# Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia

OECD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

# YOUTH WELL-BEING POLICY REVIEW OF CAMBODIA

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# *Foreword*

Today's world youth population aged 10 to 24 is 1.8 billion people strong and constitutes the largest cohort ever to be transitioning to adulthood. More than 85% of them live in developing countries and in many places, they amount to as much as 30% of the population, and the numbers keep growing. Many developing countries have the potential to realise a demographic dividend, if the right social and economic policies and investments are in place. As such, youth is increasingly taking centre stage in policy debates as a driver of development. Targeting young people requires, however, addressing challenges on multiple fronts, from getting decent employment and quality education to accessing youth-friendly health services and becoming active citizens.

Timely interventions directed at young people are likely to yield a greater return for sustainable development than attempts to fix their problems later in life. Gaps in initial education and skills, for example, are forcing too many young people to leave the school system at an early age, unprepared for work and life. Today, one out of four children in the world drops out of primary education. Surprisingly, no progress has been made in this area over the last decade. Youth joblessness and vulnerable employment are widespread; young people are three times more likely to be unemployed than adults. Adolescent reproductive and sexual health needs are poorly addressed while new health risks have emerged. Not all youth have equal opportunities for mobility, and too many young people remain excluded from decision-making processes that affect their lives.

The opportunity to close the youth well-being gap is nonetheless real. Measuring and analysing the problems of disadvantaged youth is a prerequisite for developing evidence-based policies for youth. Sharing good practices and exchanging information on what works or not plays a crucial role in youth policy making in both developing and developed countries. Policies that intervene at critical stages can significantly reduce the risks of youth becoming further disadvantaged. For example, facilitating the transition to the world of work through labour-market counselling and comprehensive on-the-job training services is helping the economic inclusion of youth. Evidence also suggests that cultural and creative activities, violence prevention programmes and juvenile justice services can support active citizenship amongst the youth population.

The Youth Inclusion project, co-financed by the European Union and implemented by the OECD Development Centre, analyses these aspects in nine developing and emerging economies (Cambodia, Cote d'Ivoire, El Salvador, Jordan, Malawi, Moldova, Peru, Togo and Viet Nam) through Youth Well-being Policy Reviews. The reviews are intended to support governments by providing evidence and concrete advice on how to assess youth challenges from a multi-dimensional perspective and how to involve youth in national development processes. The reviews shed light on the determinants of youth vulnerabilities and what constitutes successful transitions in each of the countries. Tapping into the evidence to design better policies is one of the best ways to minimise challenges and maximise the potential, turning the youth bulge into a youth dividend. The Youth Inclusion project is part of the work of the Development Centre on inclusive societies, and aims to support countries in finding innovative solutions to social challenges and to build more cohesive societies.

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# *Abbreviations and acronyms*

| | |
|---|---|
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| CDHS | Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey |
| CDRI | Cambodia Development Resource Institute |
| CS | Commune/Sangkat |
| CSES | Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey |
| DM | District/Municipality |
| EU | European Union |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| M&E | Monitoring and evaluation |
| MoLVT | Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training |
| MoEYS | Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| MoSAVY | Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation |
| MoWA | Ministry of Women's Affairs |
| NCDD | National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development |
| NEET | Not in Employment, Education or Training |
| NGO | Non-governmental organisation |
| NP-SNDD | National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development |
| NYAP | National Youth Action Plan |
| NYDC | National Youth Development Council |
| NYDP | National Youth Development Policy |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| PBB | Programme-based budgeting |
| SME | Small and medium-sized enterprise |
| SNA | Sub-national administration |
| SRH | Sexual and reproductive health |
| STI | Sexually transmitted infection |
| SSEAYP | Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Program |
| SWTS-Cambodia | School-to-work transition survey of Cambodia |
| TIC | Transparency International Cambodia |
| TVET | Technical Vocational Education and Training |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UYFC | Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia |
| WDI | World Development Indicators |
| Y-MDI | Youth Multi-dimensional Deprivation Indicator |

# *Country profile*

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 15.8 million (official estimates) |
| Population growth rate | 1.56% |
| Age structure | 0-14 years: 30.11%<br>15-19 years: 11.43%<br>15-24 years: 22.46%<br>**15-29 years: 31.76%**<br>25-54 years: 37.33%<br>55-64 years: 5.69%<br>65+ years: 4.42% |
| Gender ratio | At birth: 1.05 male/female<br>0-14 years: 1.02 male/female<br>15-24 years: 0.98 male/female<br>25-54 years: 0.95 male/female<br>55-64 years: 0.65 male/female<br>65 years and over: 0.6 male/female<br>Total population: 0.94 male/female |
| Ethnic groups | Khmer 97.6%, Cham 1.2%, Vietnamese 0.1%, Chinese 0.1%, other 0.9% |
| Religions | Buddhist (official) 96.9%, Muslim 1.9%, Christian 0.4%, other 0.8% |
| Languages | Khmer (official) 96.3%, other 3.7% |
| Urbanisation | urban population: 20% of total population (17% of youth)<br>rural population: 80% of total population (83% of youth)<br>rate of urbanisation: 2.7% annual rate of change (2010-15 average) |
| Net migration rate | -0.3 migrant(s)/1,000 population |
| Total working age population | 10 000 000<br>**15-29 years: 43%** |
| Labour force population | 8 260 000 |
| Labour force participation rate | 82.6% (87.9% male/ 77.5% female)<br>15-24 years: 71.6% (73.8% male/69.1% female)<br>**15-29 years: 75.7%** |
| Employment-to-population ratio | 77.8% (81.4% male/74.7% female)<br>**15-29 years: 74.1%**<br>Urban: 67.7%<br>Rural: 80.8% |
| Labour force by occupation (NIS, 2015) | Agriculture: 45.3%<br>Industry: 24.3%<br>Services: 30.4% |
| Birth rate | 23.4 births/1 000 population |
| Death rate | 7.6 deaths/1 000 population |
| Mother's mean age at first birth | 23 years old |
| Infant mortality rate | Total: 48.7 deaths/1 000 live births<br>Male: 55.2 deaths/1 000 live births<br>Female: 41.9 deaths/1 000 live births |
| Life expectancy at birth | Total: 64.5 years<br>Male: 62 years<br>Female: 67.1 years |
| Total fertility rate | 2.56 children born/woman |
| Contraceptive prevalence rate | 50.5% (2011) |
| HIV/AIDS | Adult prevalence rate: 0.63%<br>People living with HIV/AIDS: 74 100<br>Deaths: 2 000 |

