

Gender and Development in Cambodia: An Overview

Working Paper 10

Siobhan Gorman
with Pon Dorina & Sok Kheng



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June 1999**

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Contents

Abstract	i
Glossary	iii
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	7
1) Gender	7
2) Gender and Development	7
3) Gender Analysis in Development	8
4) Policy Approaches	9
5) Gender and Socio-Economic Change in Cambodia	9
Chapter One: Gender Issues in Education	13
1) Educational Status of the Cambodian Population	13
2) Schooling	14
3) Addressing Gender Constraints in Educational Provision: Policy, Strategies and Interventions	21
4) Suggestions for Future Research	23
Chapter Two: Gender Issues in Health	25
1) General Health	25
2) Reproductive Health	28
3) Domestic Violence	33
4) Mental Health	35
5) Suggestions for Future Research	36
Chapter Three: Gender Issues in Economy and Labour	37
1) Current Labour Force Profile	37
2) Gender and Urban Employment	40
3) Gender and Rural Development	45
4) Suggestions for Future Research	52
Conclusion	53
Appendix One: Resource Persons	57
Bibliography	59
CDRI Working Papers	67

Abstract

This paper highlights the gender gaps in contemporary Cambodian society, and discusses the constraints and underlying attitudes which determine women's disadvantaged position.

As new resources, opportunities and structures are introduced in the course of development in Cambodia, gender differentials are becoming apparent. Underlying assumptions about gender and power relations dictate the way in which new resources are allocated. New and modern inputs are generally accepted to be a "male" domain. In formal education, girls are under-represented at all levels, with the gender gap widening as the level of education rises. This directly affects women's position in the labour market, with fewer women than men in professional and leadership positions. Women form a minority in the new wage labour sector, but a majority of market traders. Following the most recent national election in 1998, the first women ministers were appointed, but only eight of the 122 members of the National Assembly are women. This means that women have very little say in the creation of the rules, regulations and policies that affect their lives.

This working paper provides an overview of current issues for gender and development in Cambodia, drawing together key issues from literature and research, and reviewing the latest statistics. Issues are presented under three broad headings—education, health, and economy and labour. Gender gaps revealed in the most recent statistics are highlighted, together with an analysis of the gender constraints which lead to women's disadvantage in accessing the material and non-material resources of contemporary Cambodian society.

The paper is intended as a basis for further analysis, discussion and research, and includes suggestions for further research at the end of each chapter.

Glossary

Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
CAMSET	Cambodia Secondary English Teaching project
CANEP	Cambodia-Australia National Examinations Project
CARERE	Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration
CDC	commune development committee
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSW	commercial sex worker
CWDA	Cambodian Women's Development Association
DfID	Department for International Development
GAD	gender and development
GSP	generalised system of preferences
GRET	Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
HIV	human immuno-deficiency virus
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IUD	intra-uterine device
KAP	knowledge-attitude-practice
KWVC	Khmer Women's Voice Centre
MFN	most-favoured nation
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MOP	Ministry of Planning
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
PADV	Project Against Domestic Violence
NGO	non-governmental organisation
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SESC	Socio-Economic Survey of Cambodia
SIDA	Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency
STD	sexually transmitted disease
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

VDC	village development committee
VEC	village education committee
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	women in development

<i>ayai</i> (form of traditional theatre)	Gay:
<i>chbab</i> (code of behaviour)	C,ab:
<i>krom samaki</i> (work group)	RkmSamKj
<i>kru khmer</i> (traditional healer)	RKExp
<i>sneha</i> (love, sex)	esina
<i>sraom anamay</i> (condom)	ekSamGnamly

Executive Summary

Socio-economic change in Cambodia is bringing new opportunities and influences as technological advances, foreign investment and development organisations link the country to the world. Yet Cambodian society is also struggling to regain a sense of national identity through a return to perceived traditional values and ideals in these post-conflict years. Perceptions of gender identity, especially the female gender identity, are closely linked to notions of “culture” and “tradition,” and resistance to changes in gender relations is often strong.

Cambodia is a hierarchically ordered society, with notions of power and status conditioning social relations. In this social order, women are considered to be of lower status relative to men, though the status of an individual is also determined by their age and other characteristics, including wealth. For women, status is additionally determined by marriage and children. What is considered appropriate behaviour for a woman may vary considerably according to her age and a range of factors relating to her socio-economic position and family composition. In general, attitudes towards gender roles place great importance on women’s role as household managers and men’s role as provider for the family.

Although women are nominally guaranteed equal rights with men in the Cambodian Constitution, the ability to claim these rights is subject to prevailing social ideals and attitudes about power and gender relations.

This paper highlights some key gender issues for contemporary Cambodia under the broad headings of education, economy and labour, and health.

1. Education

Recent statistics have shown significant gender disparities in female educational levels. Self-reported rates of literacy are considerably lower among women than among men. The gender gap is narrower among the younger generation, reflecting increased access to schooling in recent years.

Girls are also under-represented in formal education at all levels. Whereas boys and girls enrol in school in equal numbers, girls tend to drop out in larger numbers than boys, and the gender gap increases as the level of schooling rises.

Reasons for the gender gap in education are related primarily to two areas—first to costs, both direct costs and opportunity costs, and second to social attitudes towards gender roles. Particularly among poor and rural households, the labour of all household members can be crucial for survival. Reasons related to economic costs are the main reasons for the withdrawal of both boys and girls from school. However, stereotypical attitudes about gender

roles, revolving around notions of men as breadwinners working outside the home and women as housewives and mothers working within the home, mean that girls' education is not considered as important as boys'. Girls are expected to carry out domestic chores in the home and are more involved in income-generating activities. This means that a girl's labour is more important to the household, and renders the opportunity costs of sending her to school higher than those of boys.

Underlying these economic constraints on girls' education are the prevailing social ideals and attitudes of higher male status, capacity and intelligence. These attitudes persist, not only among parents but also teachers. Thus, the school environment itself is likely to reinforce perceptions of gender norms. The role of the curriculum and textbooks and other in-school factors in reinforcing stereotypical attitudes towards gender has been insufficiently researched at this stage, and warrants further attention. There was, however, no gender input into the design of most of the recently introduced basic education textbooks.

The gender gap in educational participation has immediate observable ramifications for the employment opportunities open to women, which in turn has wider social significance. Women's lack of skills and qualifications means that they are unable to compete for professional and decision-making positions, which are also the positions that command status and wealth. This means that there is a lack of role models of women in professional positions for girls to aspire to and break the vicious circle. There are also practical implications in various sectors. For example, the absence of female health professionals inhibits women from accessing adequate health care.

By restricting girls' access to education, their life opportunities and choices are also restricted. Literacy and numeracy enable access to information on a range of areas which improve the quality of life of a woman, such as contraception, nutrition, sanitation. Education increases access to employment and economic opportunities. Illiteracy limits the choices available to women and restricts participation in many development activities.

Efforts to provide literacy and non-formal education to older adult women have largely been unsuccessful. Participants tend to be youths who have dropped out of school or children whose parents cannot afford school. Adult women, especially in rural areas are involved in a variety of income-generating and domestic activities, which make it difficult for them to access non-formal education and training programmes. Without an income-generation component, the opportunity costs for adult women to attend such courses are perceived as too high.

2. Economy and Labour

Although women form a majority of the current labour force (53 percent) they enter the labour market with fewer educational qualifications and skills than men. A larger proportion of teenage girls are in the labour force than boys, reflecting their lower rates of participation in formal education. Women's lack of formal education directly affects their representation in the labour market.

Men dominate the still small wage labour market. Fifteen percent of the male labour force, compared to less than 6 percent of the female labour force, are paid employees. Men also form the majority in professional occupations and positions with decision-making responsibility. Less than a third of professionals are female, and only 6 percent of legislators, senior government officials and managers. These are also the positions which give status in Cambodian society, even though they do not necessarily command high salaries.

In the recently formed government, women are for the first time represented at ministerial level, with two female ministers. Although this is very encouraging, the proportion of women in high-ranking and policy-making positions is very low. Only eight out of the 122 members of the National Assembly are female. In effect, this means that women, who form

the majority of the Cambodian population (52 percent), have very little say in the creation of the rules, regulations and policies which affect their lives.

Where women form a majority in the labour market it is in insecure positions requiring few formal qualifications and skills. In urban areas, over two-thirds of stall holders and market vendors are female. This sector employs a tenth of the female workforce, compared to only 5 percent of the male workforce. With current low public sector salaries and a small wage labour market, the retail sector is crucial to household income and potentially more lucrative than waged employment.

As with other Asian countries, the growth of the labour-intensive manufacturing sector has resulted in new wage labour opportunities for a largely unskilled workforce. Although this employs less than 4 percent of the female workforce, it is significant in that women constitute the majority of the workforce in the garment and tobacco industries. Within the context of few employment opportunities for those with little education, factory work is perceived by many women as a lucrative opportunity. However, this work is relatively insecure and provides little opportunity for promotion or transfer into another field. Pay and conditions are extremely varied, as the Labour Law is not consistently enforced.

Women are also entering other gender-stereotyped positions which reflect both their lack of qualifications, economic necessity, and underlying male bias in social attitudes. In the service sector, women are employed as waitresses and beer girls for a primarily male clientele, where they can be subjected to sexual harassment.

Three-quarters of the population is engaged in agricultural production: 78 percent of the female and 71 percent of the male labour force. Men and women work together in most activities in production for the household and for sale. Prevailing ideals about a division of labour by gender dictate that activities which are physically demanding, or require tools and technology, are designated “male,” whereas activities which require less physical strength are designated “female.” In practice, many activities are flexible. However, activities which are designated male are also valued more highly than female activities. When the conditions under which these activities are undertaken change, this difference in value is highlighted. Men will carry out female activities for production among household members, but when production is undertaken outside the household as exchange or wage labour, the division of labour reverts to traditional notions of male and female activities, and rates of remuneration are higher for male than female activities.

3. Health

No gender differentials were found in statistics on general health and nutrition, though biological differences mean that malnutrition and poor hygiene practices can have a more detrimental effect on women than men. Overall, malnutrition among children, leading to stunting, causes problems for women in childbirth. Poor hygiene practices can cause frequent gynaecological problems for women.

Expenditure on health care is high, with estimates ranging up to a quarter of total household expenditure. The preference among all individuals in Cambodia is to seek curative care from pharmacists rather than public health care services. However, not all data is disaggregated by gender, and insufficient qualitative research has been conducted on gendered perceptions of health and health-seeking behaviour to draw conclusions.

Cambodian women suffer specifically from reproductive health-related problems. The total fertility rate is 5.2. The lack of access to and use of maternal health facilities has resulted in a high maternal mortality rate of between 473 and 900 per 100,000 live births. Most births take place at home, and only a third are attended by a trained health professional.

Only 7 percent of married couples use a modern method of contraception, and the preference is for the injection and the pill. Abortion, which was legalised in 1997, is believed to be a common form of contraception and a major cause of maternal mortality. The condom is not a preferred method of contraception for married couples because of its association with prostitution and HIV/AIDS.

The construction of gender identities and sexuality means that women are generally ignorant and shy about their bodies. This modesty, combined with the lack of female health professionals and preference for treatment by pharmacists, means that gynaecological problems may go untreated or be incorrectly treated.

Sex education has until recently been neglected in the school curriculum. Combined with a general lack of openness about sex and a desire to protect girls' virginity for marriage, women's lack of knowledge about sex, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), HIV and conception has inhibited their ability to protect themselves against pregnancy and STDs.

Women's control over their bodies and reproductive choice is still largely dependent on power relations in the household. Virginity and marital fidelity are crucially linked to perceptions of a virtuous woman, which in part determine a woman's social status. A woman's sexuality is tightly controlled, first by her parents and then by her husband. Men's influence on reproductive decision-making has not been researched, but there is evidence to suggest that women have little power to negotiate sexual relations with their husband. It is likely that men have considerable influence over the type of contraception chosen. The current preferred contraceptive methods show that responsibility lies with the woman. Methods which involve male responsibility, such as the condom, withdrawal or periodic abstinence, are least frequently used. However, female methods of contraception can involve more side-effects, especially among poor rural women whose health may not be good. It has been suggested that the injection and the IUD are preferred by women because they can be concealed from their husbands and thus avoid discussion or conflict.

It is socially accepted, and even expected, for men to visit prostitutes, and this phenomenon is becoming part of the growing culture of adolescent males socialising in groups. This issue has come to the fore because of the growth in rates of HIV/AIDS infection since the early 1990s. Recent statistics find that almost 43 percent of sex workers are HIV positive. It appears that men are inconsistent about condom use when visiting prostitutes, and most disturbing is the finding that more than 2 percent of married women are now HIV positive. Women's lack of control in this area is putting them at risk of STDs and HIV/AIDS, with potentially fatal consequences. Improving male responsibility in sexual relations is a crucial issue for gender in Cambodia.

Features of society such as prostitution, trafficking in women and domestic violence are symptomatic of the unequal power relations between men and women. Poverty constrains the ability of women to resist these forms of male oppression.

Approximately one in six women in Cambodia is a victim of domestic violence, and of these half sustain physical injuries. The incidence diminishes among women educated to secondary level or residing with or near their parents. Social and practical reasons combine to prevent women from leaving an abusive spouse. Women who leave their husband lose economic and social security. Social attitudes towards domestic violence spill over into the legal system. Police are reluctant to interfere in a "private" matter. The divorce process emphasises reconciliation and offers no means of protection for a wife against an abusive spouse.

4. Concluding Remarks

As Cambodia develops, the hierarchical structure of social relations and women's lower status relative to men is reflected in the most recent research and household survey findings.

There are fewer women than men in positions of power, decision-making and status in Cambodian society.

Women face more constraints in accessing the resources of modern society than men. Large gender disparities exist in rates of adult literacy, participation in formal education and participation in the wage labour market. As new resources, skills and information are introduced, the underlying assumptions about gender and power relations dictate the way these are allocated. Women are perceived to be less intelligent, and there is resistance to women's deviation from their traditional role. New and modern inputs are generally accepted to be a male domain.

In formal education, which is the key to many aspects of modern society, women are seriously under-represented. There are varied reasons for this, connected to perceptions of gender roles. Girls are expected to perform more domestic chores than boys, thus opportunity costs are high when girls attend school; a girl's future role is perceived to be that of a wife and mother, not to work to support her family, thus parents may not choose to invest in their daughter's education, particularly when economic resources are scarce; a woman's status is to a great extent determined by her role as wife and mother and not through her work, thus education to higher levels is not necessary. Girls are therefore withdrawn from school around the age of puberty, while boys remain longer. Girls' resulting lack of qualifications and skills severely restricts their opportunities in the labour market. Men dominate all professional fields and decision-making positions.

Improving women's access to educational services is a significant investment for the country's development. Education expands the employment opportunities open to women and improves their productive capacity. Their social status is no longer solely dependent on marriage and family. Education provides information on contraception, nutrition and sanitation, which potentially improves the quality of life for a woman and her family. Literacy and numeracy also enhance the ability to access and exchange ideas and information and to identify and solve problems. This expands the range of life choices open to a woman and her ability to improve the quality of her life. In this way, education improves women's position in Cambodian society, as well as being of wider benefit to society as a whole.

In rural Cambodia, where the majority of the population lives as subsistence farmers, men and women cooperate in agricultural production. Ideals about the division of labour state that men should carry out the more physical work and work which involves greater skill, intelligence or technical knowledge, whereas women carry out the less physically demanding tasks. In practice, the division of labour is quite flexible, but the ideals remain. Women are additionally responsible for domestic work. Once a value is attached to work, the underlying social attitudes towards gender relations become more visible. The work of women is valued less than men's, and this is reflected in rates of exchange and remuneration.

Domestic work and child care are relatively inflexible, however, and remain a female responsibility in both urban and rural areas. This becomes a key issue where employment opportunities are concerned. Currently, women dominate in occupations which allow them to combine their work and domestic responsibilities, such as market trade or informal sector occupations, or those which are short-term and can be completed before marriage and children, such as factory work. Attitudes towards gender roles may mean that for a woman to undertake work outside the home, a daughter must miss out on her education. Until norms concerning the undertaking of domestic responsibility change, and it becomes socially acceptable for men to share this work, women will continue to face additional constraints. The constraints on women's time and mobility need to be taken into consideration in the design of any gender-aware interventions.

Decision-making at the level of the household is complex. There is some evidence to suggest that the man is the overall decision-maker. Although women have considerable say in duties which relate to the day-to-day running of the household, and in certain agricultural

tasks, they do not have control in sexual matters, with the result that women are unable to protect themselves from STDs and HIV which their husbands bring back from prostitutes.

Improving women's access to education and employment opportunities is also a foundation for gender and social equity. However, social institutions such as schools also play a significant role in the transmission of dominant ideologies and social identities, and can reinforce existing gender inequalities through curriculum content and classroom practices.

Gender is often dismissed on the grounds that there are other priorities, such as poverty alleviation. However, even though both men and women suffer in conditions of poverty, it must be recognised that gender mediates the experience of poverty. Women in poverty face different constraints, and may not benefit equally from poverty alleviation strategies without consideration of gender issues. The high incidence in Cambodia of women forced into prostitution or trafficking is an extreme example of how gender inequalities can differentiate the impact of poverty on men and women. A poor Cambodian girl is less likely to go school than her brother, and will subsequently have fewer employment opportunities open to her. Her social security will then depend on marriage and frequent childbearing, over which she may have little control. She will have less access to and choice of contraception, and will be subject to greater health risks than a wealthy wife. Her daughter is more likely to follow the same path.

A glance at the bibliography shows that little has been written on gender issues by Cambodian women themselves. This reinforces the beliefs of those who resist the mainstreaming of gender issues that gender is an externally imposed feminist concept with no relevance to the needs of Cambodian society. Until Cambodian women themselves voice their dissatisfaction with existing gender imbalances, there is a risk that gender and development (GAD—including here its social equity agenda) will remain outside the mainstream of development.

However, Cambodian women's relative lack of voiced dissatisfaction with existing gender relations is also symptomatic of the trade-offs women make to cope with oppression in their lives. Women may well be aware of their strategic gender interests, but sacrifice these for other means to secure their well-being.

Cambodian women are far from passive victims of male oppression, but rather active agents operating within a constrained environment. Gender norms are slowly changing and adapting to the demands of a changing society. Cambodian women are renegotiating gender relations, taking up new roles and public positions themselves, as they are exposed to new ideas and information. For example, women working as community development workers gain the respect of villagers by conducting this new role within the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour for women. In this way, women can take up new positions formerly occupied by men and also conform to ideals of a "good" woman. In this way, gender relations are challenged in a non-confrontational manner and renegotiated, and the goal of gender equity moves nearer.

Introduction

1. Gender

The concept of gender has been in use since the 1970s, where it originated in Western feminist theory to describe a social identity formed around biological males and females (Jackson & Pearson 1998). Although biological sex differences are immutable, the roles and responsibilities assigned to males and females change over time within a society, as well as varying across different societies. Gender is an important component of individual identity, the sense of belonging to one sex, group of people or nationality.

