG Dararat Moni, Agricultural Portfolio and Policy Advisor dararatmoni.ung@undp.org Mrs NUT Annie, Advisor, Institutional Gender Mainstreaming Programme annienut1@gmail.com
GIZ	Mrs MAY Sreylon, Local Governance Advisor, EU Programme Strengthening Performance, Accountability and Civic Engagement
Cambodia NGO Committee on CEDAW	Ms Dana Wallack, Advisor ngocedaw.pnh@gmail.com
ActionAid	Mrs Caroline McCausland, Country Director Caroline.McCausland@actionaid.org
HBF (Heinrich Boell Foundation)	Mr PEN Ratana, Program Coordinator ratana.pen@kh.boell.org
DIAKONIA	Mr SENG Sovathana, Program Manager sovathana.seng@diakonia.se
Oxfam	Mr Brian Lund, Oxfam America Country Director BLund@oxfamamerica.org Mrs Kaneka Keo, Regional Policy Advisor
Banteay Srei	Mrs SOK Panha, Director

Governmental bodies/agencies	Informants
SRER Khmer Farmers Support NGO	Mr CHHUN Sophorn, Program Officer
CENTDOR (Centre for Development Oriented Research in Agriculture and Livelihood)	Mr SENG Suon, Executive Director suonseng@gmail.com



## ANNEX 3

## List of informants in the target provinces

Name	Position	Location	Meeting date
Mrs Neang Kim Mey	Deputy Governor in charge of Gender	Takeo	07/09/15
Mr Kuch Phea	Deputy Governor in charge of Agriculture and Food Security	Takeo	
Mr Nhep Srorn and Mrs Nget Sophea	Director and Deputy Director of Provincial Department of Agriculture and Gender Focal Point	Takeo, Provincial Department of Agriculture	
Mr Nop Dul	Commune Chief	Prek Phtouk Commune, Angkor Borey District	08/09/15
Mr Chan Sidan	1st Commune Councillor		
Mr Pen Bunthorn	Commune Councillor		
Mrs Ros Pheang	Women and Children Focal Point Person		
Mr Deum Kimsan	Gender Chief Office, District Governor	Angkor Borey District	
Mrs Sek Saroeun and 15 women	Commune Councillor and community women	Prek Sambour village, Angkor Borey Commune, Angkor Borey District	
Mrs Ros Pheang and Vice-chief of village	Woman and child focal point person Vice-chief of village (woman)		
Mrs Keo Horn	Vice-chief of Gender Office	Tramkok District	09/09/15
Ms Long Ratana	Gender Officer		

Name	Position	Location	Meeting date
Mr Duch Sorng Mr Ry Pheap	2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice-chief of Commune and Commune Councillor	Trapeang Kranhoung, Commune, Tramkok District	09/09/15
Chief of Office	Chief of Office in Charge of gender and food security, Provincial Department of Women's Affairs	Takeo	
Mr Long Kisoeung Mr Vong Try Mr Muk Bonhoy	Provincial Administrative Director PMMA Advisor of NCDD District Officer	Kompong Thom	14/09/15
Mrs Men Chanthoeurn	Gender Officer at Provincial Department of Agriculture		
Mrs Sang Lam Ms So Pharin	Provincial Department of Women's Affairs Officer		
Mrs Lim Phalla	Deputy Governor	Baray District	15/09/15
	Commune chief	Chrolong Commune, Baray District	
Mrs Min Sopheara and six women	Villager assistance (Gender and Children)	Hantvear village, Chrolong Commune, Baray District	
Mrs Meas Neang	Deputy Governor (Gender and Children) Vice-chief of Office (Agriculture and Food security)	Prasat Balang District	16/09/15
Mrs Horm Phen	Commune Councillor	Salavisay Commune, Prasat Balang District	
Mrs Boun Seth Chief of village and villagers	Chief of village and 13 community women	Andas village, Salavisay Commune, Prasat Balang District	
H.E Oum Mara and assistants	Provincial Governor	Preah Vihear	17/09/15
Mr Poeung Tryda and assistants	Director of Provincial Department of Agriculture		
Mrs Mong Sam Ol and assistants	Director of Provincial Department of Women's Affairs		
Mr Lor Chan	Provincial representative ADHOC		

Name	Position	Location	Meeting date
Mrs Seng Phon Nary	Deputy District Governor	Roveang District	18/09/15
	Commune Chief and Clerk	Rohas Commune, Roveang District	
Mrs Tep Nara	Commune Councillor (Gender and Children)	Romtum Commune, Roveang District	
Mrs Ya	Chief of Romtum Agriculture Cooperative	Tropeang Tuntim village, Romtum Commune, Roveang District	
	Commune Chief	Torsou Commune, Chey Sen District	19/09/15
Mrs Ros Sareu Mrs Chan Vin Mrs San Soeurn Mrs Chea Yeang	Leader and Management Committee of Agriculture Cooperative Satrey Ratanak	Rorsou Commune, Sandán village	