| | |
|---|---|
| GDP (WDI, 2016) | USD 20.02 billion (current USD) |
| GDP per capita (WDI, 2016) | USD 1 269.9 |
| GDP real growth rate (OECD, 2016) | 7%<br>7.3% (2016-20 average forecast) |
| GDP composition by sector (WDI, 2016) | Agriculture: 26.7%<br>Industry: 31.7%<br>Services: 41.6% |
| Composition of exports (OECD, 2017) | Textiles: 71%<br>Machinery/electrical: 4%<br>Vegetable products: 4%<br>Transportation: 3%<br>Plastics/rubber: 3%<br>Other: 15% |
| Composition of imports (OECD, 2017) | Textiles: 36%<br>Machinery/electrical: 11%<br>Transportation: 11%<br>Metals: 5%<br>Chemicals and allied industries: 5%<br>Other: 32% |
| Human Development Index (UNDP, 2015) | 143 out of 188 countries<br>Above Myanmar (148), below Viet Nam (116) and Lao PDR (141) |

*Source*: NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*; Kanol, Khemarin and Elder (2013), *Labour market transitions of young men and women in Cambodia*, International Labour Office, International Labour Organization, Geneva; OECD (2017a), *Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India: Addressing Energy Challenges*; UNDP (2015), *Human Development Report 2015: Work for Human Development*; WDI (2016), *World Development Indicators*, World Bank Group.

# *Executive summary*

In Cambodia, youth make up about one-third of the total population. This is a potential demographic dividend that can lead to economic growth and social transformation if the right policies are put in place. Cambodia's economy is growing, and opportunities for youth empowerment are real. Youth face several challenges, however. According to the Youth Multi-dimensional Deprivation Indicator (Y-MDI), one young person out of five is deprived in two or more well-being dimensions at the same time, including health, employment, education and civic participation, while 40% fare poorly in at least one of these dimensions. The Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia looks in depth at the situation of youth in these four areas with the aim to provide policy recommendations that will improve youth livelihoods.

Overall, the health situation of Cambodian youth has improved since 2005. The youth mortality rate decreased by 40% and the youth maternal mortality rate also improved by 53% between 2005 and 2015. The share of deaths caused by HIV/AIDS decreased by 86% in the same period. On the downside, the leading cause of death amongst youth remains road injury, responsible for the death of nearly a quarter of young men, a 10 percentage point increase since 2005. Alcohol consumption amongst teenagers, particularly boys, is also on the rise, contributing to road traffic accidents. Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is a particular concern for adolescent girls and young women. Teenage (age 15-19) pregnancy affects 12% of girls. The fertility rate for teenage women is three times higher in rural than in urban areas. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are more prevalent amongst young women than young men, and are also on an increasing trend for this group.

Early school dropout is perhaps the biggest problem the country faces. In 2016, 63% of secondary and tertiary school aged young people (aged 12-22) were already out of school. The problem stems from multiple and interlinked issues including the quality of education, the cost of education for poor families, the limited prospects for good jobs after secondary or even tertiary education and the lack of vocational training and second-chance programmes. The net enrolment rate for lower secondary school, though compulsory, is only 39%, and for upper secondary school, it is 19%. The dropout rate for lower secondary school is close to 20% and has remained unchanged since 2010. The large population of out-of-school youth needs to be educated or retrained to find productive and decent work.

The drivers of early school dropout are interlinked in a vicious cycle. Parents do not see the value in investing in education due to the poor quality of education. Cambodian youth themselves are pessimistic about the return to investment in education. In fact, for some low skilled jobs, primary school dropouts earn more than their equivalent graduates. For poor families, an immediate return from paid jobs has greater value than investing in education. School degrees have a positive impact on wages starting from higher education and vocational training, but most youth leave school before even completing secondary education. The quality of schools is affected by the fact that teachers are underqualified and poorly paid. There is little incentive for teachers to invest in training and to upgrade their skills, as most of them are busy with second jobs and private tutoring.

The low education attainment amongst youth makes skill shortages a daunting challenge for the labour market. Employers are unable to find qualified workers to fill posts. Only 31% of youth in Cambodia have jobs that match their qualifications, while 23% are overeducated and 46% are undereducated. Under-qualification is most severe in the industry sector, with 64% of youth underqualified for the job. The potential of vocational training and non-formal education is vastly underestimated. Out of the 250 000 post-secondary graduates in 2014, only 3% are from technical and vocational fields like agriculture, science and engineering. Under-qualification also affects more women than men. Some vocational training is available to women in fields such as sewing, cooking and mechanics, but it has little impact on female empowerment.

Despite the low youth unemployment rate (0.7%) and an increasing share of youth getting wage jobs, the quality of jobs in Cambodia remains low. The majority of youth (73%) in wage employment earn less than the average weekly wage of the total wage employed population. The share of youth in vulnerable employment (unpaid family workers and own account workers) has decreased over the years but remains at a non-negligible 40%. The share of youth aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEET) is relatively low at 6.4%. The majority of NEETs are inactive, i.e. not looking for a job and not studying, and they are mostly women. Young women are clearly disadvantaged compared to young men in the labour market.

Traditional social norms regarding women's role in the family and society have gone largely unchallenged, especially in rural and remote areas. Women are still expected to shoulder the majority of household responsibilities and childcare regardless of their employment status. The domestic division of labour has not been equitably distributed between men and women, leaving the latter at a great disadvantage. Social norms regarding the role of women as the "good wife", coupled with the social stigma against their mobility, make it a challenge for women to get vocational training or higher education and to work outside their community. This belief is particularly apparent amongst the non-working young and older women, particularly in rural communities.

Youth are a key driver in Cambodia's development and their involvement in policy making processes will be essential. Youth participation in politics or policy making has been limited. Collaboration with the government only happens with a few well-connected mass organisations like the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia (UYFC). The rapid spread of social-media use amongst young Cambodians is however changing this situation. Youth have become increasingly better informed and more vocal. Volunteerism is also becoming a popular trend as it is considered to benefit both the communities and the volunteers, who can gain soft skills needed for the workplace.