Gender relations form part of the broader set of social relations in a given society, and are essentially relations of power between men and women. These relations vary according to social groups and other differentiating factors, such as age, ethnicity, disability and class. They also vary over time. These relations determine an individual's access to material and non-material resources, their ability to control their bodies and their lives, and their decision-making capability. Gender relations are characterised by a complex combination of cooperation, conflict and inequality, which extends from the household to other seemingly gender-neutral institutions of society, such as community, markets and state.

Gender ideologies and power relations are so deeply embedded in the attitudes and practices of societies that they are often perceived as “natural” and “immutable.” Power dictates whose interests dominate, and also how individual interests are shaped. Those who hold power have a greater interest in maintaining the *status quo*, and resistance to change can be strong. Although macro-economic policies, political transformation and development interventions may bring radical change to people's lives, talk of addressing power inequalities between men and women is frequently perceived as a threat to culture or an imposition of “feminist” ideas from outside. However, gender and other social relations are not immutable. They change and can be changed alongside other developments in society.

2. Gender and Development

Gender analysis has been part of development discourse for 25 years (Jackson & Pearson 1998), and its implementation in the practice of development has taken many forms.

The so-called gender and development (GAD) approach emerged as a progression from the earlier women in development (WID) approach which dominated in the 1970s. Based on a belief that women had previously been excluded from development, the emphasis was on “integrating women into development,” and resulted in a proliferation of women's organisations, projects targeting women only, and separate WID units within organisations and governments. GAD moves away from a focus on women in isolation, to a recognition of the

influential nature of the relations between men and women in determining allocation of and control over resources. The current trend in GAD is on “mainstreaming,” which involves the establishment of systems and procedures to include gender issues at all stages of policy-making and the project cycle—a process which challenges existing norms and practices, patterns of authority and resources within organisations.

Gender analysis in development can variously be justified on the grounds of efficiency (more efficient use of the human resources of society in the process of economic development), welfare (the well-being of all individuals in society) and equity (social justice, equal benefits to all members of society). There is no unity in the discourse on GAD, and there continues to be much debate in academic circles and among development practitioners, parallel to the ongoing debate on the development process itself. The basis of the approach is the unequal power relations between men and women which result in women’s inferior economic, social, political and legal position relative to men. These unequal power relations prevent equitable and sustainable development.

3. Gender Analysis in Development

Various frameworks are used as tools for gender analysis, both in programmes and projects and for social or organisational contexts. These tools can be political if they are used with the aim of addressing gender inequality, but there is also a tendency among development practitioners to use them divorced from political intention, especially by those without an understanding of gender theory and/or without commitment to gender equity (March *et al.* 1999).

Approaches to gender analysis differ on the extent to which men and women are treated as separate or interdependent categories, and on how far the underlying issue of power is addressed. The Harvard analytical framework¹, also known as the gender roles framework or gender analysis framework (Overholt *et al.* 1985), focuses on the gender division of labour in productive (the production of goods and services with exchange value) and reproductive (goods and services for the maintenance of the household and its members) work, and on access to and control over material and non-material resources and benefits. From this analysis, the different tasks and responsibilities of men and women are clearly visible. However, this analysis focuses on men and women’s separate roles, and misses out how these roles fit together and are negotiated according to power structures. The aim of this framework is more efficient allocation of resources in project implementation.

The Moser framework, devised for project planning, similarly focuses on roles and the allocation of resources, rather than on the power and relationships which determine them or the dynamics of decision-making.² This approach uses the concepts of women’s “triple role” (productive, reproductive and community roles) and practical and strategic gender needs or interests to refer to the particular needs of women or men which are derived from their social positioning (Molyneux 1985; Moser 1993). Practical needs refer to the needs of men and women to fulfil their existing roles, and such needs are short term. Meeting strategic needs refers to long-term improvements through a questioning of the existing social order. However, the two categories of need may be more inseparable than the distinction suggests. This approach focuses on women’s subordination, and tends to ignore the interaction of other causes of inequality, such as class and ethnicity, with gender (March *et al.* 1999).

The women’s empowerment or Longwe framework focuses on women’s empowerment, issues of participation and control, and women’s power to change their condition and position in society (Longwe 1991). It can be used for planning, monitoring and evaluation. Five

¹ Used by some donor agencies, such as USAID, IDRC and CIDA (Porter & Smyth 1998).

² Used by some NGOs and donor agencies, such as Christian Aid, OXFAM, SIDA, NORAD and DfID (Porter & Smyth 1998).

levels in the process towards equality are identified: welfare, access, conscientisation, participation and control. These can be used to analyse the extent to which men and women are equal, or how projects address empowerment issues. Practical and strategic needs are seen as inter-related. However, like the Harvard and Moser frameworks, there is no analysis of change over time or of the differences among women.

Lacking in these frameworks is an analysis of the causes of the existing inequitable distribution of resources and the ways in which men and women negotiate their lives. The complex underlying systems of power relations determine how individual needs are perceived and claimed, how new resources are allocated and controlled, and the assignation of tasks to individuals.

The social relations framework allows an examination of the ways that gender relations create differences in the relative positions of men and women in social processes (Kabeer 1994). This approach can be used for project planning and policy formulation. It proposes a new framework for development with gender as a central component (March *et al.* 1999). Gender inequality is analysed in the distribution of resources, responsibilities and power. This approach considers relations between people, their expression and reproduction through the institutions and social structures that affect their lives (e.g. household, state, market). Unequal social relations are perceived as the cause of unequal access to and control over resources. The roles of men and women are interdependent, and involve complex processes of cooperation and conflict, which determine their outcomes. Social relations are seen as dynamic and constantly renegotiated.

4. Policy Approaches

Projects and policies address gender inequalities to different degrees. Gender-blind policies make assumptions, without distinguishing between the sexes, which leads to bias according to existing gender inequalities. Gender analysis informs gender-aware policies, which can either be gender-neutral, gender-specific or gender-redistributive (or gender-transformatory) (Kabeer 1996). Gender-neutral policies recognise that gender relations create differences in the nature of men and women's involvement in development, and in their respective needs, priorities and interests, which may conflict. The aim is to meet the practical needs of both sexes without challenging the existing distribution of resources and power. Gender-specific policies recognise the differences in needs, priorities and interests, and aim to address the practical needs of one sex also without challenging the existing distribution of power and resources. Gender-redistributive policies aim to transform the existing distribution of power and resources to redress gender imbalances, by addressing strategic gender interests, focusing on both or one of the sexes.

GAD is ultimately about the equitable distribution of resources and power in society. Challenging power relations can be threatening to those who hold power, but changes in power relations need to be viewed as positive and beneficial to all. "To cease to dominate [...] is itself a liberation. Responsible well-being is enhanced by shared responsibilities, in good relations in the family, in social harmony, and in personal peace of mind" (Chalmers 1998).

5. Gender and Socio-Economic Change in Cambodia

Gender is one marker which determines status in the hierarchically organised social relations of Cambodia. Age, wealth, marital status, whether childless or with children, family reputation, character, political position, education, employment and religious practice all interlink with gender to position a Cambodian individual in society (Ledgerwood 1990). Thus, gender identity and gender relations vary according to these factors, and Cambodian men and women are not homogenous groups.

Conceptions of status are rooted in the Buddhist belief that the merit achieved through the deeds of a previous lifetime determines the current social status of an individual. In general, women are considered to be of lower status than men of the same socio-economic background. Cambodian society is also organised around a system of patronage, where people follow a person of higher status and in return receive some form of protection.

Traditionally, social behaviour was guided by *chbab* (codes of behaviour). There are many codes, for women, men and grandchildren among others, written in verse form and handed down orally through the generations (Ledgerwood 1990; Bit 1991). The codes emphasise the position of an individual in society and their expected behaviour towards others. The status of an individual relative to another is reinforced in the language, which uses different terms of address for individuals of different rank.

Gender roles and relations are deeply rooted in the culture. Appropriate and ideal behaviour for a woman is to be shy, unassertive, and submissive and subservient to her husband. Ledgerwood (1990, 1994) notes the contradictions inherent in expectations of women. A woman must accept the authority of her husband, yet is entrusted with the fate and well-being of the entire family. A woman's behaviour can affect the status of her whole family. A woman's social position is also based on her fulfilment of the ideals associated with appropriate gender roles. These ideals are often conflicting and dynamic, being reinvented to fit new situations (Ledgerwood 1996b). Appropriate behaviour for a woman can also vary considerably through her life cycle—for example, older women can be more outspoken and assertive than young women.

Cambodian society is changing fast on many levels, as market reforms and the establishment of a liberal democracy have paved the way for an influx of foreign aid and investment, private businesses and development workers. In the last three years, the urban-rural poverty gap has widened, and the incidence of poverty has increased (MOP 1998b).

On the one hand, socio-economic change is introducing new values and opportunities, and on the other, Cambodian society is fighting to regain traditional values and ideals, perceived as belonging to a pre-1975 golden age, in the wake of the Khmer Rouge-targeted destruction of Khmer culture and years of civil war and political insecurity (Ledgerwood 1994; Tarr 1996). The hierarchical social structure prevails, and wealth becomes an increasingly important determinant of status. Patron-client relationships persist in rural communities, in politics and in business. Meanwhile, the influx of information from outside the country suggests new values, attitudes and behaviour, particularly for the younger generation.

The centrality of the female gender identity to notions of Khmer identity is emphasised by Ledgerwood (1990) in her research among Khmer refugee communities in the United States. Amid the assimilation into a new and radically different society, certain aspects of gender identity were considered inflexible: the virginity of the bride and the higher ranking of a man relative to a woman. To challenge the inequalities inherent in gender relations was perceived as a challenge to the very core of Khmer social structure, and a threat to Khmer identity. However, the ambiguous portrayal of the female gender role means that traditional stories and proverbs can be used to smooth the way to the changes that are taking place in this time of transition (Ledgerwood 1994).

The impact of socio-economic change on gender norms is apparent in many forms. Development workers emphasise the involvement of women in newly created committees. Foreign investment offers new employment opportunities for women and the chance to be economically independent. Soap operas and karaoke are introducing Western notions of "love and romance," which affect attitudes and behaviour towards relationships, marriage and sex.

The Cambodian Constitution of 1993 awards equality to all Cambodians and states that "every Khmer citizen shall be equal before the law, enjoying the same rights, freedom and fulfilling the same obligations regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religious belief,

political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth or other status” (Article 31). The Constitution provides a framework for gender equality, including: the equal rights of men and women before the law; equal participation in political, economic, social and cultural life; equality in marriage and in the family, employment and pay. The Constitution also contains a progressive assertion that work in the home should be valued as much as work outside the home (Article 36). Discrimination against and the exploitation of women is to be abolished. Based on this framework, a Women’s Code and National Policy for Women were written in 1994, but these have never been endorsed by the government.

Research in the early 1990s by Ledgerwood and Sonnois on women in Cambodia was useful in providing detailed information on women’s roles, and has informed many of the WID agendas to date. However, the emphasis was on women and their material needs at the expense of issues of status and inequality (Mehta 1993). Projects arising from this approach were income generation, literacy and health education, which meet the basic, practical needs of women in their existing roles.

Early approaches to WID in Cambodia were easy to justify in terms of welfare and efficiency. The large demographic imbalance meant that up to 65 percent of the population was women, and more than a third of households were headed by women. Today, the overall gender balance is more even (52 percent of the population are women), except among the older age ranges (60 percent women among the over 40s) (MOP 1997b). Overall, 23.5 percent of households now are headed by women (MOP 1997b).

A focus on gender is comparatively new to development work in Cambodia. Recent interventions have begun to emphasise women in decision-making positions at village level as new structures are introduced. Plans are underway to promote girls’ equal access to education, which is the major constraint to women’s participation in all areas of social and economic development.

But the transition from “women” to “gender” in approach is still incomplete, and the switch in language and concepts mystifying to many. There is little attention paid to the social construction of masculinity, or of strategies to involve both men and women in interventions in ways that will make their interdependent relationship more equitable. Much literature is still being produced along the lines of “women in development in Cambodia,” which minimises the relational aspect of gender (Ledgerwood 1996a; Derks 1997). These may serve to highlight the differences between men and women’s position and pinpoint areas for intervention to improve equality. However, it is important to recognise that men and women have to live and work together, and are constantly involved in processes of negotiation which are based on unequal relations of power. The gender approach begins from recognition of this reality, and a focus on gender in Cambodia now requires a more detailed study of social relationships and issues of equity and power.

As new resources and opportunities are introduced in the course of Cambodia’s development, gender differentials are becoming visible, particularly in formal education, the wage labour market, and in positions of authority, decision-making and status. It has become clear that, in many cases, if distribution of resources is not planned with gender equity in mind, by default the resources will go to men, based on underlying assumptions about gender. Men are automatically put forward for training courses and election to official positions.

This paper presents an overview of the current situation of gender and development in Cambodia. The topic is very broad and the information gathered has focused on the following areas: education, health, and economy and labour. The paper includes an analysis of the most recent statistics, literature and research. However, time constraints limited the amount of material that could be included. Likewise, it was not possible to consistently include the experience of Cambodian women of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. It is hoped that this paper will form a basis for further analysis, discussion and research.

Although some examples have been cited on current development project approaches to gender and development, a comprehensive review was not within the scope of this paper.

Chapter One

Gender Issues in Education

Basic education is regarded both as a fundamental human right and a cost-effective investment in development. The social and economic benefits of education are well documented—education promotes health, increases access to paid employment, increases productivity in market and non-market work, and facilitates social and political participation. As women form more than half of Cambodia's labour force, the economic returns to girls' education could be substantial. Women form the majority of the agricultural labour force, and a basic education is necessary to realise government priorities to increase and diversify agricultural production. Moreover, the creation of a literate, numerate and trainable workforce is a prerequisite for industrialisation and private sector development, while an uneducated female labour force is a significant constraint (RGC 1994).

The education of girls is regarded as yielding additional social benefits specifically linked to women's roles as mothers and carers of the family. These include reduced fertility and mortality rates, and improved maternal and family health, nutrition and hygiene. With one of the highest birth rates in Asia, high child and infant mortality rates and serious public health and nutrition problems, increasing the participation of girls in education would be a significant step towards development in Cambodia. These social benefits could accrue from formal and non-formal forms of education, though formal education may be better placed to do this because it can be standardised and offered on a wide scale.

Girls are under-represented at all levels of formal education in Cambodia, and both supply and demand side constraints on their participation have been identified in recent research. The decision to enrol children in school is taken at the level of the household and community, where geographic, economic and other factors are mediated by perceptions of gender roles and the benefits of education. The institutional environment surrounding formal education is far from gender-neutral itself. The extent to which gender constraints are recognised and addressed in the provision of schooling plays a significant role in determining equitable access to and participation in education. The significant social and economic barriers to girls' participation in formal education mean there is much scope for non-formal education to meet the specific needs of girls and women.

1. Educational Status of the Cambodian Population

There are wide disparities in the literacy and educational attainment levels of the Cambodian population, with significant differentials according to gender, age and location. The years of war and civil unrest disrupted the education of many adults, and a large proportion, particularly in rural areas, are illiterate and have received little or no formal schooling.

Current figures on adult literacy rates significantly understate the extent of illiteracy, because a standard test has not been developed and figures are based on self-reported rates. The most recent Socio-Economic Survey of Cambodia (SESC) of 1997 puts the national adult literacy rate at 67.8 percent. The adult (over 15) literacy rate is highest in Phnom Penh (82.2 percent) and significantly lower in rural areas (65.2 percent). Although the gender gap is smaller in urban areas and greatest among the poorest quintile, rates for women are lower than those for men across every age group and across all socio-economic strata, signifying both social and economic barriers to the education of females (MOP 1998a). Almost half of rural women are illiterate, with the proportion as high as 91 percent in Ratanakkiri compared with 77 percent of men (MOP 1997b). The disparities in literacy levels have significant implications for equitable participation in development interventions, since participants' needs and abilities differ by region, gender and age.

However, the SESC figures also show a narrowing of the gender gap in literacy rates across generations, reflecting a combination of improved access to formal education, changing attitudes towards education itself, and the education of girls specifically in recent years. Among the 55 to 64 age group, the gender gap is extreme, with literacy rates at 77.5 percent for men and 21.5 percent for women. The gap is directly linked to the lack of education among the over-25 population: 23 percent of men aged over 25 and 49 percent of women had received no schooling, and 40 percent had received only primary education. Only 9.7 percent of women over 25 have completed lower secondary, compared with 21.1 percent of men (MOP 1997b). In contrast, the literacy rate among the 15–24 age range is 86.1 percent for men and 77.5 percent for women.¹ A formal schooling system was not introduced until the 1950s, and prior to this education was only available for boys at the wat (SSWA 1994). By the 1960s, girls formed a third of students in school, but did not remain in the education system for long (Ledgerwood 1996a).

2. Schooling

2.1. Gender Differentials in Access and Participation

The Cambodian education system is undergoing a complete overhaul following the destruction of the Khmer Rouge regime. A chronic shortage of government funds and resources continues to hamper reconstruction, and as a result 75 percent of the costs of schooling are borne by households and communities (Bray 1998). Problems facing the government include the poor physical condition of schools, lack of materials, and the low capacity of administrative and teaching staff. Although significant progress has been made in making basic education more accessible, with figures showing an 80-percent increase in primary enrolment in 15 years, the current condition of educational provision is characterised by low enrolment and attainment rates, and high repetition and drop-out rates for both boys and girls (RGC 1996). The high wastage in the system is largely symptomatic of the poor quality of educational provision, and also the high cost to the household.

However, girls are under-represented in formal education at all levels. It is not possible to accurately compare trends in girls' participation over time because education statistics have only been collected since 1996, and changes have occurred in the number of provinces included in the data. As the additional provinces are more remote, enrolment is lower and this brings down national averages.

The latest figures show that girls form almost half of pre-school enrolments, and subsequently the gender gap widens with each level of education. Forty-five percent of primary school students are female, 35 percent of lower secondary and 35 percent of upper secondary (MOEYS 1998a). The proportion of rural girls is lower than that of urban girls, and the rural-

¹ Other sources indicate that these figures are over-estimated. The number of drop-outs shown in education statistics suggests that illiteracy is higher among this age group.

urban gap widens as the educational level increases. Girls form less than a fifth of students in tertiary education. Consequently, there are few females in professional and decision-making positions. The lack of females as role models perpetuates this cycle.

Gross and net (excluding over-age) enrolment rates are lower for girls at every level and are overall very low at secondary level. At primary level, 88.3 percent gross and 77.8 percent net for all children, and 81.2 percent gross and 72.4 percent net for girls. By lower secondary, the enrolment rates drop to 23.7 percent gross and 16.3 percent net for both sexes, and 16.8 percent gross and 12.4 percent net for girls. For upper secondary, the figures stand at only 8.1 percent gross and 6.8 percent net for all children, and 5.7 percent gross and 5.0 percent net for girls (MOEYS 1998a).