## ANNEX 4

## Overview of aid programmes and projects supporting the food security sector

Overview of major food security and nutrition-related programmes and projects in Cambodia by objectives of the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2014–2018 (CARD, 2014, adapted)

Objective 1: Food-insecure households increase and diversify food availability and food access from agriculture and livestock production, fisheries and forestry as well as from non-agricultural employment and income opportunities

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Emergency Food Assistance Project Additional Financing	MEF	ADB	BMC, KTM, OMC, SRP, KCM, KSP, PVG, PVH, SVG, TKE	IDPoor 1&2 in 100 communes	2012–2015	\$24.5m*
Tonle Sap Poverty Reduction and Smallholder Development	MAFF	ADB	BMC, KCM, KTM, SRP	Smallholders in 196 communes	2010–2015	\$5.3m
Improving Market Access for the Poor in Central Cambodia	MOT	ADB	KTM	Households in 11 villages	2012–2014	\$1.96m
Climate Resilient Rice Commercialization Sector Development Program	MEF with MAFF, MoWRAM	ADB	BTB, KTM, PVG	Households along the rice value chain	2013–2018	\$55.0m



**Objective 1: Food-insecure households increase and diversify food availability and food access from agriculture and livestock production, fisheries and forestry as well as from non-agricultural employment and income opportunities**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Rural Roads Improvement Project	MRD	ADB	BTB, KCM, KCN, KSP, KTM, PST, SRP	Households living along 500km of upgraded rural roads	2011–2016	\$35.0m
Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project – Voucher Skills Training Program component	MLVT	ADB	All 23 Provinces	210 000 participants of non-formal community-based short courses in agriculture	2010–2015	\$24.5m
Improving food security of farming families affected by volatile food prices	MAFF, MoWA, MoWRAM, MoH, CARD, NGOs	EU	Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Otdar Meanchey, Preah Vihear, Prey Veng, SRP, Svay Rieng, Takeo, Battambang	Over 50 000 farm families	2009–2011	\$15.2m
Creative Industries Support Programme	MAFF	MDG/UN agencies	K.Thom, Preah Vihear, Rattanakiri, Mondulakiri	826 beneficiaries (FAO component only)	2008–2011	\$0.7m
Improving food security and market linkages for smallholders in Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear Provinces	MAFF, MoH, MoWA	EU	OMC, PVH	7 500 households	2012–2015	€4.0m
Project for Agricultural Development and Economic Empowerment (PADEE)	MAFF	IFAD and FAO	KPP, KDP, PVG, SVRG and Takeo	12 500 households	2012–2018	\$1.6m
Fighting financial illiteracy among poor rural households	MAFF, MoH, MoWA	EU	OMC, PVH	7 500 households	2012–2014	\$0.3m

**Objective 1: Food-insecure households increase and diversify food availability and food access from agriculture and livestock production, fisheries and forestry as well as from non-agricultural employment and income opportunities**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Strengthening the adaptive capacity and resilience of rural communities using micro-watershed approaches to climate change and variability to attain sustainable food security in Cambodia	Ministry of Environment, MAFF	GEF-LDCF, FAO	SRP, Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, and Ratanakiri	10 000 beneficiaries	2013–2018	\$5.6m
Promoting appropriate technology for smallholders to increase food security among indigenous peoples in Cambodia and Lao People's Democratic Republic	MAFF	EU	Rattanakiri	80 000	2012–2015	\$1.9m
Strengthening Farmers' Organizations' Voices in Policy Dialogue on Food Security and Nutrition	MAFF	EU	Rattanakiri	900 households	2013–2015	\$638 456
Secure water to secure food and nutrition	MAFF, MWRM	EU	Oddar Meanchey	800 households	2012–2015	\$1.28m
Innovative approaches to food insecurity for urban and peri-urban poor in Siem Reap, Cambodia (INFOSE)	MAFF	EU	Siem Reap	1 800 households	2011–2015	\$1.3m
Sustainable Actions to Fight Poverty, Hunger and Malnutrition in Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear Provinces		EU	Oddar Meanchey and Siem Reap	4 093 households	2011–2014	\$1.8m