Policy reforms for youth well-being will need to take place on multiple fronts:

- In health, priority should be given to improving SRH services for youth, especially in rural areas. Youth-friendly health services and gender-sensitive clinics should be made accessible. SRH education should be implemented in schools and in communities to overcome gender-based discriminatory social norms that prevent young men and women from seeking preventive measures and treatment for STIs.
- In education, the quality of education and the completion rate first need to be improved. Removing economic constraints to school attendance must be prioritised through programmes like conditional cash transfers. The quality of education needs to be improved by training current teachers and upgrading their skills, and providing them with better salary incentives, particularly for those teaching in remote areas. Physical access to school is also an obstacle for children living in remote rural areas and needs to be improved through better transport infrastructure. Agriculture-based regions depend on children during the harvest season. School programmes could be adjusted to consider the seasonality of agriculture activities. More second-chance programmes and vocational training need to be offered to out-of-school and low-skilled youth, who constitute the majority of youth in Cambodia. This group of youth needs to gain adequate skills to be able to find decent jobs.
- In employment, the skills mismatch issue needs to be addressed through on-the-job training and flexible technical vocational education and training (TVET) programmes that allow studying while working. As most youth work in the informal sector, a scheme to certify past experience, for example, could help youth validate themselves to employers. A more in-depth review of the TVET system and the effectiveness of the current programmes is urgently needed to align training with new sector developments (e.g. agro-food industry, services and tourism) and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) needs. The local private sector should be engaged in determining what training is needed and how local businesses can be involved.
- Finally, civic activities should be integrated as part of the regular school curriculum, and more campaigns should be organised to raise awareness about how youth can become well-informed and

engaged citizens. More open debates and a formal inclusion of youth should be established in decision making, e.g. youth representation in the national assembly or local development councils. Through the use of social media, there is an opportunity to generate an environment conducive to open political debate. Freedom of speech should be respected so that youth can voice their opinions without fear of retribution. Social media and online code of conduct should be defined through clear rules and regulations so that youth can participate freely and respectfully.

- Policies must take special consideration of rural youth and young women. More than 80% of Cambodian youth live in rural areas and the majority work in the agriculture sector. The potential to develop the agriculture sector along the agro-food value chain is high. First, agricultural productivity should be improved in order to increase farmers' income. Rural areas will need better infrastructure such as irrigation and production techniques, and young farmers should be trained in business development and marketing skills. Employment services should support motivated young entrepreneurs in rural areas to develop new value-added products and services along the agro-food value chain. Access to finance and social protection will be crucial to enable rural youth to become entrepreneurs. Local SMEs have the greatest potential to create jobs for youth. Their development in the agriculture and service sectors should be promoted.
- More adequate training should be offered in terms of content and access for young women, in entrepreneurship, business management or more diverse agricultural skills to improve productivity. These should be accompanied with support mechanisms such as children's day care and basic social protection to allow women to share their time between work and family.

The National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) and its Action Plan (NYAP) reflect a new political engagement to involve youth and mainstream youth issues in different sectoral priorities. In terms of institutional strengthening:

- The NYDP will need adequate funding and institutional capacity to implement the action plan. The annual national budget must include a budget for the implementation of the NYAP. The newly established National Youth Development Council (NYDC) and its General Secretariat should mobilise technical assistance from relevant development partners to help push adoption and implementation of the various legal and policy documents, such as the NYAP, by line ministries. The successful institutionalisation and operationalisation of the NYDC will depend on the involvement and buy-ins of line ministries and youth organisations. Youth representation within the NYDC is limited to the UYFC for the moment. This is a NYDC legitimacy issue in the eyes of youth.
- The NYDC is currently housed within the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS). The NYDC should seek an independent status to ensure an unbiased co-ordination role amongst the different stakeholders. There must be a clear internal and external administrative communication procedure between the government, line ministries and the sub-national administration level.
- The capacity of the NYDC's General Secretariat must be strengthened. The secretariat must be able to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NYAP. A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system with youth-specific indicators should be designed for the NYAP.
- Regular consultation with youth must be organised. Youth participation happens mainly at the local level. The NYDC should set up a consultation mechanism with youth, such as a quarterly provincial consultation meeting, a six-monthly regional consultation and an annual national youth congress as mandated in the NYDP.

# Chapter 1. Cambodian youth profiles

Cambodia is a youthful country. Two-thirds of its 15 million people are under the age of 30 (United Nations 2013 estimates). This is a potential demographic dividend that can lead to economic growth and social transformation. A demographic dividend occurs when a combination of low fertility and low mortality rates leads to a swelling of the working age population and a youth bulge. To capitalise on this opportunity, comprehensive policies and strategies are needed to give young people access to quality education and jobs, to upgrade their skills and to provide youth-friendly healthcare services. Failure to do so will turn this dividend into an unbearable and lasting economic and social cost. As Cambodia enters an ageing society, an increasing number of people will become dependent on scarce public resources and family members. This situation calls for an urgent look at how young Cambodians are faring in different dimensions of well-being such as education, employment, health and civic participation in order to identify gaps in policies addressed to youth.

The analytical framework of this chapter is based on the *Evidence-based Policy Making for Youth Well-being: A Toolkit* (OECD, 2017b). The toolkit takes a life-cycle approach and puts forward a multi-dimensional analytical framework to look at the situation of youth in terms of education, health, employment, civic participation and subjective well-being, five dimensions considered as key to youth well-being. The analysis makes it possible to establish a profile of disadvantaged youth and to gain better understanding of the determinants of certain vulnerabilities and negative outcomes faced by young people. The framework is based on the OECD well-being framework which identifies 11 dimensions of well-being, emphasising both objective and subjective aspects of well-being such as quality of life (OECD, 2011).

To allow for international comparability (the EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project is undertaken in nine countries), the report looks at data for the 15-29 age group whenever possible, which allows capturing factors helping or hindering successful transitions into adulthood. The chapter provides a snapshot of the situation of youth in Cambodia in the areas of health, employment, education and civic participation.