Cambodian children enrol late in primary education. Although the official age of enrolment is 6, only 18 percent of the population enrol at this age (MOP 1997b). The enrolment rate rises steadily with age, and peaks at age 12, with 85.8 percent enrolment, and then gradually drops to 20.2 percent at age 19. Enrolment is significantly higher in Phnom Penh and other urban areas than rural areas. Between the ages of 5 and 11, the enrolment pattern is the same for girls and boys, but with the girls enrolling at a slightly lower rate. From the age of 12, the enrolment rate by age starts to fall for both boys and girls, but drops much more sharply for girls around the age of 13 and 14 (MOP 1997b). The average grade reached by age 13 is only 5 or 6 (MOP 1998a).

Repetition rates are high, with 41.2 percent of children repeating grade 1 in the academic year 1997/98. By lower secondary level, almost a quarter of the new intake is over-age. In 1992/93, pupils averaged two years per grade and took 15 years to complete the five years of primary schooling (UNESCO 1998). Girls repeat at a lesser rate, but drop out in higher numbers, than boys. No information is available on regularity of attendance by gender or region.

Those girls who remain in school appear to progress faster and perform better. However, the differences are small and may merely reflect the likelihood that the girls who do remain in education are on average of better ability. Data on the 1998 grade 12 exams shows that a consistently higher proportion of girls pass than boys across almost all provinces, with no major differences by subject (CANEP 1998). Until recently, bribery had a great bearing on whether or not exams were passed. Current reform of the curriculum and textbooks means that the transition to a merit-based system will take some time.

The low quality of the school system affects the social and private benefits of schooling, as even completion of primary school may not lead to functional literacy and numeracy.

Women are also under-represented in school staff. The proportion of female teachers declines the further up the educational system and the more remote the area. The 1997/98 MOEYS statistics show that women form 37 percent of primary teaching staff (40 percent of staff aged under 30) and 27 percent of secondary teaching staff. Almost all pre-school teachers are female. No figures are available to compare gender differentials in teaching staff by subject or training.

2.2. Gender Constraints on Access and Participation

Several studies have specifically identified gender constraints on participation in education: Fiske (1995), Gray & Ith (1995) and MOEYS (1998a, 1998b). The more comprehensive MOEYS (1998b) survey of 1,530 households with children under 15 in five provinces supports and quantifies many of the findings from Fiske's earlier more qualitative study. The following summary of findings has been divided into factors at household and community level and factors within the educational system.

The decision to enrol a child in school occurs at the level of the household, and is determined by a complex combination of social and economic factors. Recent research has high-

lighted the following areas. These should not be taken as distinct from one another, but rather as inter-related factors.

The most significant reason for not sending children to school, or for taking them out, is the cost. Particularly when resources are scarce, the labour contribution of each family member can be crucial for survival. Aside from the direct costs, a family has to consider the opportunity costs of sending children to school. These depend on the value of a child's labour to the household—productive or domestic—which in turn will depend on the constitution of the household and the availability and number of members. The opportunity costs of sending girls to school are in general higher, because girls have more domestic responsibilities and are responsible for selling in small-scale retail trade. Most parents believe that girls should do more housework than boys, and that selling is a female activity (MOEYS 1998b). Even if girls are not directly contributing to household productive labour, they are often freeing up their mother's labour time.

Housework and minding siblings combined were found to be the main reasons for girls' drop-out and non-enrolment in the MOEYS survey, especially between the ages of 12 and 15. "Work" was the largest reason given for both boys and girls in the 1997 SESC, but significantly more for girls (MOP 1997b). In rural areas, the labour of all family members is required for farm work. More children in rural areas work than in urban areas, and a higher proportion of girls under 15 are in the labour force than boys (MOEYS 1998b; MOP 1997b).

It is often the eldest daughter who suffers most, as she is expected to take over her mother's child-care role if her mother is occupied. This can have two consequences with respect to schooling: either the eldest daughter drops out to take over her mother's household obligations, or her achievement at school is detrimentally affected as she attempts to juggle the two. Help with generating income was a more significant reason for absenteeism among girls than boys, though rates of absenteeism were not available.

The value which parents attach to education depends very much on their expectations of a child's future role and how education contributes to this role. These expectations seem very much to be rooted in traditional perceptions of gender role ideals: male as breadwinner, female as housewife and mother.

The MOEYS study found strong gender biases in parental attitudes to education. Sixty percent of caretakers agreed that education was more important for boys than girls, and almost half believed boys were more intelligent than girls. Interestingly, the gender bias in favour of boys was stronger among female than male respondents. These biased attitudes may be particularly significant, as studies have claimed that parental encouragement has a major influence on whether girls persist in schooling or drop out (Fiske 1995; Gray & Ith 1995).

Parents had strong gendered perceptions about appropriate work for their children. Minding siblings, housework and retail trade were strongly associated with girls, and farming with boys. This also reflects ideals about gender roles.

Education was strongly linked to employment and earning potential for boys, as boys are expected to become the main earners in the family. Whereas parents considered it possible for girls to get a good job after education, this was not such an expectation. In practice, there may be more pressure on boys to perform well at school and less encouragement for girls.

Research has shown that a child is more likely to be enrolled in school when the mother is educated, and that the gender disparity declines the higher the level of education of the mother (MOP 1998a). The MOEYS survey showed the gender bias in attitudes towards the intelligence of children, the importance of education and domestic work to decline with the level of education of the respondent. There is thus a vicious circle whereby the gender disparity persists because girls do not reach a high enough level of education to instigate change.

The relation of puberty, marriage and education has not been specifically explored. Girls drop out of school in large numbers at puberty. Indications are that this partly reflects parental attempts to control girls' sexuality, in a society where the virginity of girls is deemed essential for marriage. Security of school-going daughters was a major concern to parents in the MOEYS survey, even when distance was not, perhaps relating to concerns about sexuality but also to the growing incidence of the abduction of girls for prostitution.

Peer pressure may also influence student attitudes to future gender roles and the value of education, particularly after puberty, when students begin to give more consideration to their adult role.

Parents believe that the economic returns to boys' education are higher than for girls, as there are more employment opportunities for boys (MOEYS 1998b; Fiske 1995). However, analysis of data from the 1997 SESC suggested that the economic returns to girls' education are currently higher with each level of education than for boys (MOP 1997b). It is unclear whether ability was controlled for in the analysis. As mentioned earlier, those girls who remain at higher levels of schooling are likely to be of above average ability, such that their selection for employment may reflect their higher ability rather than their level of schooling. Whether or not the economic returns to girls' education remain higher will depend how the demand for "female" or "male" wage jobs changes in the labour market.

Girls enter the labour force earlier than boys (MOP 1997b) and therefore are providing a significant economic contribution to the household sooner. The perceived economic returns to staying longer in education would need to be high to compensate for the loss of this income to the household.

The school environment itself is far from being gender-neutral. Supply-side constraints have a differential impact on boys' and girls' access to, and participation in, schooling. Factors such as costs (direct and indirect), distance and the lack of school facilities, while imposing constraints on all children's access to and participation in education, also have a gender dimension which results in a negative impact on girls.

Research has shown the costs of schooling to be the most significant factor in determining parents' decision to send their children to school (MOEYS 1998b; Fiske 1995). Although the Constitution clearly states that education should be free to all, this in practice is not the case. The costs surrounding education are direct and indirect, and include school fees, uniform, textbooks and stationery, transport, and tutoring. The most recent SESC found that households in Phnom Penh spent about nine times the amount of rural households on education (MOP 1997b). The main difference is expenditure on private tutoring, which is not widely available in rural areas. The average rural household spends 2,670 riels per month on education. A survey of the costs of schooling showed that 75 percent are borne by the household and community, and only 13 percent by the state (Bray 1998).

Government expenditure on education has fallen in the last two years to less than 10 percent of the national budget, after reaching 11.1 percent in 1995 (Chan *et al.* 1999). The ADB Education Sector Review recommended 15 percent as the minimum target for government spending (RGC 1994). It was estimated that in 1995 the government paid 20,000 riels per year per primary student, while parents paid on average 120,000 riels per year for uniform, private tuition and books (RGC 1994). The average expenditure on education in rural areas is around \$1 per month (MOP 1997b). Although parents may value education highly (Fiske 1995), where economic resources are scarce and choices have to be made, the decision will be mediated by the decision-maker's and community's perceptions of gender roles and the benefits of education.

The gender gap in education has widened in rural areas, pointing to the necessity of targeting strategies for increasing educational participation at the rural poor. The gap has also widened between the number of years that the rich go to school compared with the poor,

highlighting the increasing inaccessibility of school to the poorest for economic reasons, and leading to an increase in levels of illiteracy (UNESCO 1998; MOP 1997b). The high cost of education to the community exacerbates inequalities in access. With poverty the main cause of drop-outs and non-attendance, girls are more likely to lose out on education.

Distance to school remains a constraint on access. Although the majority of households live within 1 km of a primary school (MOP 1997b), only half of the schools (51 percent) teach up to grade 6 (MOEYS 1998a). Only one in twenty villages have a lower secondary school, and one in a hundred a functional upper secondary school (MOP 1997b). A lower secondary school is on average 40 minutes walk from home, and an upper secondary school even further (MOP 1998a), with the result that going to secondary school potentially incurs considerable transport costs and increases opportunity costs, as more time is taken to get there and back. In remote areas, the nearest secondary school may be much further away. Thus, in many cases going to secondary school is not an issue. The differential impact of distance to school relates to the opportunity costs for girls, whose work burden is larger, and to parents' fears for the security of their daughters. Parents in rural areas are more reluctant to let younger girls go to school than boys when distance is an issue.

The absence of latrines and washing facilities in schools is particularly troublesome for girls, especially after puberty when menstruation requires washing facilities. MOEYS statistics from 1997/98 report that about 72 percent of schools do not have toilet facilities. A large majority of both urban and rural respondents in the MOEYS survey reported most dissatisfaction with school latrines, and this may be one factor causing the drop in girls' enrolment after the age of 13.

Girls' achievement in formal education overall, and within particular subject areas, is influenced by gender biases in the system, for example, textbooks with gender-stereotyped images, teacher attitudes towards students, the structure of the curriculum, and timetabling can all reinforce social expectations of gender roles.

At present, girls and boys follow the same subject curriculum in primary and secondary school, with no options or subject specialisation available. There is no information on student perceptions of the relevance of the curriculum to their perceived needs by gender, and the consequent impact on persistence in education.

Little information is available to reliably compare achievement or classroom participation by gender. In the 1998 MOEYS survey on girls' education, teachers claimed that girls participated as much as boys in class, or even more so, but interpretation of their understanding of participation was lacking. In the Cambodian context, methodology has traditionally been teacher-dominated and teacher-led, and participation may have been judged according to teachers' own gendered expectations of student behaviour. Some sources describe girls as quiet and shy in class, often deferring to boys (Ledgerwood 1996a; Tarr 1996), and this is certainly considered ideal behaviour for females. Teachers in the survey expected girls to be quiet in class and boys to be hard-working and studious. Other teacher observations suggest that girls are more inhibited when they form a very small minority in the classroom, but if they form a significant majority they are more confident.

Teachers' attitudes towards the benefits of education by gender reflected the prevailing social attitudes towards gender roles shown by the parents. For both boys and girls, knowledge was the most important benefit, but education was seen as allowing boys to find a better job than girls (MOEYS 1998b). Girls themselves saw the value of education in terms of improving their ability to carry out the expected female role of wife and mother, and to improve their ability to manage the household (Fiske 1995).

Schooling is a main instrument of the socialisation process, and has the potential to reinforce or change prevailing social attitudes towards gender. Low expectations of girls can result in low achievement, which in turn affects girls' ambition with respect to employment.

Likewise, the extent to which girls' self-confidence is nurtured in the classroom could influence their decision to stay in school.

The influence of teacher attitudes to students and student perceptions of teachers in Cambodia has been little researched. In the Cambodian context, learning has traditionally been by rote, with little meaningful interaction possible, and it is unclear to what extent gender biases in teacher attitudes could be internalised by students, and thus affect participation. There have been suggestions that girls are neglected by teachers in the classroom, and that teacher attitudes towards girls are "dismissive" (Copley 1995). If the biased attitudes of teachers are consciously or unconsciously reflected in classroom practices, they could be a source of discouragement for girls, dissuading them from persisting and performing well in education. As the education system adopts the more interactive, student-centred style of teaching that is currently being introduced (UNESCO 1998), it will clearly become imperative to address the issues of gender bias in teacher attitudes and classroom practice.

Much worldwide research has stressed the positive impact of the presence of female teachers in schools on girls' participation in education. In Cambodia, male teachers and administrators outnumber females, and there are few women in positions of responsibility inside or outside school. In Fiske's study, girls claimed to be more comfortable and less shy with female teachers. Having female teachers and women in positions of responsibility is important in providing girls with role models which can positively affect their performance in school and influence aspirations for the future. If there are no role models, it is hard to break the perpetuating cycle of women concentrated in particular professions and positions.

However, the fact that both male and female teachers in the MOEYS survey showed similar biases in attitudes to gender and education signifies that a gender balance in teaching staff would not have a significant impact on addressing gender bias in the classroom, unless this was complemented by gender-awareness training.

No research has been conducted on the specific constraints facing female teachers and educational administrators. It is likely that some of the supply-side constraints mentioned above apply to female teachers as well as students, for example, issues of distance, security and sanitary facilities. With few women graduating from high school and university, there are fewer qualified women to take up teaching jobs and positions in educational administration. The cycle is thus perpetuated.

There is little information available on the extent to which gender issues are incorporated into the teacher training curriculum. Gender issues in education have been brought into the training curriculum for lower secondary English teachers (CAMSET). The issue of gender in education is introduced in sessions exploring the context of education in Cambodia. In practice sessions, observation tasks focus on the teacher's interaction with girl students (Copley 1995). However, this represents only a small number of the teachers in the country.

New textbooks have been designed and produced for Khmer, mathematics, science and social studies, covering most grades in basic education. However, there was no gender input in the design phase. The committee responsible are currently devising criteria with which to conduct a future review of the gender, ethnic and disabled balance in the textbooks.

A gender approach has been incorporated into the design of textbooks for English. Girls are portrayed in effective, positive roles, and as proactive in social situations. Gender roles depicted neither reflect existing social stereotypes nor are unrealistic. Images which challenge traditional stereotypes can be portrayed through the context of a foreign setting.

Student and teacher reactions to the portrayal of gender roles in textbooks have not yet been surveyed.

2.3. Gender Differentials in Higher Education

There are few statistics available for higher education, and little research has been conducted. The emphasis of educational reform and public and donor spending is on basic education. This is unlikely to change until improvement is shown in the basic education system.

MOEYS statistics from 1995/96 show that girls make up 19 percent of students at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, with highest numbers in the humanities. At other faculties offering formal training, women form the following proportions: Faculty of Law and Economic Sciences, 9 percent; Faculty of Business, 18 percent; Faculty of Pedagogy, 23 percent; Cambodian Institute of Technology, 2 percent; Maharishi Vedic University, 5 percent; Royal University of Agriculture, 9 percent; University of Fine Arts, 13 percent; Faculty of Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry, 20 percent.

By tertiary level, the few women who are present are more likely to be found studying humanities, and are particularly under-represented in technical and agricultural subjects (EMIS 1998). This follows a similar pattern to girls in tertiary education around the world, and is not a specifically Cambodian problem. Little information is available on the perceived economic rates of return to the different specialisations.

Most of the research on gender in education has considered basic education, but many of the gender constraints at primary and secondary level apply and are intensified at the tertiary level. Only two small studies have been conducted specifically on gender issues in higher education (Gray & Ith 1995; Fitzgerald 1997).

Gray and Ith's study on girls in higher education found the main constraint on girls' access to higher education to be "Khmer tradition," which included the expectation that girls should marry between the ages of 16 and 22, should not be more intelligent than their husbands, and should be content as wives and mothers (Gray & Ith 1995).

The selection pool of female students for tertiary education is small because so few women complete upper secondary school, especially in rural areas. Students must then pass the university entrance exam to enter a course. Anecdotal information suggests that lecturers provide private preparatory courses for the entrance exam, and that without this preparation the exam is almost unintelligible. Only 4 percent of high school students passed the entrance exam in 1994 (RGC 1994). The costs associated with the preparatory course for the entrance exam are reportedly high. Clearly some reform of the entrance exam system is necessary, perhaps linking university entrance to performance in the grade 12 exams. Further information is not available on the proportion of upper secondary school girls who apply for and are accepted into university. This would be useful in devising strategies to encourage girls in school to continue to university.

Most higher education institutions are located in Phnom Penh, which intensifies the distance issue for prospective students from rural areas and increases the costs, as accommodation has to be found. Many male students live in the wats, which is not possible for females. Unless rural girls have relatives in Phnom Penh, this is a major obstacle. Dormitories need to be provided for girls. Until now, entrance exams have taken place in Phnom Penh, which poses the same obstacles for women applicants.

Little information exists on participation and achievement in higher education. Fitzgerald's (1997) small study found girls more likely to participate when they formed a large minority in the classroom.

2.4. Vocational and Non-Formal Education

The higher number of girls than boys who drop out of the formal education system before receiving a basic education means that a large number of girls are joining the labour force without the skills necessary to participate effectively in the social and economic development

of the country. Girls form two-thirds of the out-of-school population. Literacy is thus a major gender issue.

The standard of literacy required to qualify for formal technical and vocational education poses a severe obstacle for most school drop-outs (UNESCO 1998). Thirty-seven percent of students in formal vocational education, and 5 percent of those in formal technical institutions, are female (Trewavas *et al.* 1997). Enrolment in government-run technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions has declined in recent years, primarily because of they are supply driven and do not cater for the demands of a market economy.

Despite the estimated large number of illiterate Cambodian women, especially over the age of 30, adult women aged over 25 constitute a minority in many literacy programmes. Such programmes mainly reach young adults and school drop-outs. In the UNESCO Terakoya programme, most participants are aged 15–24, and the proportion of females varies between approximately 60 and 90 percent, depending on the province. As the curriculum was designed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) for older adults, its relevance for the increasingly lower-aged participants is being questioned. Literacy classes for adult women are a great need. Many NGOs cite illiteracy as the major constraint to involving women in training and extension programmes. Given the now-recognised importance of including women in these programmes, unless element for illiterate participants are incorporated into the design of the courses or combined with literacy classes, this could be a major setback for rural development.

The highland women in remote provinces such as Ratanakkiri face additional language constraints in accessing adult education and training programmes. They are far less likely than their male counterparts to speak the Khmer language. Programmes which have Khmer-language ability as an entry criterion actually discriminate against women (Sri 1995).