**Objective 1: Food-insecure households increase and diversify food availability and food access from agriculture and livestock production, fisheries and forestry as well as from non-agricultural employment and income opportunities**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Reducing chronic food insecurity and vulnerability to shock among poor indigenous farmers and their communities in Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri	MAFF, MoH	EU	Mondulkiri and Ratanakiri	5 224 beneficiaries	2011–2014	\$1.05m
Promoting inclusive and sustainable growth in the agriculture sector, fisheries and livestock	MAFF	EU	All provinces		2014–2018	€20m
Humanitarian Implementation Plan-Response to cyclones Wutip and Nari		EU (ECHO)	Affected provinces		2014	€3m
DIPECHO HIP South East Asia-2014		EU (ECHO)	Not specified		2014–2015	€0.5m

**Objective 2: Cambodians improve use and utilization of their food, resulting in reduced child and maternal malnutrition and enhanced human and economic development**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Implementation of Sub-decree 133 on marketing breastmilk substitutes	NNP, NMCHC, MoH	WHO	Nationwide	All children	2014–2015	N/A
Development of National Nutrition Plan of Action				Entire population with focus on children and women	N/A	N/A

**Objective 2: Cambodians improve use and utilization of their food, resulting in reduced child and maternal malnutrition and enhanced human and economic development**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Mother Child Health and Nutrition (MCHN) programme providing fortified blended food to children 6–23 months and pregnant lactating women (1000 days), and health and nutrition education	MoH	WFP (in collaboration with NGOs)	PST, SRP	11 000 children under 2 and pregnant/lactating women per month	2011–2016	\$1.5m per year
Management of Acute Malnutrition – Treatment of children 6–59 months identified with moderate acute malnutrition through provision of fortified blended food	MoH, PHD	WFP	KSP	350 children 6–59 months per month	2010–2016	See above
Second Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project	MRD	ADB	KCG, PST, BTB, BMC, SRP, KTM	377 000 people with access to safe water, 290000 people with access to improved sanitation	2010–2015	\$21m
Second Greater Mekong Sub-region Communicable Disease Control Project	MoH	ADB	90 villages in 18 border districts	5 400 households (60 per village) with access to improved sanitation	2014–2015	N/A
Management of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) at the hospital level	NNP, MoH, NMCHC	UNICEF	35 hospitals in 25 provinces	All children screened as SAM	2014–2018	N/A
Scaling up distribution of micronutrient powders to children between 6–24 months	NNP, MoH, NMCHC	UNICEF, HKI, WVC	National	All children between 6–23.9 months	2014–2018	N/A

**Objective 2: Cambodians improve use and utilization of their food, resulting in reduced child and maternal malnutrition and enhanced human and economic development**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Implementation of infant and young child feeding campaign	NNP, MoH, NMCHC	UNICEF	National	All children between 6–23.9 months	2014–2018	N/A
Support Fortification initiatives in Cambodia	NSCFF, NCIDD, MoP, MoH	RACHA/ UNICEF	National	Entire population	2014–2018	N/A
Support Scaling Up Nutrition initiative in Cambodia	CARD	UN agencies	National	Entire population	2014–2018	N/A
Joint Programme for Children, Food Security and Nutrition in Cambodia	MAFF, CARD, MoH	UN agencies	Svay Rieng, KSpeu	2 100 families	2010–2013	
Distribution of Mebendazole every 6 months for children 6–59 months	MoH					

**Objective 3: Improve social safety nets and capacities to cope with risks and shocks, and increase the stability of food supply for food-insecure households**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
School meals in primary schools and preschools	MoEYS	WFP	BMC, BTB, KCM, KCG, KSP, KTM, OMC, PVH, PVG, PST, SRP, STG	390 000 children in 20% of primary schools and co-located preschools per school year	2011–2016	\$10m per year
Scholarships (food or cash) for the poor in primary schools	MoEYS	WFP	BMC, BTB, KCM, KCG, KSP, KTM, KPT, KRT, OMC, PVH, PVG, PST, SRP, STG, SVG	96 500 children (and their households) in 62% of primary schools per school year	2011–2016	\$9m per year

**Objective 3: Improve social safety nets and capacities to cope with risks and shocks, and increase the stability of food supply for food-insecure households**

Programme or project	Institutions	Partners	Provinces	Beneficiaries	Timeframe	Budget
Productive Assets and Livelihoods Support (PALS)	MRD, NCDD, Provincial administration	WFP	KCG, KSP, KTM, PVG, PST, SVG, SRP	14 000 food-insecure rural households per year	2011–2016	\$1.9m
Emergency assistance to restore the livelihoods of vulnerable farming families affected by the floods in Banteay Meanchey and Battambang provinces	MAFF (GDA), NCDM	FAO	Banteay Meanchey and Battambang	7 000 farming families for rice cultivation and 4 500 households for vegetable cultivation	2013–2014	\$0.5m

\* \$ = US\$









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