## Overview

There is no universally agreed definition of youth. The UN defines a young person as aged 15-24, while the African Union defines it as aged 15-35. In Cambodia, the MoEYS defines youth as aged 15-30, regardless of marital status. Youth is a period of transition, both physically and socially, as a young person leaves childhood to enter adulthood. This is a particularly vulnerable period in a person's life when a combination of increasing responsibilities, life-changing decisions, and rising social and peer pressure can be overwhelming.

In Cambodia, youth (15-30) make up about 33% of the total population (Table 1.1). The majority of youth are Khmer (96%) and 83% live in rural areas, a majority of which in the Tonle Sap and Plain regions. Between 2004 and 2014, the total population in the capital city of Phnom Penh increased by 19% due to natural demographic evolution but also to urbanisation. The youth population in Phnom Penh increased by 57%. Most of the youth (91%) were literate (NIS, 2015), but only 28% were enrolled in secondary education (MoEYS, 2015/16). Two-thirds of youth had finished schooling and one-third was still in school, but half of these were engaged in some form of work at the same time (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013).

The EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project calculated the Youth Multi-dimensional Deprivation Indicator (Y-MDI) to measure the share of youth affected by multiple deficits in the areas of health, education, employment and civic participation. The Y-MDI is a new indicator based on the OECD's well-being adjusted framework, which considers well-being in both objective and subjective terms. In Cambodia, the Y-MDI finds one young person in five to be deprived in at least two well-being dimensions, while 40% fare poorly in at least one dimension, mostly in education.

**Table 1.1. Description of Cambodian youth aged 15-30**

| | Youth aged 15-30 | 2004 | 2014 | 2004 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | In numbers | | In percentage | |
| Population | Total | 4 139 253 | 5 071 495 | 100.00 | 100.00 |
| | Male | 2 062 098 | 2 565 481 | 49.82 | 50.59 |
| | Female | 2 080 966 | 2 510 332 | 50.27 | 49.50 |
| Ethnicity | Khmer | 3 980 606 | 4 886 572 | 96.17 | 96.35 |
| | Other ethnic groups | 36 432 | 72 976 | 0.88 | 1.44 |
| | Others | 127 272 | 117 998 | 3.07 | 2.33 |
| Disability | Disabled | 79 733 | 52 634 | 1.93 | 1.04 |
| | Non-disabled | 4 058 738 | 5 013 257 | 98.05 | 98.85 |
| Urban/Rural | Urban | NA | 862 154 | NA | 17.00 |
| | Rural | NA | 4 209 341 | NA | 83.00 |
| Regions | Phnom Penh | 439 280 | 690 580 | 10.61 | 13.62 |
| | Plain | 1 752 604 | 1 754 526 | 42.34 | 34.60 |
| | Tonle Sap | 1 225 546 | 1 660 570 | 29.61 | 32.74 |
| | Coastal | 296 917 | 360 988 | 7.17 | 7.12 |
| | Plateau/Mountains | 428 586 | 600 288 | 10.35 | 11.84 |

*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

## Health

Youth is a time of first exposure to certain forms of risky behaviour in terms of sexual relations and substance abuse. Adolescents face additional challenges. Globally, one quarter of girls (39 million) and 17% of boys of secondary school age (11-15) were not enrolled in school in 2008 (UNFPA, 2013). Being out of school makes them more vulnerable in terms of sexuality, early marriage and child bearing. Millions of girls are forced into unwanted sex or marriage and end up with unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, STIs and HIV. In low- and middle-income countries (excluding China), 12% of girls are married before they turn 15, while 34% are married or in union before they are 18. The leading causes of mortality and morbidity amongst young women aged 15-24 in these countries are pregnancy complications, unsafe abortion and childbirth. In 2011, 41% of all new HIV infections were amongst adolescents and youth (UNFPA, 2013). Basic youth health indicators usually include mortality and morbidity, SRH and substance abuse.

### *Youth mortality rate*

The overall health situation of Cambodian youth has improved since 2005. The youth mortality rate decreased by 40% from 2.5 deaths per 1 000 individuals in 2005 to 1.5 in 2015. The mortality rate in 2015 was 1.2 deaths per 1 000 females and 1.8 per 1 000 males (Table 1.2). Young men were 50% more affected than young women. The youth mortality rate calculates the number of deaths per 1 000 individuals in the 15-29 age group.

The maternal mortality rate (MMR) also improved by 53% between 2005 and 2014. In 2014, 13 young women for every 100 000 live births died of maternal conditions, compared to 28 in 2005 (Table 1.2). Great progress has been made in decreasing MMR, which is the annual number of female (in this case young women aged 15-29) deaths per 100 000 live births from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management (excluding accidental or incidental causes).

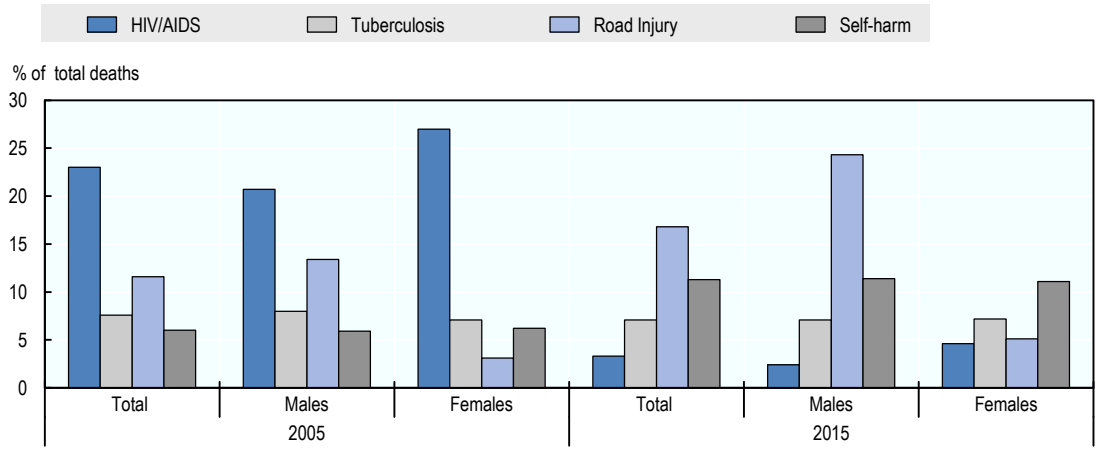
**Table 1.2. Youth (15-29) mortality rate, 2005 and 2015**

| | 2005 | | | 2015 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male |
| Mortality rate (per 1 000 individuals) | 2.5 | 2.2 | 2.9 | 1.5 | 1.2 | 1.8 |
| Maternal mortality rate (per 100 000 live births) | | 27.8 | NA | | 13* | NA |

*Note*: The MMR includes deaths during pregnancy, childbirth or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, for a specified year.
*Source*: WHO Global Health Estimates 2005 and 2015; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2014*.