In the International Labour Organisation's Vocational Training for Employment Generation, the majority of participants were male (57 percent), because fewer women are able to attend centre-based training (Berlin 1998).

There has, however, been huge growth in the number of private vocational schools in Phnom Penh, and the participation of women here is high. At Regent College, which offers English, computing, management, secretarial and accounting courses, 60 percent of students are women, mostly in accounting. At Informatics College, which offers similar courses, girls are a minority except in English and secretarial courses. At Pacific Training School, 60 percent of the students are female, studying computing and English.

The National Institute of Management (formerly the Faculty of Business) operates both state and private degree courses. In the final year of the four-year course, students specialise in one subject (management, marketing, accounting and finance, law, management information systems, travel and hotel management). To enter the state course students have to pass an entrance exam, but all those with a high school certificate can enter the private class. All the certificates awarded for the four-year degree course are equally recognised. Courses are run at different times during the day and evening. Girls formed one-third of the participants in both the state and private courses in 1998.

3. Addressing Gender Constraints in Educational Provision: Policy, Strategies and Interventions

The Cambodian government has recognised the importance of girls' education for development, and has recently approved a National Action Plan on Girls' Education, which includes priority areas and strategies to specifically address the needs of girls in basic education (MOEYS 1998a). Action Plans for Higher Education and Higher Education in Agriculture

specifically refer to women's low representation, but the area is not awarded high priority nor are the ramifications analysed in detail.

A pilot project, the Girls' Education Assistance and Planning Project, implemented by CARE has been carried out in one province. It focuses on involving the whole community in addressing the problem of girls' education. The project includes awareness raising on the benefits of girls' education, and literacy classes have been provided for out-of-school girls, with the aim of reintegrating them into the formal education system where possible. An extension of this project will build the capacity of village education committees (VECs) to manage the literacy classes, and it includes an income-generation component to address the economic constraints of sending girls to school. Parent-teacher associations and cluster-school committee members, district education officials, VEC members and teachers will participate in the design of action plans to improve girls' educational participation. Incentives (e.g. materials) will be offered for the achievement of action plan targets. Through its various components, the project attempts to address both the practical needs of girls for basic education and a means to subsidise the costs and strategic constraints, such as the low value attributed to girls education in the community.

The fact that the educational system is now being reformed provides an opportunity to address gender issues at an initial stage, in order to prevent new gender differentials from emerging later, for example, in textbook and curriculum reform, incorporation of a gender perspective into teacher training as new methodology is introduced, etc.

All non-formal training and education needs to be tailored to the specific requirements of the target group, in terms of content, methodology, timing and location. Employment opportunities need to be identified for which there is market demand and which are appropriate for women. Needs and constraints will vary according to age, gender and location. Women have a heavier work burden, and their time and mobility is restricted. The location of skills training centres near provincial capitals may be more of a constraint to adult women working in agriculture. Mobile training units could address women's mobility constraints.

Many NGO interventions seem designed to suit the convenience of the trainers at the expense of reaching the target group, for example, timetabling of classes during the day, when women are not free, because trainers are unable or unwilling to work in the evenings. The inflexible nature of the formal education system in timetabling is one constraint which non-formal education should be able to overcome.

The private vocational schools in Phnom Penh mentioned above and the National Institute of Management offer flexible schedules, with courses running during the day and evening. Girls are less likely to attend the evening classes. At the National Institute of Management, girls form up to 50 percent of the classes during the day, but only 10–15 percent during the evening, reflecting girls' mobility and household work constraints and security fears.

Many NGOs have concentrated on training in traditional skills for women, such as silk-weaving, basket-making, mat-weaving and sewing. The market for silk and handicrafts, however, has been heavily dependent on the tourist industry, which has not expanded as many have hoped. Combined with a depressed economy and lack of marketing skills, especially in the provinces, tourist-oriented crafts have not been profitable. With political stability, the tourist industry may recover and the market for tourist-oriented crafts expand.

Products which can be sold in the local market, such as floor mats, are currently more profitable. Khemara and the Indradevi Association provide sewing training for young village women who then work in garment factories. Other NGOs, such as the Cambodian Women's Development Association (CWDA), provide secretarial and computer training, which falls more in line with market demand and increases women's ability to compete. Other skills which can be profitable are pig-raising, fish farming and vegetable gardening.

The main constraint in addressing widespread illiteracy is the lack of reliable information on the scope of the problem. A national survey has been proposed by UNESCO, but this project has not yet secured funding.

Literacy education alone does not meet the perceived needs of the illiterate adult population, and there is growing disinterest in literacy courses among adults unless they are combined with income-generation skills (UNESCO 1998). Just as economic factors over-rule a desire to send children to school, so economic necessity and short-term needs take priority over literacy education. The poor will be unable to participate unless this does not interfere with their income. Time is a particularly valuable for the poorest, and especially among women, whose workload is heavy. If women have to miss part of a course due to their agricultural work, they are sometimes too embarrassed to attend the rest.

Several NGOs formerly targeting women have turned their attention to their children instead. Reasons cited for this are that the women have no time to study, and that they instead request education for their children. In order to successfully overcome the gender constraints on women's participation, issues of child-care and poverty need to be addressed. Evidence suggests that the most successful projects are those which integrate literacy and skills training, and have provisions for child-care and credit. Village-based interventions timetabled according to the wishes of the participants are likely to have better rates of attendance. The linking of literacy to skills and income generation is also important to ensure that newly learned literacy skills will be used and remembered.

Ensuring the participation of the target group, however, is not straightforward. In the case of the UNICEF/Community Action for Social Development programme, which targets women and children, the project addressed women's child-care constraints by providing "childminder" classes for their children, so that women could attend literacy classes. Research into the programme found that though the childminder class had 65 children, the adult class had only 10 participants, most of whom were single men and women aged between 20 and 30 (Teng *et al.* 1999). As in many other developing countries, parents prioritise their children's education over their own when the opportunity arises.

Other organisations providing literacy classes note the growing numbers of younger participants in classes, especially girls, and point to the high cost of formal education and the timetabling flexibility of their literacy class as incentives.

These cases highlight the shortcomings of formal education provision, the growing demand of out-of-school youths for basic education, and the failure to tailor courses to address the specific gender constraints of different groups, such as illiterate adult women. Two types of classes are needed: the first remedial, to address the inadequacies of formal education; the second for adult illiterates, which need to be geared toward functionality and income.

4. Suggestions for Future Research

- Higher education and employment: what types of employment are considered appropriate for women?; what are the perceived links between education and employment, in the context of new employment opportunities in a transitional society?; tracer studies of female graduates.
- Gender sensitivity in curriculum and textbooks.
- Gender sensitivity in the teacher training curriculum.
- Constraints on teachers and educational administrators.
- Changes in teacher attitudes towards gender; the impact of this on classroom practices; gender sensitivity in the curriculum.

- Student perceptions of education—relevance/usefulness of the curriculum.
- Changes in gender constraints on educational participation with socio-economic change.
- Gender constraints on achievement.
- Gender constraints among ethnic minorities.
- Rural female employment and the impact on daughters' access to education, especially in the context of increasing agricultural productivity

Chapter Two

Gender Issues in Health

1. General Health

Within the context of development, the health status of the nation is critical, as it affects the ability of the people to participate in the social and economic development of the country. Without a certain level of social and economic development, basic health care cannot be provided, and without a basic state of health, the population does not have the physical and mental capacity necessary to develop the country.

Health is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “a state of physical, mental and social well-being” (Ravindran 1993). Health status is a product not only of biology, but also of the social, cultural, economic and political environment. An individual’s health is affected by the individual’s lifestyle, life stress, the stage of their life cycle, and the social, economic and cultural setting. These affect both the causes of ill health and also the ability to access health services (Ostergaard 1992; Ravindran 1993). Improvements in individual health depend on a multitude of factors, including improved living standards, improved education, and better working conditions (CIDA 1989).

Men and women’s health needs differ due to their differing biological composition, and their gender roles mean that men and women are subject to different health risks. The social construction of gender also means that their experience and perceptions of health differ.

The health situation in Cambodia is among the worst in the world, and the health care system faces immense problems. Quality health care is scarce, and public confidence in the system is low. The 1995 government per capita spending on health was \$2, and only 5.7 percent of government spending in 1997 was for health (Chan *et al.* 1999). Limited access to quality health care is worsened by poor living conditions, poor hygiene practices, large families and food shortages. Illiteracy and poor knowledge of health and hygiene prevent people from coping with illness (UNICEF 1995a). Not all health professionals are trained, and public salaries are so low that health workers need to supplement their income through private practice. Most health professionals are concentrated in urban areas, even though the majority of the population lives in rural areas.

Health care in Cambodia is not free. The poorest, for whom the ability to work is critical for survival, are the most vulnerable to illness, and have the most difficulty affording health care. Health costs are a major source of debt in Cambodia, both because of the expense of health care and the opportunity costs arising from the loss of labour (Murshid 1998).

1.1. Gender Differentials in Health and Nutrition

Limited statistics on health and nutrition are available, and research and survey findings are not consistently disaggregated by gender.

There have been no national surveys on the nutritional status of the population, though recent large surveys have attempted to calculate the incidence of child malnutrition, as this is held to be a measure of the status of the population as a whole (RGC 1997b). Results show that Cambodian children are chronically under-nourished, with few significant gender differentials (MOP 1997c; MOP 1998a). There appears to be a slight differential in favour of girls, which is greatest among the richest quintile, indicating socio-cultural rather than economic factors (MOP 1997a; MOP 1998a). Seasonal differences in malnutrition occur as the availability of food fluctuates. Children in urban areas are less likely to be malnourished than those in rural areas.

Children in the weaning period of 6–18 months are particularly affected by malnutrition, probably because of the low frequency of meals given (one or two per day). No difference in breast-feeding patterns was found, despite the prevailing cultural belief that boys should be breast-fed longer than girls because boys need to become strong, while girls will become stubborn if fed for too long (Sonnois 1990; KWVC 1996). Research by the Khmer Women's Voice Centre (1996) found that parents did not distinguish between baby boys and girls in supplementary feeding, but fed according to the appetite of the child.

The high incidence of child malnutrition, however, causes stunting, which can have particularly severe consequences for women because of their childbearing role. Stunting causes narrow hips, which can lead to obstruction in childbirth. The lack of adequate quality care means that early child malnutrition can actually lead to death for women in the context of poor maternal health care (MOP 1997c).

It is difficult to analyse gender differentials in intra-household consumption because data is mainly collected by household and not by individuals. It has been inferred from household expenditure that girls under 15 receive more rice and cereals than boys, but that the pattern is reversed above the age of 15 (MOP 1998a). It is unclear why this reversal should occur. Adult males receive more discretionary food items, such as meat and eggs, than adult females, which could be related either to status in the household or to beliefs about the sexual division of labour centred around the heaviness of work.

Life expectancy in Cambodia was estimated from the results of the demographic survey of 1996 as being 50.3 years for a man and 58.6 years for a woman. Although the estimates cannot be considered reliable, because reporting was only about 62 percent complete (Huguet 1997), the gender gap is not unrealistic, since it is between six and 10 years in other Asian countries (MOP 1998a).

Data from the 1997 SESC indicate no gender differentials in rates of morbidity. Morbidity rates were highest among the old and the young. However, estimating rates of morbidity is problematic when utilisation of health services is poor, records are not available and illness is based on self-reported data. Questions were only asked about major illnesses.

Poor hygiene practices are likely to cause gynaecological problems for women. Sonnois (1990) cites such problems as being frequent.

An oft-cited study by the WHO from a mission in 1983 found that women were more susceptible to death from malaria, because they were less likely to have access to health care and had poorer general health and nutritional status (quoted in UNICEF 1995a). However, there is as yet no evidence of gender differentials in access to health care in recent research. Women may well have poorer health because of problems associated with pregnancy and childbearing which affect their general health.

There are gender differentials in the types of diseases to which men and women are susceptible, depending on the location and division of labour. For example, men are more likely to suffer from malaria in areas where they work in the forest or where they venture far into the forest to collect firewood.

1.2. Health-Seeking Behaviour

The services of a medical doctor were only available in 4 percent of rural villages in the sample of the 1997 SESC, while 43 percent of villages in Phnom Penh had these services (MOP 1997b).

Few gender differentials in rates of morbidity or utilisation of health services were indicated in the 1997 SESC. A slightly lower percentage of females than males sought treatment, and females also waited longer before seeking treatment.

Expenditure on health is high, and for poorer households with little spare cash or savings, illness can be catastrophic. The 1997 SESC reports that expenditure on health accounted for 5 percent of rural household expenditure, and about 10 percent if associated costs (such as transport) were included. Another recent survey found health expenditure to be as high as 20 percent of total household expenditure (MOH 1998a). Disaggregated statistics showed no significant gender differentials for treatment of “major illnesses” in terms of cost per visit. Forty-five percent of health costs were funded by loans from moneylenders (MOH 1998a).

The first choice of health provider for both urban and rural men and women is the pharmacist, followed by private doctors and clinics (MOP 1998a). This reflects the prevailing lack of confidence in the public health care system. The 1996 SESC found that 35 percent of treatment is provided by a parent or relative, with this figure rising to 71 percent in remote provinces. Only 16 percent of treatment was provided by health centre staff. The home is perceived as the safest place, and seeking treatment outside is a last resort (Put 1992). Since the burden of health care in the family falls largely to women, the failure of the public health care system to meet needs gives women additional household work.

Put (1992) highlights some of the methodological difficulties in assessing health-seeking behaviour. Most of the private practitioners are also public health staff, and it is therefore difficult to distinguish between providers. The traditional healers (*kru khmer*) are so widely used for such a variety of problems that their use is taken for granted and is underreported. Analysis of the severity of an illness is problematic, because a fever or cough could be symptomatic of many minor or major illnesses.

No information is available on the type of provider used for the type of illness by gender, or for the types of illnesses for which treatment is not sought, and the reasons for this. No information is available on perceptions of “minor” and “major” illnesses.

As the economy develops and new employment opportunities are created, gender differentials in susceptibility to illness and disease may occur which specifically relate to the working environment. The Labour Law states that a health centre must be provided in establishments employing more than 50 workers.

In many establishments this is not yet being enforced—garment factories are a notable example. The majority of workers are young single female migrants, who are particularly vulnerable in a new, unfamiliar urban environment. CARE is currently working with local NGOs to identify the needs of these workers and to establish health centres for them.

One significant gender constraint which is already apparent is the lack of trained female health professionals, especially in rural areas. This relates to gender issues in education (see Chapter One). Less than one-third of health professionals, but two-thirds of nurses and midwives, are female (MOP 1997b). Half of all these women are in Phnom Penh. Women are shy about their bodies, and prefer to see female medical staff, in particular for gynaecological

problems (Sonnois 1990; Ryan & Gorbach 1997). Lack of female staff can delay or prevent women from seeking treatment.

Although the lack of gender differentials may be an accurate reflection of reality, it must also be mentioned that many studies on health-seeking behaviour do not systematically disaggregate data by gender. Research which focuses on the household as the unit of analysis may miss gender-based household inequalities.

A typical approach in research seems to view the health service itself as gender-neutral, and to focus on women only in terms of their reproductive role (for example, MOH 1998b). This ignores the impact of gender on perceptions of illness, the ability to access health care, and control over health-related decisions and expenditure.

1.3. Gender Issues in Health Education

Gender raises questions about approaches to health education. Women are often targeted for health education because their gender roles make them the main providers of health care in the family. The oft-cited “educate a woman, educate the whole family” dictum depicts women in their traditional role. The dilemma, from the point of view of gender analysis, is whether to meet the practical needs of the family, improving health through the most effective route (*i.e.* targeting the mother), but in so doing reinforcing stereotypical views of a woman’s role, and perhaps even encouraging male abdication of responsibility. Participation in activities such as health education involves additional time for women, and ignores the context of broader social relations.

A more strategic approach attempts to involve men, encouraging them to take responsibility for child-rearing and thus reducing some of women’s domestic workload. The issue of men’s involvement in child-care and domestic work strikes at the core of gender issues. Changes at the household level are fundamental to the quality of women’s participation in activities outside the household.

2. Reproductive Health

Reproductive health-related problems have a specific impact on women’s general health. Cambodian women bear many children close together. The total fertility rate is 5.2 (MOP 1996). Combined with a heavy workload, especially for the poor, this weakens their general health and is a risk to the mortality and morbidity of the mothers and children.

2.1. Maternal Health

The maternal mortality rate provides an indication of the quality of life for women, in a context where marriage is near universal and the total marital fertility rate is 6.7 (MOH 1995). The maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the world, estimated to be between 473 and 650–900 per 100,000 live births (UNFPA 1997; UNICEF 1995b). The average for the region is 160 per 100,000 live births (Larsson 1996). The high figure is due to poor access to and utilisation of maternal health facilities. The majority of women (81 percent) give birth at home, and the main care provider in attendance is the traditional birth attendant (69 percent) (MOP 1997b). According to the 1996 SESC, only 30 percent of births were attended by a midwife, nurse or doctor, though attendance by trained midwives is increasing (MOH 1998a; MOH 1995). Reasons cited for not using public health facilities were distance, inability of the family to participate, cost, lack of drugs and Khmer tradition (MOH 1998a).

The main causes of maternal mortality are believed to be abortion, eclampsia and haemorrhage. Anaemia, which is prevalent among Cambodian women of all ages, increases the risk of fatal haemorrhage in childbirth.

Maternal health is an important social indicator. Poor maternal health in turn affects the health of children—babies are born prematurely and underweight, and mothers may be unable to breast-feed. Cultural beliefs lead in some cases to a reduction in food intake for pregnant women.

2.2. Birth Spacing and Contraception

Birth spacing services have only been provided since 1991. Following the heavy population loss suffered during the Khmer Rouge regime, the government followed a pro-natalist policy. In recognition of the adverse effects of uncontrolled fertility on women and children's health, the provision of birth spacing services was introduced in 1991 (MOH 1998b).

Access to birth spacing services is still limited, and the 1995 Knowledge-Attitude-Practice (KAP) survey reported a large unmet need for contraception—78 percent couples were interested (MOH 1995). A recent survey found that 71 percent of respondents who had never used contraception wished to do so. The first phase of the National Birth Spacing Programme which promoted reversible methods of contraception (the pill, IUD, condoms) developed into the National Reproductive Health/Birth Spacing and Sexual Health Project in 1997, which included safe motherhood, the prevention of unsafe abortion, and the prevention and management of STDs and HIV/AIDS. In recognition of the need for couples to limit family size, sterilisation for men and women was trailed in 1997 (MOH 1998b).

Traditional beliefs prevail in the selection of contraceptive methods. Only 7.0 percent of married couples were using a modern method. Of those, the preference is for the injection and then the pill, because these are compatible with traditional conceptions about the relation of body heat to conception. The IUD and the condom are not trusted because they are not compatible with these beliefs (Sadana & Snow 1994), though the IUD is the favoured method in Phnom Penh. Only 0.3 percent of couples nationwide were using condoms. Knowledge of contraceptive methods is low, and most people do not know of a supply source.