The share of deaths caused by HIV/AIDS amongst youth aged 15-29 has decreased by 86% since 2005. The leading cause of death amongst youth is now road injury, followed by self-harm, which has worsened since 2005, especially for young men (Figure 1.1). Other leading causes include tuberculosis, maternal conditions and cardiovascular diseases (Table 1.3).

**Figure 1.1. Leading causes of death as a share of causes of total deaths amongst youth aged 15-29, 2005 and 2015**




*Source*: WHO Global Health Estimates 2015.

**Table 1.3. Distribution of causes of death amongst youth aged 15-29, 2005 and 2015**

| Causes of death | 2005 | | | 2015 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male |
| Road injury | 11.6 | 3.1 | 18.2 | 16.8 | 5.1 | 24.3 |
| Self-harm | 7.8 | 8.0 | 7.7 | 11.3 | 11.1 | 11.4 |
| Drowning | 4.9 | 2.7 | 6.6 | 5.9 | 3.2 | 7.6 |
| Interpersonal violence | 3.3 | 0.8 | 5.3 | 2.6 | 0.8 | 3.8 |
| Other injuries | 6.1 | 5.1 | 6.8 | 7.7 | 6.5 | 8.4 |
| Tuberculosis | 7.6 | 7.1 | 8.0 | 7.1 | 7.2 | 7.1 |
| HIV/AIDS | 23.4 | 27.0 | 20.7 | 3.3 | 4.6 | 2.4 |
| Respiratory Infections | 2.6 | 3.2 | 2.1 | 3.5 | 4.8 | 2.7 |
| Maternal conditions | 3.4 | 7.8 | NA | 3.4 | 8.6 | NA |
| Other communicable diseases | 8.7 | 10.5 | 7.4 | 7.6 | 10.4 | 5.9 |
| Cardiovascular diseases | 7.6 | 9.8 | 5.9 | 10.7 | 13.5 | 8.9 |
| Other non-communicable diseases | 12.9 | 14.9 | 11.4 | 20.1 | 24.3 | 17.5 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source*: WHO Global Health Estimates 2005 and 2015.

### *Sexual and reproductive health*

SRH is of particular concern for adolescent and young women as early pregnancy and childbearing can have long-term negative effects on the rest of their lives. WHO estimates that worldwide, about 16 million girls aged 15 to 19 and some 1 million girls under 15 give birth every year, with most of these births occurring in low- and middle-income countries. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are the second biggest cause of death for 15-19 year-old girls worldwide. Every year, some 3 million girls aged 15 to 19 undergo unsafe abortions. Babies born to adolescent mothers face a much higher risk of dying than those born to women aged 20 to 24 (WHO, 2014).

In Cambodia, the total fertility rate, defined as the average number of children born to women aged 15-49, decreased from 3.4 in 2005 to 2.7 in 2014. However, the teenage (age 15-19) fertility rate increased in recent years from 47 per 1 000 women in 2005 to 57 in 2014. Approximately 12% of women have either become mothers or were pregnant with their first child when they were teenagers. It is worth noting that in most of these cases the age of the mothers was between 18 and 19, 18 being the legal marriageable age. In 2014, one in three girls aged 19 gave birth or was pregnant with her first child. The fertility rate in rural areas for teenage girls is three times higher than in urban areas, and 1.5 times higher for women aged 20-24 (Table 1.4).

The determinants of teenage pregnancies or early motherhood are strongly associated with the education level. More than one-third of teenagers (37%) who have never been to school have either given birth or are pregnant, compared to 18% who have a primary-school education and 8% who have a secondary education or higher (NIS et al, 2015). A multivariate regression analysis carried out for this study confirms that all things equal, young women who have a secondary education have a significantly lower risk of early childbearing than those who have no secondary education. Young women who are working are also much less likely to bear a child than those who are not working (Meng, Po and Thiep, 2013).

**Table 1.4. Total fertility rate (per 1 000 women) by residence and age groups, 2014**

| Age group | Urban | Rural | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| **15-19** | 21 | 66 | 57 |
| **20-24** | 101 | 179 | 162 |
| **25-29** | 135 | 156 | 152 |
| **30-34** | 92 | 104 | 102 |
| **35-39** | 56 | 50 | 51 |
| **40-44** | 11 | 18 | 17 |
| **45-49** | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| **Total (15-49 years)** | 2.1 | 2.9 | 2.7 |

*Source*: NIS (2015a), *Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2014*.

Young women are more at risk of STIs than young men. According to the CDHS 2014, the rate of female STIs during the 12 months prior to the survey was 5.6% out of 11 678 female respondents aged 15 to 49 years who had had sexual intercourse, including with their husband. Amongst women aged 15 to 29, the prevalence was 5% in 2014, an increase from 2.7% in 2005. The infection rate was highest in the Phnom Penh and Coastal regions, and lowest in the Tonle Sap region. More young women in the richest and the poorest quintiles had STIs. This can be explained by the fact that many women from the poorest households get married at a very young age and have limited knowledge about STIs (Santhya and Jejeebhoy 2012). As for young women in the richest quintile, they tend to be affected by the risky behaviours of their partner, as wealth is strongly associated with multiple sex partners (Rutaremwa et al., n.d; Chimoyi and Musenge 2014; Kuhanen 2010). Male STI prevalence was low at 0.5% out of 3 506 males who had had sexual intercourse. Male youth aged 15-29, at 0.7%, were less exposed to STIs than young women. STIs amongst young men were less frequent in the Coastal and Tonle Sap regions (Table 1.5).

**Table 1.5. Youth with STIs, by region and wealth, 2005 and 2014 (in percentage of total youth aged 15-29)**

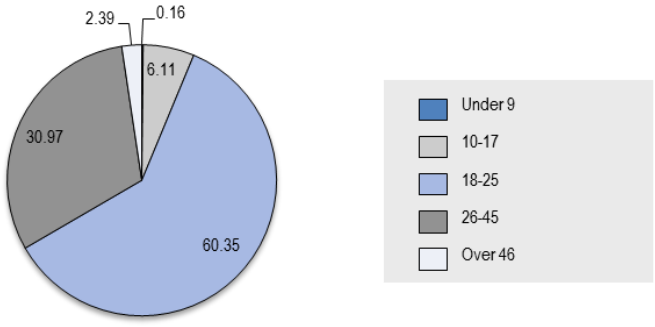
| | 2005 | | 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female | Male | Female | Male |
| TOTAL | 2.7 | 0.9 | 5.0 | 0.7 |
| **Regions** | | | | |
| Phnom Penh | 4.6 | 1.0 | 5.7 | 1.2 |
| Plain | 1.8 | 0.6 | 4.7 | 0.8 |
| Tonle Sap | 4.1 | 1.2 | 3.8 | 0.5 |
| Coastal | 1.3 | 0.7 | 7.9 | 0.0 |
| Plateau/Mountains | 1.8 | 0.6 | 5.6 | 0.8 |
| **Wealth quintiles** | | | | |
| Poorest | 2.9 | 0.3 | 4.5 | 0.5 |
| Poorer | 2.5 | 0.7 | 4.1 | 0.5 |
| Middle | 2.8 | 1.6 | 5.6 | 0.6 |
| Richer | 2.1 | 0.9 | 5.4 | 0.0 |
| Richest | 3.2 | 0.9 | 5.4 | 1.5 |

*Note*: Prevalence in the 12 months prior to the survey.
*Source*: NIS (2005a), *Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2004;* NIS (2015a), *Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2014*.

### *Drug abuse*

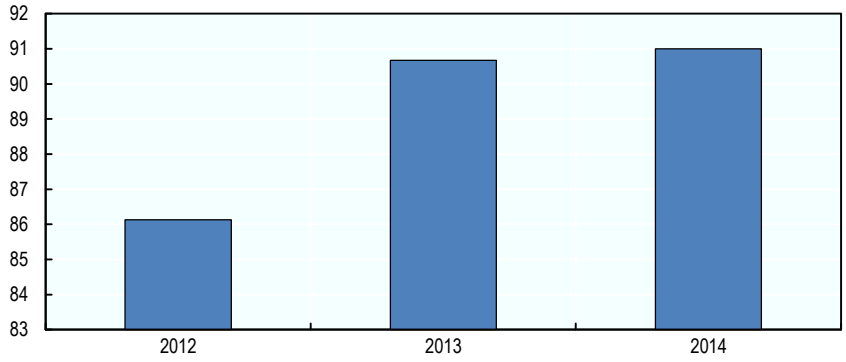
Drug use and addiction amongst Cambodian youth is on the rise. Official data on the number of drug users and addicts are difficult to collect because affected young people are unlikely to report themselves. The annual reports from the National Authority for Combatting Drugs (NACD) gives estimates of the number of drug addicts, cautioning that the total is likely higher. In 2010, the NACD counted between 5 000 and 6 000 addicts, with approximately 60% between the ages of 18 and 25. Those aged between 26 and 45 accounted for 31% of all drug users (Figure 1.2). The number of addicts who seek treatment at various public and private drug rehabilitation centres is also increasing, giving a proxy indication that drug use and addiction is on the rise. The total number of treatment seekers grew from 1 162 in 2012 to 1 286 in 2014. The share of young people (18-35) seeking rehabilitation services at a public or private centre increased from 86% to 91% in that period (Figure 1.3). These numbers are highly contentious, however, as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime claims the number of drug users in Cambodia to be 46 000 (Menghun and Zsombor, 2013).

**Figure 1.2. Distribution of drug users by age group, 2010 (%)**




*Source*: NACD (2010), *Annual Report on the Control of Drugs.*

**Figure 1.3. Drug addicts aged 18-35 seeking rehabilitation services (as a percentage of total treatment seekers)**

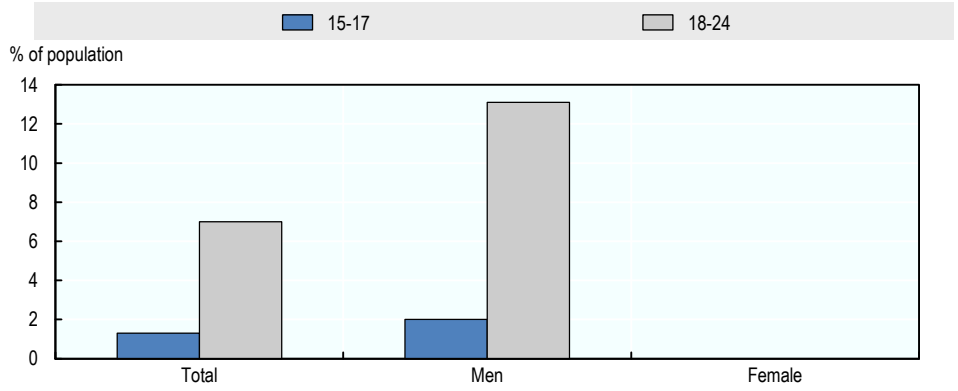



*Source*: NACD (2012), *Annual Report on the Control of Drugs*; NACD (2013), *Annual Report on the Control of Drugs*; NACD (2014), *Annual Report on the Control of Drugs*.

### *Tobacco and alcohol consumption*

The smoking trend is improving amongst adolescent boys aged 15-17, but is high amongst youth aged 18-24. According to the 2011 National Adult Tobacco Survey of Cambodia (NATSC), 2% of adolescent boys in the age group 15-17 smoke tobacco products, either regularly or casually (Figure 1.4). The share of smokers amongst young men aged 18-24 rises to 13.1%. It is estimated that 40% of Cambodian men older than 15 are smokers. The incidence of young women who smoke was close to zero (NIS, 2011).