Moreover, the condom has been marketed as a *sraom anamay* (hygiene bag) in connection with HIV/AIDS prevention and “dirty” sex with prostitutes, and has consequently lost popularity as other forms of contraception have been introduced.

There is evidence to suggest that abortion is commonly used as a method of contraception, using unsafe traditional methods which risk women's lives (White 1995; MOH 1998b). Abortion was legalised in 1997 in an attempt to encourage women to seek safer methods.

2.3. HIV/AIDS and STDs

The incidence of HIV/AIDS has increased rapidly in recent years. Almost half of the cases are in people aged under 29, and the majority of those infected under 20 are female (MOH 1998b). According to the HIV Sentinel Surveillance survey released in September 1998, 42.6 percent of commercial sex workers are HIV-positive, as are 6.2 percent of police officers (UNFPA 1998). Most disturbing is the finding that 2.4 percent of married women selected at random from the population are also HIV-positive. Current estimates are that 140,000 people in Cambodia are now HIV-positive.

A survey of knowledge about HIV/AIDS among young people showed the general level of awareness to be quite high, though misconceptions about the transmission of HIV/AIDS persist, particularly among those who are illiterate (Ly *et al.* 1996). Knowledge of methods of prevention tends to be higher in Phnom Penh than in rural areas (Brown 1997). Research has also found that the *kru khmer*, traditional healers who are all men, reinforce misconceptions about HIV/AIDS transmission. A 1997 study found that *kru khmer* believe it is unlikely that a healthy man could contract an STD, and that these are transmitted by prostitutes with poor

hygiene (Eisenbruch 1997). Given the popularity of *kru khmer* in rural areas, this could be a significant obstacle to the prevention of HIV/AIDS and STDs.

Knowledge about STDs, however, is low. The Ly (1996) survey found that a lower percentage of young people knew that condom use also prevents transmission of STDs. This reflects the lack of coordination between HIV/AIDS and STD prevention campaigns. Only one-third of those surveyed could name an STD. One study revealed that women were currently receiving ineffective treatment for STDs, which is symptomatic of the inadequacy of pharmacies (the preferred source of treatment) to treat symptoms accurately (Ryan & Gorbach 1997).

Social attitudes towards sex and STDs mean that open discussion is difficult. Parents are reluctant for STDs to be discussed at school for fear that this would lead to an increase in sexual activity (Tarr 1996).

2.4. *Lack of Knowledge about Sex, the Body and Conception*

Part of the social construction of the female gender identity is innocence and ignorance about sex (Ledgerwood 1990). This results in a lack of awareness about the body, embarrassment, and difficulty in identifying and addressing problems. Several studies have revealed women's lack of knowledge of the body, how contraception functions and how conception occurs (MOH 1995; Chap, Rattana & Escoffier 1996; White 1995). Although most women know that sex can lead to conception, three-quarters of women respondents in the Ministry of Health KAP survey (1995) did not know when their most fertile period was. The KAP survey is currently being repeated.

In schools, reproduction has been taught as part of the biology curriculum, but has often been restricted to plants and animals, and has not touched on human reproduction (Knibbs & Vann 1997; Tarr 1996). Sex education is being developed and integrated with population education across several subjects for grades 7 to 12. Discussion of sex has been problematic for both parents and teachers, and there has been reluctance to give girls sex education out of fear that this will encourage them to have sex (Tarr 1996). In-service teacher orientation will be provided once textbooks and teacher manuals have been produced (Knibbs & Vann 1997).

Because girls do not have access to information about sex, their ability to protect themselves against pregnancy and STDs is inhibited. Abstinence and the rhythm method were claimed to be the most common methods of birth control, but their effectiveness is clearly limited by beliefs that conception occurs at menstruation, leading to abstinence before and after this time (MOH 1995; Chap, Rattana & Escoffier 1996). This is also supported by beliefs that sex during menstruation can be harmful to both partners.

The lack of knowledge about sex prevents the growing number of sexually active adolescents from making informed decisions about relationships.

2.5. *Sexuality*

Reproductive health problems are closely related to the social construction of sexuality and gender identity. "There is a direct relationship between sexual behaviour, women's powerlessness in sexual relationships and problems related to sexual and reproductive health" (Ravindran 1993).

The socialisation of girls and boys differs from a very early age. Young girls are covered up before boys, and supervised more than boys (Ebihara 1974). From puberty, parents prefer to keep girls close to home until they are married.

The virtue of young females is closely linked to pre-marital sexual behaviour and fidelity in marriage. "The basis for a woman's honour lies in the control of her sexuality" (Ledger-

wood 1990). A girl should be “pure,” ignorant about sex and her body. A woman’s sexuality is tightly controlled, first by her parents and then by her husband.

For men, however, sex is perceived as a need (Phan & Patterson 1994), so much so that visiting prostitutes is socially acceptable. Peer pressure is a significant influence in risky behaviour, especially for boys who socialise in groups (Ly *et al.* 1996; Tarr 1996).

2.6. Power Relations

Sexual relations are also an area where power relations are played out like any other form of social relations. Women are not equal to men in Cambodia, and do not enter sexual relations on an equal level with men. This affects women’s abilities to negotiate sexual relations. It is unclear to what extent wives are able to negotiate sexual relations with their husband, but there are suggestions that it is very little. One survey of adolescents in rural and urban areas found that it was difficult for women to refuse sex (Ly *et al.* 1996). In Zimmermann’s study (1994), 32 out of 37 victims of domestic violence believed that their husband had the right to have sexual intercourse with them whenever he wanted.

“There appears to be no question of women being equal partners in society, nor acceptance of a wife as a co-equal in the family home. The statements of men [...] show that men feel they are invincible and that they have rights and freedoms greater than women in Cambodia today” (Phan & Patterson 1994).

The powerlessness of commercial sex workers (CSWs) to have their clients use condoms has been documented. CSWs tend not to use condoms with their “boyfriends,” who are regular customers (Dunn 1995). A CWDA survey of CSWs found a large gap between the desire to use condoms and actual usage. CSWs living in brothels did not seem to be empowered to refuse sex with clients who would not wear a condom (CWDA 1995; Klaasen 1995). Sex workers provide a service, and clients are not required to negotiate the type of sex they want (Tarr 1996). CSWs in brothels are also subject to the authority of the brothel owners.

Visiting brothels seems to be part of male group socialisation, encouraged by advertising for alcohol, which links drinking with potency. Drunkenness often leads to reluctance or inability to use a condom (Tarr 1996; Klaasen 1995).

With respect to control over fertility, it has been suggested that one reason for the preference for injectable contraception in rural areas is to enable a woman to hide the fact that she is using contraception from her husband. She is thus able to control her fertility without negotiating or causing conflict with her husband. Likewise, women in urban areas prefer the IUD because they can also keep this secret (Klaasen 1995).

It is unclear how much influence wives have over their husband’s sexual behaviour. In general, it is accepted that men visit prostitutes because they need sex and there are times when sex with their wife is not possible, such as during menstruation or pregnancy. However, women condone this also from a position of vulnerability. They prefer their husband to go to a prostitute than to acquire a mistress or a second wife. Some sources say that wives actually pay for their husband’s visits, which is not altogether unrealistic, since women are in control of the household money.

The growing popularity of karaoke videos and soap operas has introduced a culture of love and romance which is at odds with traditions of arranged marriages. Despite the romantic ideals behind the relationship, young people still respect the traditions of arranged marriages (Tarr 1996). These relationships are often sexual, and the word used for love (*sneha*) is strongly associated with sex. Unlike the relations between a client and a CSW, these relationships require negotiation between boys and girls, and in this girls are at a disadvantage. They may not be able to refuse sex or ensure protected sex (Ly *et al.* 1996).

For some adolescent men, there is more satisfaction and prestige attached to the seduction of a “real” girl (*i.e.* not a CSW). For girls, there is a lot more at stake. Evidence suggests that unwanted pregnancies can have severe consequences for girls, leading to girls losing their families and becoming CSWs (Knibbs & Vann 1997). Girls mostly see sex within the context of marriage or with a prospective husband (Tarr 1996; Ly *et al.* 1996). Men do not necessarily see these girls as prospective marriage partners, who should be virgins and approved of by parents. Men can walk away from sexual relationships with their reputations unspoiled, while women cannot. These relationships can therefore be disempowering for women (Tarr 1996).

It has also been suggested that, with respect to sexual relations, the male gender identity is less rigid. Same-sex activity is tolerated for men, does not affect the male gender identity, and does not exclude the possibility of sex with women (Tarr 1996). This area is not well documented.

2.7. Men's Involvement

Little attention has been paid so far to men's involvement in the choice and use of contraception, and to the nature of husband-wife communication on these matters, short of statements on “the importance of sharing responsibility for birth spacing and [maternal/child health]...responsible parenthood...male responsible sexual behaviour” (UNFPA 1998).

KAP surveys worldwide only interview women, and thus rely on women's perception of men's involvement. The 1995 KAP survey reported that almost half of the women surveyed who knew a contraceptive method had talked to their husbands once or twice in the past year about contraception. However a large proportion (40 percent) had never talked about contraception with their husband. The translation of the desire to use contraception reported in the KAP survey into action depends on gender and power relations in the household, as well as on access to services.

The condom has not been successfully marketed as a method of contraception. Its association with sex with prostitutes has resulted in it being considered a sign of distrust between married couples. All other modern methods rely on the woman taking responsibility for contraception, and with that also all the risks. Forty-five percent of women in the KAP survey who had discontinued contraceptive use had done so because of perceived side-effects and complications.

Furthermore, emphasising female responsibility in birth control reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and the gender division of labour, associating women with child-bearing and child-rearing, which restricts them from participating in activities outside the home. If power imbalances were corrected, men's involvement in fertility control would not conflict with women's empowerment, because decisions would be taken based on mutual trust.

The condom is a method of contraception which is free of side-effects and has the additional benefit of protecting women and men from STDs. It also protects women from cervical cancer. The failure of birth spacing programmes to promote the condom as a method of birth control, and the poor marketing of the condom for HIV/AIDS prevention, has placed married women at risk. The promotion of IUD and other clinical methods must be questioned in the context of evidence of high rates of HIV/AIDS and STD transmission.

Sterilisation has recently been introduced for women and men. It is likely that if the focus continues to be on women taking responsibility for contraception, it will be women who are sterilised. Little is known about male attitudes to vasectomies. It has been suggested that men would be reluctant to have vasectomies because they would wish to keep their options open for having another wife and children. Sterilisation for women is a much more serious operation, and with poor health services a riskier one.

The involvement of men needs to be tackled in such a way that it does not detract from addressing the unequal power relations. Men's involvement should not be with the aim of "allowing" women to practise birth control, but to encourage their participation in and responsibility for disease prevention, fertility regulation and child-rearing (Sen, Germain & Chen 1994).

3. Domestic Violence

It has been suggested that Cambodian society has no cultural tradition for resolving conflict other than by force (Oveson, Trinkell & Ojendal 1996). Problems are not resolved by discussion or attempts to assess the opposing view, but through an exhibition of power (Bit 1991). Violence is preferable to losing face (Oveson, Trinkell & Ojendal 1996). Social order during the Khmer Rouge regime was based on punishment and violence. Failure to obey rules was punished by violence and death.

In the aftermath of the Khmer Rouge period, many male survivors lacked education, skills and employment opportunities, and this rendered them unable to fulfil their obligations as breadwinner for the family. Frustration and powerlessness may also be manifested in domestic violence (Zimmermann 1997).

The actual incidence of domestic violence is difficult to quantify, because many cases go unreported. Figures in a survey can only be considered a minimum, with the actual incidence higher. A recent survey covering 59 percent of Cambodian households found that one in six women (16 percent) had been physically abused by their husbands (Zimmermann 1998). Half of these sustained injuries, half of which were to the head.

A qualitative investigation into domestic violence found cases of spousal rape, abuse during pregnancy, torture and death as a result of beatings. Other non-violent forms of abuse included threats and insults and restrictions on mobility (Zimmermann 1997).

The incidence of domestic violence was noticeably less among women educated to lower or upper secondary school level. There was no noticeable reduction in abuse for those with only primary education. It is not clear whether education brings a higher status, because of increased earnings, or whether education increases a woman's ability to resist domination in the household. Information was not available about the level of education of the husband, and whether this had any bearing on the perpetration of violence. The incidence of domestic violence was also less frequent among couples residing with the wife's parents.

Domestic violence creates high costs for families, communities and the state, and is a significant impediment to development. Injured women are unable to participate fully and equally in social, economic and political activities. Women's labour is crucial to the survival of Cambodian families, and family income suffers when the woman is incapacitated. There is a knock-on effect on the family, because an injured mother may be unable to work or to look after her children. Children's education may suffer because there is less money to spend on schooling, or because they must take on their mother's work burden. Victims of domestic violence are also more likely to abuse their children, and are more likely to have witnessed violence between their parents (Zimmermann 1998).

Prevalent social attitudes combine with practical constraints to keep victims of domestic violence with their husbands. Men are considered to be the heads of the household, and therefore have the right to control the other members. Women themselves are socialised to obey their husband and to tolerate his anger. Domestic violence is largely accepted as the norm. A quarter of women who were hit by their husbands did not consider themselves to have been physically abused. Domestic violence is frequently explained as chastisement for a wife's inability to adequately fulfil her duties as a wife, and as such is likely to be condoned by the community. Almost half of the acts of abuse occurred when husbands were drunk. Women

victims are likely to receive little support from the community, and are more likely to be condemned for bringing a “private” matter into the public eye, thereby disgracing the family. A large proportion of women do not seek any kind of help for domestic violence (Zimmermann 1994).

Social attitudes condoning male domination in the household spill over into the police and judicial systems. Police are reluctant to intervene in so-called “private matters” except in “serious” cases, which appears to mean death or near-death (Zimmermann 1997). Health officials are also reluctant to report hospitalised cases of domestic violence. Domestic violence is considered a marital problem and not a crime.

Women victims in the Zimmermann study cited social and practical reasons for remaining with an abusive spouse. The main reasons were to protect their children from the shame of not having a father, and of having no other housing option (Zimmermann 1997). Although financial dependence is often thought to be a reason for staying with a husband, many of the women in the Zimmermann study were the sole or primary supporters of the family. However, most rural households depend on the labour of all household members for their livelihood, and to leave this relative security is a major step.

Divorce is socially and legally discouraged, and any intervention to resolve a marital dispute, whether by a legal body, village chief or relative, emphasises first “reconciliation,” a process which is inherently weighted against women and which can put battered women at serious risk (Zimmermann 1998). The process of reconciliation is confused with the outcome. The emphasis is more on keeping the couple together than actually solving the problem. There is no effective means of ensuring women’s safety from a violent husband, such as restraining orders. Violent husbands are rarely arrested.

The divorce process can be lengthy, and is complicated by women’s lack of knowledge of legal procedures and the lack of enforcement by court officials. Although legally women can file for divorce directly with the court, many women are unaware of this and believe that the correct procedure is to go through local authorities first, which increases the time taken to complete the process. The failure of a husband to appear in court can also prevent a woman from obtaining a divorce. Although a husband’s presence is not necessary, in practice court officials are reluctant to proceed without him, and such cases are often postponed.

The social and economic risks for a woman on her own, or with children to support, are great. Cambodian society does not readily accept unmarried, divorced or separated women, and this increases the social obstacles facing victims of domestic violence. Leaving a husband is a major step, and the perceived disadvantages may outweigh the benefits. Although the majority of women in the Zimmermann (1994) study believed it was better to be divorced than to remain with a violent husband, one of these, despite being provided with funds to live with her mother, chose to return to her brutal husband, and later committed suicide.

Despite the history of violence and psycho-social stress suffered by many of the population, which distinguishes the Cambodian situation, the fact remains that domestic violence, predominantly against women, prevails in most societies and throughout all socio-economic strata, and is ultimately an expression of unequal power relations between men and women.

NGOs providing support to victims of domestic violence tend to offer primarily practical support measures, such as shelter, skills training, financial and legal aid. There are additionally some efforts to tackle the underlying social attitudes, for example, the recent KWVC television campaigns to raise awareness that domestic violence is wrong. The Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV) used traditional Cambodian theatre (*ayai*) as a medium to raise awareness about domestic violence, especially in rural areas with little access to other media (PADV 1998). The performance aimed to show that domestic violence is wrong, highlighting the effects on women, children, families and society. Community intervention in domestic violence cases was encouraged, and information was provided about the law and local serv-

ices available. About 340,000 men, women and children watched the performances across the country, but their impact on attitudes and behaviour has not been assessed.

Attempts to eradicate domestic violence necessitate changes in social attitudes towards gender, and this requires targeting both women and men. “Until a transformation of ‘everyday’ gender relations occurs, men’s violence cannot be ended at its source, because it is rooted in unequal relations of power between men and women” (Sweetman 1998).

One dilemma in designing interventions seeking to change attitudes towards domestic violence is that where these are perceived as threaten male power this may inadvertently increase the risk of violent behaviour. In one instance, an awareness-raising session by a Cambodian NGO attended by both wives and husbands on domestic violence was immediately followed by a brutal beating, seemingly a demonstration of male authority.

4. Mental Health

There is little documentation on the mental health status of the Cambodian people. Some research studies were conducted in the 1980s among Cambodian refugees in the border camps and overseas, but little was documented on the lives of the Cambodian people inside Cambodia. Although this research provides useful insights into the experience of trauma and coping strategies, life in a refugee camp and life as a refugee overseas brings with it additional, context-specific stresses from those faced by the Cambodians in Cambodia who were attempting to pick up their lives again in the aftermath of the events of 1975–79. Little psycho-social support has been provided, and the issue of mental health has received surprisingly little attention in mainstream development activities.

It can be assumed that mental stress exists on a wide scale among Cambodian adults in Cambodia. The Cambodian people have suffered a variety of extreme conditions since the 1970s to which mental stress is a natural response, including not only the radical and destructive Khmer Rouge regime, the ensuing famine, and the conflict from the early 1970s, which has continued to the present in some regions, but also the rapid socio-economic change which has taken place since the late 1980s.

In his study of refugee referrals for counselling in the United States, Mollica (undated) indicated four kinds of events leading to trauma: deprivation; incarceration; torture, rape or sexual abuse; and witnessing death or killing. The average Cambodian patient had witnessed nine severe traumatic events. This provides an indication of the severity of trauma experienced by the average adult Cambodian.

Symptoms of mental stress documented among refugee groups, such as depression, insomnia, nightmares, headaches, dizziness and the inability to carry out daily activities, are commonly reported by adults in present-day Cambodia. There is, however, little understanding of how trauma has affected the people, and what the implications are for development, particularly as it relates to the will and ability to work, to plan for the future, and to solve problems. Additionally, it is little understood how trauma is experienced differently by Cambodian men and women.