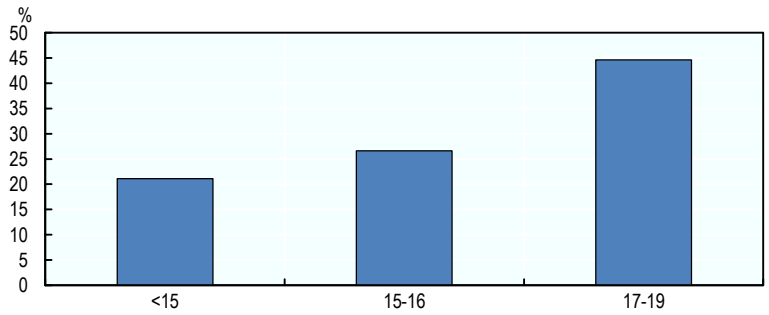
**Figure 1.4. Youth 15-24 using any tobacco product**




*Source*: NIS (2011), *National Adult Tobacco Survey of Cambodia*.

Cigarettes are cheap and easily accessible to young people and adolescents. The NATSC survey showed that one out of five of young smokers aged 15-19 started smoking before the age of 15 (Figure 1.5). WHO conducted two rounds of tobacco surveys in Cambodia, in 2003 and 2010, amongst students aged 13-15 in grades 7 to 12. In both surveys, the percentage of young boys smoking cigarettes was higher than that of girls, with the incidence for girls being quasi insignificant. The overall number for boys smoking declined from 4.6% in 2003 to 0.4% in 2010. On the other hand, tobacco products other than cigarettes are becoming more popular amongst adolescents. The surveys show that tobacco products (pipes, cigars, cigarillos, water pipes, hookah, snuff, chewing tobacco, dip and others) were used by 6% of boys and 3% of girls aged 13-15 in 2010, an increase from 3.3% and 3%, respectively, in 2003 (CDC, n.d.)

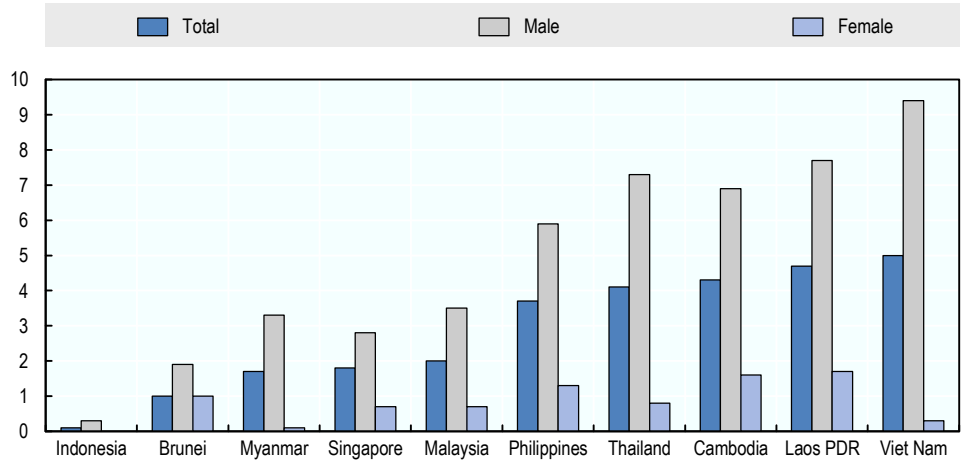
**Figure 1.5. Percentage of smoking initiation age amongst regular smokers aged 15-19**




*Source*: NIS (2011), *National Adult Tobacco Survey of Cambodia*.

Alcohol consumption amongst youth is increasing in Cambodia. This trend is a concern, particularly due to the traffic accidents it causes amongst youth. Road injury is the first cause of death amongst youth and alcohol consumption is the second leading cause of traffic accidents (Mom and Khuon 2009). There is no legal drinking age in Cambodia; as a result, adolescents as young as 14 years old regularly consume alcohol. Amongst 15-19 year olds, 42% of males and 27% of females were drinkers (Mom and Khuon 2009). The alcohol consumption level amongst Cambodians aged between 15 and 19 is amongst the highest in ASEAN countries (Figure 1.6). Empirical research in 2012 on the link between the use of tobacco and alcohol abuse in Cambodia indicates that men who smoked were two times more likely to have drunk alcohol in the previous week, suggesting that reducing alcohol consumption could also control tobacco use (Banta et al., 2012).

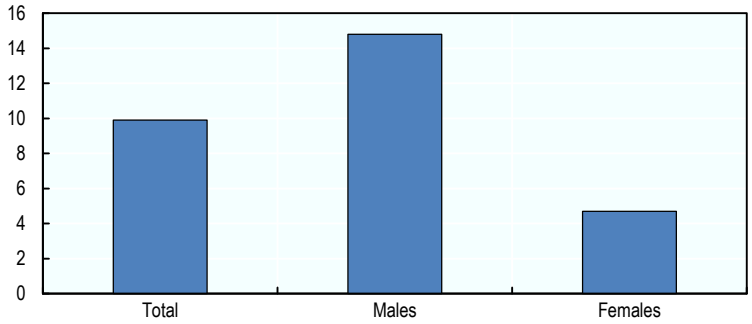
**Figure 1.6. Alcohol consumption of 15-19 year-olds, ASEAN Countries, 2010 (in litres of pure alcohol per year)**




*Source*: Global Health Observatory data 2010.

Heavy episodic drinking is one of the most important indicators of severe alcohol consumption. Heavy episodic drinking is defined as drinking 60 grams or more of pure alcohol on at least one occasion in the previous 30 days and is calculated as a percentage of the whole population. In 2010, of 15 to 19 year old Cambodians, about 10% were heavy episodic drinkers (Figure 1.7).

**Figure 1.7. Heavy episodic drinkers 15-19 years old (in percentage of age 15-19 population), 2010**




*Source*: Global Health Observatory Data 2010.

## Education and skills

The greatest challenges facing youth are poverty and social exclusion due to poor employment prospects because of little or no access to education or vocational training. Some youth are endowed by birth with certain basic assets including access to quality education, decent jobs, health care and other social protection. Others live in an environment where they and their families are vulnerable to various environmental, economic, social and individual risks. In fact, the majority of youth in developing countries today fall under this category. In particular, for youth living in rural areas, remoteness, ethnicity, disability and family problems contribute to vulnerability. The situation is no different in Cambodia, where poverty, poor access to schools and the low quality of education push children out of school. The following educational outcomes for Cambodian youth have been measured: participation and progression rates, completion and attainment rates, and learning achievements.