The perception of traumatic events and coping strategies is additionally conditioned by gender, because of inability to fulfil their traditional gender roles. During the Khmer Rouge period, all traditional social roles were turned upside down. Children were the authority over their parents, families were separated. Traditional systems of support and comfort—religion, the monks and the wat, family and kinship bonds—were all systematically destroyed. The lack of traditional networks of extended families, and desperate living conditions threatening survival, combine to create attitudes of distrust and selfishness in communities today (Baron 1996). Economic hardship prevents people from fulfilling their gender roles and obligations to their family, which is in turn a source of distress.

Responses to emotional distress are gendered, because women are commonly conditioned to repress their emotions and to suffer in silence in societies where politics, religion and societal customs are controlled by men, and where the value of a woman is governed by her purity (Emerson 1997).

Among traumatised people, basic needs take precedence over psycho-social issues. Once basic needs for food and shelter are met, psycho-social issues come to the fore. As income increases, people in despair turn to vices such as alcohol, drugs and gambling as a means of coping with mental stress (Baron 1996). Other manifestations of psycho-social distress are spousal and child abuse (Bit 1991; Zimmermann 1998).

At the level of the household, the demographic imbalance of the 1980s may have increased women's vulnerability and exacerbated the existing power imbalance in favour of men. Cambodian society places great emphasis on marriage, particularly for women, and it seems that many women were forced, through social and economic necessity, to become second wives. The experience of being a second wife has not been researched, but today women still remain socially and economically dependent on their husbands, particularly after they have children. Many constantly fear that their husbands will abandon them or take a second wife (even though this practice is illegal) (Emerson 1997; Sonnois 1990).

Attitudes and behaviour in reaction to trauma and stress are a danger for society, because they are passed on to children who have not themselves experienced the trauma (Emerson 1997). Although Cambodian society has moved on, the Cambodian people have not yet dealt with the traumatic events they have experienced.

5. Suggestions for Further Research

- Health-seeking behaviour and preferences by gender, especially in context of change/improvement in service provision: treatment or health care providers sought for depending on the type of illness; types of illness for which treatment is not sought; decision-making on health care; influences on health-seeking behaviour; health-seeking behaviour for reproductive health.
- Husband-wife communication and decision-making about sexual relations, family planning, visits to prostitutes; women's power to negotiate.
- Intra-household allocation of food and discretionary items by age and gender.
- Attitudes towards contraceptive methods in rural areas.
- Men's knowledge of and attitudes towards contraception.
- Causes of maternal mortality and morbidity.
- Attitudes/practices of reproductive and sexual health providers in urban and rural areas.

Chapter Three

Gender Issues in Economy and Labour

The transition to a market economy from a centrally planned economy only began in 1989, and until the 1993 election there was little of the aid and foreign investment necessary for economic development.

Political instability has meant that the country continues to be heavily militarised, with government spending weighted towards defence—54 percent of government expenditure in 1997. Spending on rural development and agriculture, the sectors which involve the vast majority of the population, was little more than 2 percent in the same year (Chan *et al.* 1999).

The gradual economic growth which the country has seen since 1993 slowed in the wake of factional fighting in July 1997, the subsequent decline of the tourist industry, and the regional economic crisis. This has negatively affected real wages and employment. In the industrial and service sectors, which have demonstrated considerable growth since 1994, the rate of growth declined in 1997 (Chan *et al.* 1999). There has been little investment in the agricultural sector to date (Kato *et al.* 1998).

The economy is heavily dependent on foreign financing, which formed 38 percent of the 1997 budget (Chan *et al.* 1999). The figure is even higher if donor expenditure on projects is consolidated with the national budget.

Little research has been conducted on the gendered impact of economic reforms. The common suggestion that female-headed households were disadvantaged in land allocation after decollectivisation appears to be anecdotal. Certainly the *krom samaki* (work group) system of the 1980s offered a source of support to vulnerable groups, including widows, because labour, draught animals and tools were pooled. After this system was abandoned, the most vulnerable groups were dependent on exchange relations in the community, lacking the wealth to hire labour and equipment.

In the 1980s, the demographic imbalance was marked, and women replaced men in many professions, particularly state-owned enterprises and the public sector. When state-owned industries were privatised, many women lost their jobs (SSWA 1994).

1. Current Labour Force Profile

1.1. Labour Force Participation

Data from the 1997 SESC show the proportion of the male and female population (over 10 years old) who are in the labour force to be almost equal: 65.0 percent of women and 65.8 percent of men. However, women outnumber men in the labour force, constituting 53 percent (MOP 1997b).

The proportion of girls aged 10 to 19 who are in the labour force is greater than that of boys, as would be expected given girls' lower rate of participation in formal education. Of the 15–19 age group, 63.9 percent of girls, compared with 43.8 percent of boys, are in the labour force (MOP 1997b). From the age of 20, the pattern is reversed, and the proportion of males is higher than females for each age range.

Of those in the labour force between the ages 10 and 24, almost all are employed (98 percent for both men and women) (MOP 1997b). Unemployment is highest in Phnom Penh, with rates at 3.0 percent for men and 3.6 percent for women. The gender gap in labour force participation is higher in urban areas than in rural areas, reflecting the high involvement of women in agricultural activities. Whereas unemployment rates were insignificant for people aged over 25, there is a growing trend of youth unemployment. In Phnom Penh, there is 20-percent unemployment among the 15–19 age group, with the same rates for men and women. For the 25–29 age group, however, unemployment is only 3.3 percent (MOP 1997b).

1.2. Education

The lower participation rates of females in formal schooling have a knock-on effect in the labour market. Women enter the labour market with fewer qualifications and less training than men. The labour force as a whole is largely uneducated and unskilled—24.4 percent of the total labour force, and 31.6 percent of the female labour force, has not attended school. Of the male labour force, 10.0 percent has a lower secondary and 1.1 percent a secondary school certificate. For the female labour force, only 5.2 percent have completed lower secondary school, and 0.4 percent upper secondary school. Only 0.2 percent of the labour force hold degrees, and only 13 percent of those that do are female (MOP 1997b).

1.3. Occupation

Most Cambodians (75.4 percent) work in the agricultural sector, and 55.5 percent of the agricultural workforce is female (MOP 1997b).

A large proportion of working women are classified as unpaid family workers; 42 percent compared with only 17 percent of men. Fifty-five percent of men, compared with 36 percent of women, are classed as own-account or self-employed workers (MOP 1997b).

The wage labour market remains very small in Cambodia's under-developed economy. However, there is already a large gender gap—15 percent of the male labour force are paid employees, but only 5.4 percent of the female labour force are (MOP 1997b). Most waged employment takes place in Phnom Penh, where 47 percent of employed men and 24 percent of employed women are paid employees. In rural areas, there are limited opportunities for paid employment, and only 10 percent of men and 4 percent of women are paid employees. Clearly, where wage labour opportunities are available they are mainly taken up by men, though many casual hired labourers are women (Aafjes & Athreya 1996). Gender issues must be considered within the context of a dire shortage of employment opportunities and a large supply of unskilled labour. Combined with the lack of enforcement of the Labour Law, workers are particularly vulnerable to low wages and poor working conditions.

Cambodian women are under-represented in professions which carry status, such as the civil service, professional positions and decision-making or management positions. Less than one-third of professionals are female, while only 6 percent of legislators, senior government officials and managers, and about 20 percent of civil service positions, are held by women (MOP 1998a). This relates largely to women's lack of the educational qualifications, which would enable them to better compete with men in the labour market for these positions.

In 1994, eight out of 110 judges were women, but no prosecutors were. In the Phnom Penh Municipal Court, the 17 women out of 61-strong staff were all clerks. Two percent of

the police force are women (Harris 1994; Ledgerwood 1996a). Only one-third of health and education professionals are female, and less than one-third of legal professionals. Forty-three percent of business professionals are women, reflecting their higher rate of involvement in retail and trade.

Where women dominate pockets of the labour market, it is in insecure positions requiring few formal qualifications, such as factory work and market retailing. In the retail sector, 67 percent of shop holders and 77 percent of stall and market vendors are female. The textile and garment industries, in which 72,000 women (3 percent of the female labour force) work are dominated by women, who constitute 76 percent of textile and 89 percent of garment factory workers.

1.4. Wages

Women in Cambodia earn less than men. Data from the 1996 SESC show the average monthly earnings for those with one job to be considerably less for women than men (62,000 riels compared with an average of 83,000 riels). The proportion of females in each earning group declines as the amount earned rises. Women form 40 percent of the lowest earning category, and only 13 percent of the highest. In the *Cambodia Human Development Report 1998*, analysis of the 1997 SESC data, controlling for age and education in six occupations, found that women with the same age and educational backgrounds earned less than men in the same occupations. On average, men earn 50 percent more than women (MOP 1998a). The lower earnings of women reflect discrimination in access to education and in pay.

1.5. The Labour Law

The Labour Law, which was passed in 1997, stipulates standard working hours and conditions, and endorses the formation of unions and the right to strike. The Labour Law contains provisions for equality of the sexes in employment, but there are several loopholes, vague terminology and immense power left in the hands of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to stipulate working conditions and to arbitrate in disputes (Aafjes & Athreya 1996). "All kinds of sex abuse" are prohibited (RGC 1997a), but these are not specified, nor are the mechanisms by which these should be monitored and dealt with.

The law excludes civil servants and domestic workers, of whom the latter are mostly female. The earlier retirement age for women may still mean that women are disproportionately affected in planned public service retrenchment programmes.

All enterprises are required to provide primary health care to workers, and establishments employing more than 50 workers are obliged to provide an infirmary on the premises (Article 242 of the Labour Law, RGC 1997a).

Provisions are made for maternity leave, breast-feeding of babies and the provision of child-care. However, only half-pay is awarded for maternity leave, which directly contradicts the Cambodian Constitution. There are provisions for women to have breaks to breast-feed their babies, but a child-care centre and nursing room need only be installed in or nearby an establishment employing 100 people. If facilities are not provided, the worker can charge the company for child-care fees.

However, without mechanisms to enforce existing provisions, the protection offered to workers by the Labour Law exists on paper only. Women enter the labour market with fewer qualifications, and therefore fewer employment opportunities, than men. They have less bargaining power, and there is no shortage of replacement labour. They are, therefore, more vulnerable to exploitation by employers than men.

The law contains several provisions which are implicitly biased against women. Article 95 states that the first workers to be laid off should be those with fewest professional qualifi-

cations. In practice this is likely to be women. There are no specific measures to protect women. Other articles contain explicitly gender-biased language, such as Article 200, which assumes all plantation workers to be male and awards benefits accordingly (Berlin 1998).

2. Gender and Urban Employment

2.1. *Manufacturing and Industry*

The expansion of the labour-intensive manufacturing industry is seen by the government as a solution to the problem of youth unemployment, which will intensify as the large proportion of the population under aged 14 enter the labour market (RGC 1996). The 1994 Investment Law offers what the government claims to be “the best business incentive package in South-east Asia” (CDC 1994). The incentives offered are liberal and particularly attractive to labour-intensive industry, and low labour costs are touted as an attraction in investment advertising literature (CDC 1994). The law provides weak provisions for skills training and promotion of local staff.

Cambodia has a comparative advantage over the more developed countries of the region because it has been granted most-favoured nation (MFN) and generalised system of preferences (GSP) status with the United States, which allows reduced import tariffs. As countries develop they lose their entitlement to GSP status, and thus there is incentive for companies to relocate to Cambodia.

Within the manufacturing sector as a whole, women form less than half of the work force, but several industries are staffed predominantly by women: garments, textiles and tobacco. The garment industry has expanded enormously since 1995, with over 36,000 workers, 89 percent of whom are female (MOP 1997c).

The employment of women in labour-intensive garment manufacturing is much debated in existing literature on gender and development (see Gorman 1997). The industry is relatively short-term, since it moves to wherever the cheapest labour can be found. It provides few benefits to a developing country because it does not link to a country’s productive base, usually importing textiles from abroad. Incentives as liberal as those granted by the Cambodian government result in the loss of a large amount of potential revenue. The main advantage is in providing employment for an unskilled labour force, and the usual preference is for women, who are perceived as being more easily controlled and better able to perform sewing-related tasks. Younger women are usually targeted before they have children. Workers tend to be hired on a short-term basis depending on the volume of work, which can fluctuate. Recent reports suggests the current regional economic crisis has resulted in the loss of many jobs in this sector in Cambodia, as costs have increased and labour costs in neighbouring countries such as Indonesia have decreased (Bou 1998).

In terms of the quality of employment provided, there is little training in transferable skills and few opportunities for promotion. Men dominate the higher ranking positions. Working and pay conditions vary considerably between factories, but in general rules are strict and workers are vulnerable to dismissal without reason or notice (Klaasen 1995; Gorman 1997; Aafjes & Athreya 1996). It is unclear to what extent the Labour Law provisions are enforced on issues such as health and child-care facilities, sick leave and health and safety regulations. Anecdotal information suggests these are not enforced, but inadequate research has been conducted to make generalisations. Mechanisms for monitoring conditions appear to be weak, and worker dissatisfaction with conditions over the last two years has led to the formation of unions (though this was arguably politically instigated). Trade unions have led strikes and demonstrations, which in several cases have been dispersed by violent intervention. It is clearly difficult for factory workers to claim their rights in the workplace.

In the absence of other employment opportunities, a job in a garment factory is perceived as a positive opportunity to generate cash income for a large number of young, single girls

who migrate from rural areas (Gorman 1997). Several NGOs that provide sewing training to women have agreements with factories to give preference to their trainees. There is no shortage of labour, and prospective employees will pay large sums of money to procure a position. In the stage of development of the country, provided that reasonable working conditions (by Cambodian standards) are ensured, this type of employment is a good opportunity for women in the short term. As new opportunities become available and the quality of education improves, the worth and benefit of this type of employment for women should be reassessed.

Women in the manufacturing sector are particularly vulnerable. If redundancies are to be made, the least skilled and those hired on temporary contracts are the first to go, and women are most likely to be filling these positions. A survey of working women reported that women dominated the casual labour force in breweries and the construction industry. As casual labourers, they were routinely discriminated against in terms of wages (Aafjes & Athreya 1996).

2.2. Retail and Trade

It is difficult to isolate “informal” from “formal” sector employment in Cambodia (Berlin 1998). Retail is conducted in shops, market stalls, mobile stalls and by the roadside. Women dominate this sector, which involves 9.5 percent of the female work force and 51.0 percent of the female workforce in Phnom Penh (MOP 1997c). In the most “formal” sector (*i.e.* shops) the proportion of women drops, perhaps indicating that, as retail becomes more modern and organised and thus bears more status, this profession will become more male.

Surveys of urban informal sector workers (defined as working in unregistered enterprises or those not recognised by law) in Phnom Penh have shown a significant number to be migrants from rural areas (Rao 1996; So 1998; CDRI 1998). Activities undertaken included vegetable, fruit and food selling, hairdressing and manicure, petrol and cigarette selling, and domestic service. These offer a convenient way for women to combine household and child-care responsibilities with income generation. “Flexibility of time” and “family involvement” were the main reasons cited in deciding type of occupation (Rao 1996). Many of these activities are an extension of women’s domestic role, and require few or no new skills. Business itself is an extension of women’s responsibility to manage the household finances. Many women are forced into these occupations out of necessity, because they are the sole income earners, while others are supplementing a husband’s low formal sector income.

The informal sector is not covered by labour legislation and women work long hours, which can cause physical and mental strain. Workers in the informal sector are subject to harassment from police and authorities, and must pay regular bribes (So 1998).

2.3. Prostitution and Trafficking

Research by human rights organisations has estimated the number of CSWs in Cambodia to be 17,000, with about 10,000 in Phnom Penh (Diakonia 1998). Economic liberalisation, relaxed control of the industry after the 1980s, and the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) all contributed to the growth of the industry. With market reforms, (male) spending power has increased, as has the popularity of leisure activities. Alcohol and brothel visits are increasingly associated with adolescent male group socialising (Tarr 1996). In addition, the growing inequality of income leads to an increase in supply to the profession.

The numbers of HIV-infected CSWs has increased and the average age of sex workers has decreased, reflecting in part the preference for virgins who are free of HIV. The incidence of kidnapping and trafficking of women and young girls seems to be increasing, though no statistics are available.

Many women are forced into prostitution out of economic necessity, and a significant proportion are sold or tricked into the profession (UNICEF 1995c). One research study on migration found that only half of CSWs interviewed had intended to become sex workers, the rest had originally migrated in search of other income-generating opportunities (Klaasen 1995). A 1995 survey of CSWs attending the Tuol Kork Dike Clinic found that CSWs mainly worked in the profession for economic reasons. Surveys have found 30 to 40 percent of sex workers to have been sold to the brothel (Dunn 1995; CWDA 1994). Almost all wanted to stop doing this work (Dunn 1995). About half the sex workers surveyed had had no education at all, and the rest had had an average of 2.4 years of schooling (Dunn 1995). The report concluded that without the creation of other sustainable forms of employment, poor and uneducated rural women would continue to be drawn into the profession.

As mentioned above, sex workers face many health risks, especially from HIV/AIDS and STDs. They are particularly vulnerable because, as women and as service providers, they lack the power to negotiate sexual relations with their clients. Brothel owners are also not always able or willing to intervene on their behalf.

In neighbouring Thailand, prostitution has become an important means for young women to support their families. It has become more socially acceptable for daughters to work temporarily in the industry, and sex tourism contributes a large amount to the national economy (Cook 1998; Derks 1998b). Cross-border trafficking and illegal migration from Cambodia to Thailand is widespread, though no statistics are available (Derks 1998b).¹ Often, poor girls are recruited in their villages with false promises of a job in a city. Vulnerable women and girls are targeted, such as those in poverty with few alternatives, and those with intra-familial or relationship problems (Derks 1998b). The law to suppress abduction and trafficking is poorly enforced, and the low salary of law enforcement agents inhibits commitment and inspires collusion with traffickers for economic gain.

Working conditions for CSWs vary depending on the location. For those in brothels, a percent of the takings is usually given to the brothel owner, sometimes in return for the provision of meals and security. Whether women migrate to Thailand voluntarily or through deception, conditions vary from bonded labour to good pay and treatment (Derks 1998b).

2.4. Service Sector

Women dominate in lower-paying positions in the service sector, such as hotel clerks, waitresses and beer girls. Women dominate in restaurant and bar work (79 percent), but in the hotel industry a minority of workers are female (MOP 1997b).

In these positions, women are frequently subjected to sexual harassment, and few opportunities for promotion are available (Aafjes & Athreya 1996). Young women often are employed precisely to attract male customers, and are forced to tolerate harassing behaviour (Aafjes & Athreya 1996).

2.5. Civil Service

The position of women and their working conditions within the civil service has not specifically been researched, and comprehensive statistics are not available. Women seem to be concentrated in the lower-ranking positions in ministries, and some evidence suggests that qualified women are not allowed to use their technical skills, but instead are assigned administrative work (Harris 1994). According to the 1996 SESC, 20 percent of the public administration and social security workforce (excluding defence) are female (MOP 1997c). Of 2,931 senior government officials, only 159 (5 percent) are women (MOP 1997c). A research study

¹ CWDA conducted research on trafficking in 1998, but the findings are not yet available.

in 1996 cited unofficial figures of 82 women compared to 542 men at the central government offices of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mines (Bo 1996).

Civil servants are not protected by the Labour Law. Women can therefore not be protected from discrimination in promotion, retirement and pay. Pay is on average very low, resulting in a lack of commitment by workers, workers taking second jobs, and pervasive corruption throughout the ranks (Aafjes & Athreya 1996). Despite the low remuneration, civil service employment is regarded as secure in the long term and signifies status.

2.6. National Decision-Making

Women are seriously under-represented at the level of national decision-making. However, in the recently formed government women for the first time are represented at ministerial level. There are two women ministers among the 25 ministries (Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts), and four secretaries of state out of 50 (two at the Ministry of Women's Affairs, and one each at the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour). Of the 122 members of the National Assembly, only eight are women.

The 1993–97 legislature had only 4 percent women members (rising to 6 percent after various reshuffles). There were no women ministers, and only five under-secretaries of state (including two at the Ministry of Women's Affairs) (Sivanna, n.d.).

2.7. Gender Constraints in Urban Employment

The major constraint on women's choices in the labour market is their lower level of education, relative to men. Women are particularly under-represented in positions of responsibility requiring higher skills and qualifications. This mirrors the decreasing proportion of women in successive levels of formal education. Lack of education is believed to lead to women's lower performance at work, and thus to lack of promotion to higher positions (Bo 1996).

In addition to women's lack of education, women face a "double working day," whereby they are obliged to combine a full-time job with domestic responsibilities. Although it may be accepted or necessary for women to work, there remains considerable social pressure on them to fulfil responsibilities considered appropriate for a wife or mother. As in most countries of the world, women still spend more time on household work and child-care than men. Because this burden traditionally falls on women, husbands are unlikely to offer assistance. Exhaustion and frustration can have a negative impact on work performance (Bo 1996).

For the few Cambodian women in management positions, it can be difficult to reconcile a daytime leadership position with the role of a "good," somewhat subservient wife at home. This issue needs to be seriously considered in policies encouraging the participation of women in the labour market and in public positions. Although it is becoming more socially accepted for women, particularly in urban areas, to seek employment outside the home, household work remains inflexibly female work. Unless gender issues are resolved at the level of the household, women will continue to be constrained in the quality of their participation in the labour market.

Factors relating directly to women's role as child-bearers cause discrimination within the labour market in general. The nature of a working woman's career is necessarily intermittent because she breaks to give birth to a child. This lack of continuity can lead to conscious or unconscious employer preference for employees of one gender to comply with their need. To an employer, the cost of employing a female worker with the same qualifications and ability is higher than employing a male worker, when the costs associated with maternity leave are calculated.

The organisation of productive work is biased against women, who tend to be preferred for casual, part-time jobs which are short term in nature. These jobs also lack the security and benefits of full-time employment. As they usually require low skills, they are also lower paid. In long-term positions requiring skills and responsibility, men tend to be preferred because they will commit long term and continue in the work without interruption. This pattern is already visible in the labour market. For Cambodian women, marriage and children convey status. Single women are of lower relative status, and it is not common for women to forego marriage. As Cambodian women begin to reach more equal levels of education, and there are more income-earning opportunities available to them, they will be faced with the dilemmas of women all over the world regarding marriage, children and employment.

Stereotypical attitudes prevail about men and women which attribute mental strength and decisiveness to men, who are therefore considered to be better suited to leadership positions (Bo 1996). These are in turn reinforced by women's lower education levels and lack of self-confidence. There is also a general attitude that it is the role of a man to provide for the family, which results in the consideration of a woman's work as supplementary and secondary to her husband's.

Child-care responsibilities further restrict women's time, mobility and choice of occupation. In many situations, relatives can be called upon for child-care, and in many cases an older daughter looks after her siblings at the expense of her education. Few institutions offer child-care facilities, and child-care is a greater problem in urban than rural employment, because the extended family network is not so readily available. However, even though women see child-care as a constraint, they are unwilling to leave their children in the hands of strangers (Ledgerwood 1992). The preference of many women for small-scale trading is due to the fact that it can be combined with child-care and household responsibilities. The lack of provision of child-care facilities in other areas of employment restricts opportunities open to many women.

Constraints on women entrepreneurs can vary according to their ethnic origin and stage of life. Khmer-Chinese women, for example, are more mobile than other ethnic groups, as are older women without young children. Khmer-Chinese women have a strong tradition of involvement in business, and this is part of their socialisation. They also have easier access to skills, training and credit facilities (Azad 1994a, 1994b).

2.8. Credit in Urban and Rural Areas

Women dominate among the self-employed and owners of small and family businesses. Lack of capital is the main obstacle for women who wish to start up or expand a business (Azad 1994a, 1994b; Prins 1996). The rates of interest among money-lenders can be extortionate.

There are over 60 NGO and bilateral providers of credit, mainly for trading and business, which explains the overwhelming majority of female borrowers—Catholic Relief Service, World Relief and UNICEF/Ministry of Women's Affairs, 100 percent; PRASAC, 55 percent (Prins 1996); ACLEDA, 91 percent; GRET, 75 percent (Bousso *et al.* 1997).

No comprehensive study of gender issues in credit has been conducted in Cambodia, despite the fact that the majority of borrowers are female. Their differing activities mean that men and women have different interests in credit use. The likelihood that women prefer short-term, small loans for short-term business ventures, whereas men prefer larger, long-term loans, has been noted (Prins 1996). The fact that the credit ceiling with most schemes is low is one reason why there are fewer male borrowers. The current demand for rural credit is not being met. Little credit is provided for rice, crops, fishing or livestock, and a GTZ survey found a high demand for farm tools and agricultural inputs (Prins 1996). This would indicate that the needs of men in credit are not being met. One comparative study of rural develop-

ment programmes found that most credit was in fact used for consumption and not production (Chim *et al.* 1998).

One NGO representative involved in rural credit commented that even though most of the borrowers are female, most of the activities invested in were male. The strict repayment deadlines mean that, for practical reasons, women are the borrowers because the men often travel outside the villages for work (Bousso 1997). Investment in male activities based on reasons of profitability needs to be distinguished from male appropriation of loans from their wives. Little is known about the decision-making process underlying loan-taking and investment, and control over loan use is a central gender issue. As borrowers and/or as the household financial manager, women are also responsible for loan repayments. If women are not able to control and manage the use of the loan, they still bear responsibility for loan repayment. Murshid (1998) notes that the burden of repaying outstanding debts through agricultural labour falls on the women, whose labour is then valued at half the normal rate.

3. Gender and Rural Development

The agricultural sector is crucial to the development of Cambodia, yet it received only 2.2 percent of government spending in 1997 (Chan *et al.* 1999). Investment in agriculture is left largely to donors. The majority of the Cambodian population are subsistence farmers, mainly rice farmers, and women form the majority of the agricultural workforce (55 percent). At least half of rural women are illiterate, especially among those aged over 35. The figure is probably higher, as no reliable survey has been conducted.

3.1. Sexual Division of Labour

Among adults, there is no strict sexual division of labour, but “where there is an engendered division of labour, it is constructed around the idea as to what constitutes physically demanding labour or what constitutes technically induced forms of knowledge” (Halcrow 1994). “Male” tasks are those which are considered to involve considerable physical effort, such as ploughing, while “female” tasks, such as transplanting, are considered not to be so physically demanding. Work which is seen to be technical, or to involve large machines or tools, is also perceived as male. Thus, even though “irrigation” is broadly considered male, men perform the tasks involving the tools of irrigation, but women carry out other essential complementary tasks to irrigate the crops (SAWA 1994b; Halcrow 1994).

In rice cultivation, the first stages are considered male and the latter stages female (FAO 1997; Ledgerwood 1992; Ebihara 1974). Researchers have noted the increasing flexibility of gender in rice cultivation activities, particularly when they are within the household. Tasks are more rigidly gender-specific when work is waged or exchanged (Shams & Ahmed 1996). Men help with transplanting the dry season rice crop, because this must be done quickly when water levels are receding.

In palm sugar production and fishing, women are mainly involved in processing and trading (McAndrew 1998).

Although there are prevailing ideals about the work that should be done by a man or a woman, in practice this depends on household composition; the number and age of household members, and the availability of their labour and time; and the location and accessibility of different resources. A woman’s mobility is restricted to varying degrees depending on the number and age of her children. Older women without young children can be more mobile. Where there are older children, they may take on some of domestic duties to enable mothers to work.

In families that are largely dependent on natural resources in northwest Cambodia, a woman’s role is directly related to food production for the household. Women gather forest

foods and collect and harvest small aquatic animals from rice fields (Shams & Ahmed 1996; FAO 1997). Firewood is collected by men for commercial use, and by men, women and children for domestic use (Burgess 1998). Both men and women collect wood from watersheds and inundated forests, but who goes depends on security, distance from the home and availability of time—when the forest is nearby, women go, but if it is far away or insecure, men go (Shams & Ahmed 1996).

The gender of the worker is more flexible for some activities than others. For example, only men climb sugar palm trees. Women usually tend and sell smaller animals, such as pigs, chickens and ducks, which are near the house. Men are responsible for the larger livestock which are used as draught animals.

The many cases of women carrying out “male” tasks, usually because male labour is not available, show the question is not one of capability but of perceptions about what is appropriate or ideal, and also what is practical. The shortage of male labour after the Khmer Rouge regime meant that many women were forced to take up male activities (Paris *et al.*, n.d.; SAWA 1994a), and the migration of many men in search of work has continued this pattern.

Interestingly, whereas the sexual division of labour is flexible within the family, when it comes to performing tasks outside the family for remuneration, the division of labour seems to become more inflexible, and it is mainly women who carry out wage or exchange labour (SAWA 1994a, 1994b; Halcrow 1994; Murshid 1998).

It is clear that the household division of labour is very complex and varies according to many factors. Community development workers have criticised the time and effort entailed by detailed analysis of the sexual division of labour, and have questioned its usefulness for a gender approach to development project implementation. This type of analysis is, however, useful in making visible the work that women do which is often subsumed under perceived male activities, such as irrigation.

Whereas productive tasks in many situations are flexible, the near universal inflexibility of women’s domestic workload means that women spend more time working than men. Young children carry out the same tasks, but as children grow older a division of labour becomes apparent. Both boys and girls are expected to undertake wage work, but girls are also expected to help with cooking (Mehta 1993; Klaasen 1995). This affects education and employment opportunities open to them. Men, however, are able and prepared to carry out domestic work when their wives are ill or giving birth (Kant 1993; SAWA 1994a, 1994b).

Perceptions of work, however, need also to be taken into consideration before condemning this as an excessive burden. Villagers themselves consider work in terms of its demand on energy, not in terms of time or economic value (Halcrow 1994). Thus, women continue to work in the vegetable garden while the men rest after ploughing. There are currently no adequate statistics available to suggest that women’s workload affects their health and nutritional status more adversely than men’s. Time studies show that women have less leisure time than men, and the intensity of their work remains constant throughout the year, whereas the intensity of men’s work fluctuates (Berg 1998; Kasukabe, Wang & Kelkar 1995).

What is perhaps more significant in analyses of the work that women do is that it is accorded less value than the work of men. Domestic work is not considered “work” in the same way as agricultural production activities. This work is taken for granted in the household, and thus rendered “invisible.” NGOs involved in gender-awareness training claim it comes as a great surprise to villagers, especially to men, when the full extent of women’s “work” is made apparent. It is not yet clear how much long-term attitudinal change is caused.

The lesser value of women’s work is reflected in the remuneration or exchange value of agricultural activities. Female wage rates are 50 to 60 percent of male rates (Murshid 1998; Paris *et al.*, n.d.). One morning of ploughing (male) is exchanged for (at the minimum rate) a full day of transplanting or weeding (female). When male and female labour is exchanged for

similar activities, the rate is the same but male labour is not usually exchanged. When female work is exchanged with female labour, the value is measured by output. Women's labour is also often used to repay credit. A recent study of three villages in different provinces found a growing dependence of the poor on the wage labour market (Murshid 1998). Increasing landlessness among the poor, and the resulting loss of control over production, leaves the poorest with no assets except their own labour. Women are at a disadvantage in terms of earning power if they enter the agricultural wage labour market.

It is probable that the prevailing notion of the lesser importance of women's work than men's contributes to women's well-documented general lack of self-esteem and confidence in their own capability and intelligence.

Decision-making in crop planning seems largely to be made jointly in couple-headed households. In crop planning, men and women decide together the timing, location, type and quantity of crop (Roberts 1997; SAWA 1994a, 1994b). Selection of seeds and preservation is the woman's responsibility.

3.2. Land

It is often claimed that the land reforms of the 1980s had a negative impact on women, using the example of female-headed households. However, the impact of land redistribution on women depended largely on the composition of the household, kinship support, and access to capital or assets. As land allocation was based on the number of adults in the household, the amount allocated to female-headed households depended on the age of children in the family. Ability to farm the land depended on the age and health of the female head, the number of working age children, and ability to access hired or exchange labour.

As land sales increased from 1992, those without the human and financial resources necessary to make the land productive migrated to urban areas in search of income-generating opportunities.

The current situation is somewhat confused. Many households do not hold land titles. Possession is considered ownership in the community, but legal protection is not guaranteed.

Land registration is a key gender issue. If land is registered in a husband's name only, the wife may not be able to claim half the land in divorce settlements. In theory, when land is jointly registered, both parties must sign to transfer land titles. However, in practice this is not enforced, and because men make decisions on larger issues in the household, such as land sales (Sonnois 1990), women are vulnerable to their husband's decisions (Kusakabe, Wang & Kelkar 1995).

The transition to a market economy has resulted in the increasing commoditisation of land and common property resources. Land perceived as unowned or unclaimed, such as forest and shrub land, is being cleared by individual households for their own use, or sold by the government as logging concessions or to companies to grow cash crops. The ability to clear land for individual household use depends on the availability of human labour, and therefore favours those who are already in an advantageous position.

The increasing sale of tracts of land to logging firms and companies wishing to grow cash crops has increased distances to forests for communities whose subsistence is largely dependent on the exploitation of natural resources, such as those in northwest Pursat and in Ratanakkiri (Shams & Ahmed 1996; Berg 1998). Some gendered impacts have been documented. The increased distance for firewood and forest produce collection, and the growing scarcity of some products, makes it difficult for women to fulfil their responsibility to feed the family, because their work burden is increased and they have less access to transportation (Shams & Ahmed 1996; Berg 1998).

Where cash-cropping is introduced, it is as yet unclear how it affects the gender division of labour. In Ratanakkiri, traditional farming practices are being altered by some of the indigenous communities. Cash crops such as cashew nuts and coffee are being grown with little knowledge or information on marketing possibilities. It is too early to make conclusions about the gendered impact of the transition to a market economy, but it is likely that cash crops will become a male-controlled domain, as it men who customarily deal with the authorities and the cash economy (Ting, n.d.). Women's traditional decision-making power in slash-and-burn agriculture, and the matrilineal inheritance patterns of some of the tribes, may be affected by these agrarian changes (Berg, n.d.).

Men and women have a different relationship to and interest in land based on their social responsibilities. Little is known about differences between Cambodian men and women's perspective of land among people in different types of communities, or about the significance of land as a household or productive resource. Women are responsible for managing the household and caring for the children, and it is likely that they perceive land as a crucial asset to fulfil these responsibilities. Men are responsible for providing for the family, and may perceive land as a more productive resource. In designing land policies, more information is needed on gendered perceptions of land and its uses.

3.3. *Economic Decision-Making in the Household*

There is little detailed information on decision-making processes in the household and how they are affected by socio-economic change. As it is the woman's responsibility to manage household finances, it is the woman who holds the finances. Men usually hand over all or most of their wages to their wives. However, access to cash does not ensure control over expenditure. It has been suggested that, even though women make independent decisions about day-to-day spending, larger decisions are made either jointly or by the men in couple-headed households (Sonnois 1990; Ledgerwood 1992). Additional evidence suggests that in joint decision-making, if there is disagreement, the husband has the final decision. Prevailing social attitudes of a wife's subservience to her husband may lead to male domination in decision-making (Kelkar *et al.* 1997).

It has been noted that even though women control household expenditure, there is a growing tendency for expenditure on luxury items by or for men, which is perhaps indicative of men's higher status within the household in general. The most recent *Human Development Report* showed that men were favoured in the allocation of discretionary food and non-food items, such as meat and clothing (MOP 1998a). Little is known about the different interests of men and women in expenditure. Women may prioritise family and household needs over personal ones, whereas men, whose social status depends more on interaction in the public sphere, may prioritise personal needs. Ledgerwood (1992) showed that though men gave their wages to their wives, the one item for which they retained cash was cigarettes.

No research exists on control over expenditure and how this varies with location, social strata or occupation, or how patterns change with increasing income. However, it seems that, particularly among urban men, there is a growing tendency for personal expenditure on "social" activities with other men, such as meals out, drinking alcohol and visiting prostitutes. It is unclear whether the wife has any knowledge of or control over these expenditures. Among rural households, with all activities farm-based, it would be difficult for a husband to keep any money for personal expenditure without his wife's knowledge. Where the husband migrates in search of labour, he is more likely to use at least some of his earnings for personal expenditure. The growing availability of luxury items, and the targeting of men by cigarette and beer companies, may leave women with a smaller budget with which to fulfil household needs.

3.4. Technology

The introduction of technology and tools through development interventions, to save time and labour and increase production, may favour one gender to the detriment of the other. Modern tools are more likely to be introduced for male activities, such as ploughing equipment and large pumps. Women use traditional tools. Most tasks defined as male involve tools or means of transport, for example, ploughing, raking, threshing, transporting seedlings and paddy rice by oxcart, irrigating with pumps (SAWA 1994a, 1994b). Women's tasks require few or no tools, for example, winnowing, sowing, transplanting, uprooting, weeding. Women mill rice by hand, but have limited access to and control over tools (SAWA 1994a, 1994b). In effect, men have labour-saving devices but women use labour-intensive tools. Male activities involving tools are valued more highly, because tools are associated with complexity and are considered to require skill and knowledge.

Technology can also alter the division of labour. One evaluation report showed that the introduction of treadle pumps near the house effected a switch in responsibility for the collection of water from male to female (Roberts 1997). Although the distance is shorter and the overall workload thus reduced, men's time has been freed for other activities, but women's working time has been increased. Likewise, the introduction of large pumps may mean that they will be used exclusively by men, as women are reluctant or unable to operate them because they require physical effort to start (Jordans 1998).

The introduction by development organisations of devices to reduce women's workload has failed to consider all gender aspects. An intervention to provide rice milling machines to replace hand-pounding provided maintenance and training to men, effectively giving men control over the machines and rendering women dependent on men for access to and use of the machine (Kelkar 1997).

Research among highland peoples notes that the more sophisticated the tools and technologies introduced, the less access and control women have over them (Berg 1998; Sri 1995). When only simple technologies were used, men and women had the same access and control over them. This inter-relates with the men and women's lack of confidence in women's ability to manage activities which are deemed more complicated. If new tools of production and technology continue to be dominated by men, women may become more separated from production and restricted to reproductive or domestic activities, or to simple, low income-generating productive activities.

The indigenous women working with the CARERE Highland People's Project in Ratanakiri identified reduction in their workload as their priority need (Berg 1998). Accordingly, rice mills and wells have been introduced, which free some of the women's time for education, participation in decision-making, and income generation. Devices such as wood fuel stoves are used for a variety of purposes in rural households, and it has been noted that the introduction of new time/labour-saving devices should take into account the multitude of uses and be linked to income generation (Huggins 1996; Hulscher 1998).

3.5. Information and Skills

Because men and women perform different tasks within agricultural production, they possess complementary knowledge which is essential to the successful implementation of development programmes. As mentioned above, the work done by women is undervalued by both men and women, and likewise the knowledge that accompanies their work experience and their perceived skills and intelligence.

In the last 20 years, women have been the majority of workers managing agricultural production in the absence of men. It has been argued that, as the continuous factor in passing on knowledge of local resources, women are therefore better sources of knowledge on seed selection, soil fertility and water management. Women's knowledge is not used if women are

ignored as farmers (SAWA 1994a, 1994b). Reports from the field back this up, claiming that women have more information on farming because they are involved in more aspects and spend more time in the fields, whereas men are more likely to be away. Targeting women in extension services is a more effective way to introduce new techniques.

If women are not explicitly targeted, they are implicitly bypassed (Derks 1997). Past experience has shown that men are automatically put forward on candidate lists for training or extension activities. Including women in training and extension involves active commitment and encouragement by project staff. Quota systems have been introduced in many cases as a quick route to ensuring female participation, which is a good short-term solution, though it fails to address the underlying gender constraints.

The cooperative nature of work in agricultural production activities by all household members means that, ideally, all should receive new information imparted through training and extension activities. In practical terms, effectiveness cannot be presumed from the trickling down of information through one household member. Since this person is most likely to be male, this additionally undermines the capacity of women and results in a male monopoly on new information and the disempowerment of women. It also reinforces prevailing attitudes about the low value of women's work and women's lack of intelligence.

Involving women requires addressing their particular constraints in the implementation of training and extension work. Main constraints identified are lack of time, restricted mobility due to household-based responsibilities, and lack of confidence in their own ability (Meijers 1998; Molendijk 1998).

Projects which offer training courses in short, regular bursts, and which are located in the village, are likely to be more successful in attracting female participants than courses which are offered at provincial training centres, or those with whole-day field visits, because women do not have to be away from home for long periods.

The percentage of rural women who are illiterate is very high, and it should be a priority of organisations working in rural development to take this into consideration in training methodology. The trainers of many organisations rely on written handouts and flip-charts, which implicitly exclude women from participating. Some organisations use visual aids for training, but this type of methodology is more difficult for veterinary training, which involves recording medicines and dosages. Information imparted in short training sessions over a longer time period is more easily remembered.

When new information is introduced which relates specifically to women's areas of work, it is particularly important to ensure that women are given control over this information. Veterinary training is one such area, because women are responsible for small livestock. Where this training and information is provided to men, there is a risk that women will lose control over areas formerly considered female.

It is also important to distinguish between female participants who are widows or single and those who are wives. The constraints on female heads of household are different from those of females of couple-headed households, and the inclusion of only female heads of households to fulfil the quota does not constitute overcoming the constraints on all women.

3.6. Female Extension Workers

According to field workers, female extension workers are a significant influence on the participation of women in extension and support activities. In many cases, it was claimed that they were also the best workers. The lack of female extension workers available or put forward is therefore a tremendous setback. The numbers of women currently in agricultural higher education institutions is low, and has in fact decreased in recent years. At the Royal University of Agriculture, women make up 16 percent of students (MAFF 1998). In actual

numbers, this translates into only one or two women in each year studying agricultural engineering, fisheries and forestry, and on average five in agronomy and animal production.

Field workers note that female extension workers managed to work effectively in a way that still allowed them to behave in a manner considered appropriate for women. In this way, they were respected and listened to by all members of the community.

These role models are particularly important in increasing women's self-esteem and the awareness that women are intelligent, particularly when they approach village women on the same level, and not as alien city women.

3.7. *Participation in Community Decision-Making Structures*

The abstract ideals of democracy and participation in the Western sense are new to Cambodian society, which has long been under authoritarian state regimes. Anthropologists have claimed there is no history of community organisation other than reciprocal relations among kinship groups and exchange labour (Halcrow 1994; Ebihara 1974). Women in Halcrow's 1994 research laughed at the idea of communities organising without state control. The formation of community groups is also associated by some villagers with group formation under the Khmer Rouge, when meetings were little more than propaganda sessions (Sri 1997).

The new structures established at village level, the village development committees (VDCs), are intended to be a means for villagers to participate in the development of the community. These participatory structures are being introduced into a context of strong hierarchical social relations. Those who bear more perceived status have more decision-making power in a group situation. It is often the case that a village leader is elected VDC leader, or that he is the *de facto* influence on decisions.

Likewise, there is no tradition of women's representation on decision-making bodies. Pagoda committees are all male, and most government officials are men (Chim *et al.* 1998). Women's low representation is usually excused by women's lack of education and their resulting lack of capacity relative to men. The government stipulation of quotas for two women per VDC has increased the number of women, but without additional support it does not necessarily enhance the quality of their participation, nor does it address their specific constraints.

Although such positions of responsibility are new to many of the members, women are particularly unused to speaking out in front of groups of men and those perceived to be of higher status. Older women who have more status in the community are likely to be more articulate in groups than young married women.

Women are also marginalised in commune development committees (CDCs). Where these committees are appointed and not elected, efforts have been made to appoint female village elders (Biddulph 1998; Meijers 1998).

Where women are present as a significant minority in VDCs, they are able to exert more influence in the groups, but where they are a small minority they tend to be more passive (Biddulph 1998). However, in the self-help groups established by PADEK, which are predominantly composed of women, the male minority took the decision-making positions (Rao & Swift 1998).

The main constraints on women's effective participation in community groups are their own lack of belief in their own ability, and their lack of time and restricted mobility.

Women's lack of confidence in their capacity stems from, and is reinforced by, the attitudes of other men and women in the community. Until women are seen to be acting responsibly in decision-making positions, these attitudes will perpetuate. A recent comparative study of rural development programmes found clear evidence contradicting the belief that

women were not capable of VDC work (Chim *et al.* 1998). Women in fact use their skills in community networking to collect and disseminate information among the community better than men.

Strategies to support and build women's capacity are needed to complement quota systems. Community development workers have found it effective to bring together the women from different VDCs for discussion (PRASAC). Through these sessions, the women increase in confidence to speak out in their VDC meetings.

UNDP's CARERE project support to the Ministry of Rural Development's SEILA programme has a strong gender component, aiming to develop capacity for gender mainstreaming within the SEILA programme and to strengthen the capacity of women to participate in the sustainable development of Cambodia.

Other suggestions to strengthen women's role in VDCs are to designate specific roles to each VDC member, such as one female finance officer and one female information officer, and in this way training of VDC members can be better targeted (Biddulph 1998).

A significant constraint on women's participation in community groups is the lack of time they have available to commit to other activities. The potential conflict between income-generating activities, household management and participation in decision-making structures, is an area which has not been well researched.

3.8. Gender Training

Gender training is perceived by many NGOs as the way to deal with gender issues. However, in some cases there is a lack of capacity to adapt the content of the training to suit the needs of the participants. The same training often is conducted for project implementers and those at the village level. This partly reflects the time, financial and capacity constraints of NGOs and trainers to adapt, and also partly the confusion surrounding the gender approach and how best to incorporate it.

4. Suggestions for Further Research

- Gender issues in the civil service: working conditions and gender constraints.
- Gender issues in factory work.
- Gender and land: impact of land reforms, access to land, gendered values of land.
- Gender and credit: decisions on loan use; control of proceeds.
- Decision-making in households: processes of decision-making; women's control over expenditure; impact of wage employment on expenditure; uses of male/female income; urban/rural variations.
- Perceptions of women in decision-making positions at national and community levels on the quality of their participation; working relations with men; constraints women face at work and at home.
- Impact of female income/work outside the home on gender relations in the household.
- Women's contribution to the economy: quantified and qualified.

Conclusion

Cambodian society is changing fast. Socio-economic change is bringing new opportunities and influences, as technological advances, foreign investment and development organisations link the country to the world. Yet Cambodian society is also struggling to regain a sense of national identity through a return to perceived traditional values and ideals in these post-conflict years. Perceptions of gender identity, especially the female gender identity, are closely linked to notions of “culture” and “tradition,” and resistance to changes in gender relations is often strong.

Cambodia is a hierarchically ordered society, with notions of power and status conditioning social relations. In this social order, women are considered to be of lower status relative to men, though the status of an individual is also determined by their age and other characteristics, including wealth. For women, status is additionally determined by marriage and children. What is considered appropriate behaviour for a woman may vary considerably according to her age and a range of factors relating to her socio-economic position and family composition. In general, attitudes towards gender roles place great importance on women’s role as household managers and men’s role as providers for the family.

Although women are nominally guaranteed equal rights with men under the Cambodian Constitution, the ability to claim these rights is subject to prevailing social ideals and attitudes about power and gender relations.

As Cambodia develops, the hierarchical structure of social relations and women’s lower status relative to men is reflected in most recent research and household survey findings. There are fewer women than men in positions of power, decision-making and status in Cambodian society.

Women face more constraints in accessing the resources of modern society than men. Large gender disparities exist in rates of adult literacy, participation in formal education, and participation in the waged labour market. As new resources, skills and information are introduced, the underlying assumptions about gender and power relations dictate the way these are allocated. Women are perceived to be less intelligent, and there is much resistance to women’s deviation from their traditional role. New and modern inputs are generally accepted to be a male domain.

In formal education, which is the key to many aspects of modern society, women are seriously under-represented. There are varied reasons for this connected to perceptions of gender roles. Girls are expected to perform more domestic chores than boys, thus opportunity costs are high when girls attend school; a girl’s future role is perceived to be that of a wife and mother, not to work to support her family, thus parents may not choose to invest in their daughter’s education, particularly when economic resources are scarce; a woman’s status is

to a great extent determined by her role as wife and mother, and not through her work, thus education to higher levels is not necessary. Girls are therefore withdrawn from school around the age of puberty, while boys remain longer. Girls' resulting lack of qualifications and skills severely restricts their opportunities in the labour market. Men dominate all professional fields and decision-making positions.

Improving women's access to educational services is a significant investment for the country's development. Education expands the employment opportunities open to women and improves their productive capacity. Their social status is no longer solely dependent on marriage and family. Education provides information on contraception, nutrition and sanitation, which potentially improves the quality of life for a woman and her family. Literacy and numeracy also enhance the ability to access and exchange ideas and information, and to identify and solve problems. This expands the range of life choices open to a woman and her ability to improve the quality of her life. In this way, education is a necessary basis to improve women's position in Cambodian society, as well as being of wider benefit to society as a whole.

In rural Cambodia, where the majority of the population lives as subsistence farmers, men and women cooperate in agricultural production. Ideals about the division of labour state that men should carry out the more physical work and work which involves greater skill, intelligence or technical knowledge, whereas women carry out the less physically demanding tasks. In practice, the division of labour is quite flexible, but the ideals remain. Women are additionally responsible for domestic work. Once a value is attached to work, the underlying social attitudes towards gender relations become more visible. The work of women is valued less than men's, and this is reflected in rates of exchange and remuneration.

Domestic work and child-care is relatively inflexible, however, and remains a female responsibility in both urban and rural areas. This becomes a key issue where employment opportunities are concerned. Currently, women dominate in occupations which allow them to combine their work and domestic responsibilities, such as market trade or informal sector occupations, or those which are short-term and can be completed before marriage and children, such as factory work. Attitudes towards gender roles may mean that for a woman to undertake work outside the home, a daughter must miss out on her education. Until norms concerning the undertaking of domestic responsibility change, and it becomes socially acceptable for men to share this work, women will continue to face additional constraints. The constraints on women's time and mobility need to be taken into consideration in the design of any gender-aware interventions.

Decision-making at the level of the household is complex. There is some evidence to suggest that the man is the overall decision-maker. Although women have considerable say in duties which relate to the day-to-day running of the household, and in certain agricultural tasks, they do not have control in sexual matters, with the result that women are unable to protect themselves from STDs and HIV which their husbands bring back from prostitutes.

Improving women's access to education and employment opportunities is a foundation for gender and social equity. However, mainstream social institutions such as schools also play a significant role in the reproduction of dominant ideologies and social identities, and can reinforce gender inequalities through curriculum content and classroom practices.

Gender is often dismissed on the grounds that there are other priorities, such as poverty alleviation. However, even though both men and women suffer in conditions of poverty, it must be recognised that gender mediates the experience of poverty. Women in poverty face different constraints, and may not benefit equally from poverty alleviation strategies without consideration of gender issues. The high incidence in Cambodia of women forced into prostitution or trafficking is an extreme example of how gender inequalities can differentiate the impact of poverty on men and women. A poor Cambodian girl is less likely to go school than her brother, and will subsequently have fewer employment opportunities open to her. Her

social security will then depend on marriage and frequent child-bearing, over which she may have little control. She will have less access and choice of contraception, and will be subject to greater health risks than a wealthy wife. Her daughter is likely to follow the same path.

A glance at the bibliography shows that there has been little written on gender issues by Cambodian women themselves. This reinforces the beliefs of those who resist the mainstreaming of gender issues that gender is an externally imposed feminist concept with no relevance to the needs of Cambodian society. Until Cambodian women themselves voice their dissatisfaction with existing gender imbalances, there is a risk that gender and development (GAD—including here its social equity agenda) will remain outside the mainstream of development.

However, Cambodian women's relative lack of voiced dissatisfaction with existing gender relations is also symptomatic of the trade-offs women make to cope with oppression in their lives. Women may well be aware of their strategic gender interests, but sacrifice these for other means to secure their well-being.

Cambodian women are from passive victims of male oppression, but rather active agents operating within a constrained environment. Gender norms are slowly changing and adapting to the demands of a changing society. Cambodian women are renegotiating gender relations, taking up new roles and public positions themselves, as they are exposed to new ideas and information. For example, women working as community development workers gain the respect of villagers by conducting this new role within the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour for women. In this way, women can take up new positions and positions formerly occupied by men, and also conform to ideals of a "good" woman. In this way, gender relations are challenged in a non-confrontational manner and renegotiated, and the goal of gender equity moves nearer.

Appendix One

Resource Persons

Ahrens, Luise	RUPP	Higher Education Adviser
Berg, Connie van den	CARERE Ratanakkiri	Gender Adviser
Biays, Sophie	MSF	Doctor
Boua Chanthou	PADEK	Director
Bolton, Mike	PRASAC	Agriculture
Boyle, Ros	Concern Worldwide	Micro-Finance Adviser
Burgess, Sarah	FAO	Consultant
Chea Sok Dona	CAAEP	Gender Officer
Coyne, Geoff	CANEP	Team Leader
Derks, Annuska	Center for Advanced Study	Research Officer
Dok Narom	PRASAC	Community Development
Dy Ratha	IDA	Director
Ferns, Martin	MOEYS Textbook Project	Editorial Management Adviser
Forder, Julie	CARE	Reproductive Health Coordinator
Fowles, Jane	CAMSET	Teacher Training
Fox, Sue	UNESCO	Terakoya Team Leader
Greeves, Richard	World Education	IPM Training
Hay Ngorn Touch	Research Institute	Textbook Development
Hopkins, Tom	CAAEP	Extension
Im Run	MOWA	Former Under-Secretary of State
Janssen, Nico	FAO	Programme Officer
Kien Sereyphal	CWDA	Director
Knibbs, Sarah	UNFPA/SCF	Adolescent Reproductive Health
Koy Veth	KWVC	Director
Kulesa, Karl	UNFPA	Assistant Representative
Leu Chan Bola	Pacific Technical School	Assistant
Lev Bunna	Khemara	Manager of Family Support Service
Lim Mony	ADHOC	Manager of Women's Section
Lim Siv Hong	CIDSE	Programme Officer
Louwes, Klaziena	PRASAC	Kompong Cham
Meijers, Hanneke	CARERE	Gender Adviser
Nora	Informatics College	Student Services and Information
Nugent, Rob	IPM	Country Representative
Nuth Rasy	WMC	Director of Audio-Visual
O'Brien, Noelle	ETAP	Consultant
O'Neill, Mary	Concern Worldwide	Assistant Country Director
Oum Samoeun	NIM	Head of Continuing Training Office

Oum Sopheap	WVI	AIDS Programme Manager
Pearson, Jenny	VBK	Director
Phoumy	OXFAM	Programme Officer
Pickering, Helen	MSI	Health
Pok Nanda	Women for Prosperity	Director
Rothavy	CAA	Gender Officer
Ruath Mullika	CAAEP	Gender Officer
Sar Samen	PADV	Director
Shrubsall, Robert	CAMSET	Textbook Development
Sok Chanchhorvy	MOWA	Department of Information
Sok Khim	OXFAM HK	Programme Officer
So Phannary	ACLEDA	Marketing Manager
Sopheap	PADEK	Gender Officer
Sor Sophan	NIM	Statistics
Sprechmann, Sofia	CARE	Trainer
Tin Sokha	PRASAC	Community Development
Uy Chanthan	CWCC	Administrator
Va Vanny	Regent College	Information
Veer, Sita van der	PRASAC	Community Development
Walsh, Norman	CAAEP	Training
Watmouth, Sue	PADV	Consultant

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Gender and Development in Cambodia

As new resources and opportunities are introduced in the course of development in Cambodia, gender differentials are becoming apparent. Underlying assumptions about gender and power relations dictate the way in which new resources are allocated, with new and modern inputs generally accepted to be a “male” domain. In formal education, girls are under-represented at all levels, with the gender gap widening as the level of education rises. This directly affects women’s position in the labour market, with fewer women than men in professional and leadership positions. Following the most recent national election in 1998, the first women ministers were appointed, but only eight of the 122 members of the National Assembly are women. This means that women have very little say in the creation of the rules, regulations and policies that affect their lives.

This working paper provides an overview of current issues for gender and development in Cambodia under three broad headings—education, health, and economy and labour. Gender gaps revealed in the most recent statistics are highlighted, along with analysis of the gender constraints which lead to women’s disadvantage in accessing the resources of contemporary Cambodian society.

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