### *Educational participation*

The enrolment rate in primary school is high but drops significantly in secondary education, despite lower secondary being compulsory. In Cambodia, children start primary school at age 6 and secondary education at age 12. After 12 years of general education, students can continue to vocational training or tertiary education. According to the MoEYS, in 2015, the net enrolment rate in primary education was 94%, but the rate for lower secondary-school enrolment, which is still compulsory, dropped to 39% (Table 1.6) (MoEYS, 2015/16). The net enrolment rate for upper secondary education dropped even further to 19%, with more girls enrolled than boys in all levels (MoEYS, 2015/16). Net enrolment rate refers to the total number of students in the theoretical age group for a given level of education enrolled in that level, expressed as a percentage of the total population in that age group.

**Table 1.6. Net enrolment rate in primary, and lower and upper secondary schools, for school years 2010/11 to 2015/16**

| | | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | Total | 95.2 | 96.4 | 97.0 | 95.6 | 94.5 | 93.9 |
| | Girls | 94.6 | 96.1 | 97.0 | 95.8 | 94.9 | 94.6 |
| | Boys | 95.8 | 96.7 | 96.9 | 95.4 | 94.1 | 93.4 |
| Lower secondary | Total | 35.0 | 35.1 | 37.8 | 38.5 | 39.1 | 38.9 |
| | Girls | 37.2 | 37.4 | 40.2 | 41.1 | 42.2 | 42.7 |
| | Boys | 33.0 | 33.0 | 35.5 | 36.0 | 36.0 | 35.3 |
| Upper secondary | Total | 20.6 | 19.6 | 18.1 | 17.1 | 17.3 | 18.6 |
| | Girls | 20.5 | 20.1 | 18.8 | 18.0 | 18.6 | 20.3 |
| | Boys | 20.6 | 19.1 | 17.4 | 16.2 | 16.0 | 17.1 |

*Source*: MoEYS (2010/11-2015/16), *Education Indicators and Statistics.*

Net enrolment rates differ by region. Surprisingly, Phnom Penh does not have the highest enrolment rate for primary schools, and in fact the rate has decreased by 10 percentage points since its peak in 2012/13. The Coastal and Tonle Sap regions have experienced a significant drop in primary-school enrolment rate since 2012. Between 2012 and 2016, lower secondary enrolment improved in all regions, except Phnom Penh, where it actually decreased (Table 1.7). Despite legal provisions, child labour remains a problem in the garment and footwear industry (Better Factories Cambodia, 2013). In 2012, nearly 11% of Cambodian children were found to be child labourers (ADB, 2015).

**Table 1.7. Net enrolment rate by region for school years 2010/11 to 2015/16 (%)**

| | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Primary | | | |
| **Phnom Penh** | 91.8 | 92.4 | 98.0 | 89.5 | 89.5 | 88.6 |
| **Plain** | 96.0 | 97.6 | 97.6 | 98.0 | 99.0 | 97.9 |
| **Tonle Sap** | 95.8 | 96.6 | 96.7 | 93.8 | 90.1 | 84.1 |
| **Coastal** | 95.0 | 91.9 | 93.6 | 84.9 | 78.2 | 76.2 |
| **Plateau/Mountains** | 91.4 | 94.0 | 96.8 | 96.2 | 93.5 | 94.8 |
| **Total** | 95.2 | 96.4 | 97.0 | 95.6 | 94.5 | 93.9 |
| | | | Lower secondary | | | |
| **Phnom Penh** | 50.0 | 52.4 | 53.5 | 51.4 | 48.7 | 45.8 |
| **Plain** | 39.5 | 40.4 | 44.3 | 44.9 | 44.2 | 44.5 |
| **Tonle Sap** | 31.0 | 28.9 | 30.5 | 31.4 | 32.9 | 31.1 |
| **Coastal** | 30.6 | 31.9 | 34.2 | 34.5 | 35.3 | 33.8 |
| **Plateau/Mountains** | 24.1 | 21.8 | 23.9 | 26.3 | 26.6 | 26.8 |
| **Total** | 35.0 | 35.1 | 37.8 | 38.5 | 39.1 | 38.9 |
| | | | Upper secondary | | | |
| **Phnom Penh** | 46.8 | 39.2 | 34.3 | 30.0 | 28.5 | 29.3 |
| **Plain** | 20.9 | 20.8 | 19.5 | 19.0 | 18.8 | 20.5 |
| **Tonle Sap** | 16.5 | 14.8 | 13.6 | 12.7 | 13.2 | 13.5 |
| **Coastal** | 20.2 | 18.8 | 17.5 | 16.4 | 15.0 | 16.5 |
| **Plateau/Mountains** | 13.4 | 11.8 | 11.8 | 12.0 | 11.9 | 12.8 |
| **Total** | 20.6 | 19.6 | 18.1 | 17.1 | 17.3 | 18.6 |

*Source*: MoEYS (2010/11-2015/16), *Education Indicators and Statistics*.

Enrolment in tertiary education is rising but remains low. The tertiary gross enrolment rate is defined in this report as the number of students in tertiary education, regardless of age, over the total population aged 18 to 22. Based on this definition, in 2014, about 20% of Cambodian youth were enrolled in tertiary education. This represents a great improvement from 2004, when the enrolment rate was just 5% (Table 1.8). Rural youth enrolment also increased over this period, although it remains much lower than urban youth enrolment. The tertiary enrolment rate amongst youth from the wealthiest households (top quintile) is more than seven times that of youth from the poorest households, showing a persistent income-based inequality to access higher education.

Early school dropout remains a persistent and widespread phenomenon. Dropout rates from compulsory education for the 2014/15 school year were 6% for primary school (grades 1-6) and 19% for lower secondary school (grades 7-9). The dropout rate is calculated as the percentage of primary school children aged 6-11 and lower secondary school children aged 12-14 who have not completed that education cycle and were out of school at the time of this research. It excludes children who never entered school. Between 2010/11 and 2014/15, the dropout rates decreased slightly for primary school, but for secondary school they remained practically unchanged. In the Plateau/Mountains and Phnom Penh regions, dropout rates for lower secondary school increased (Table 1.9). MoEYS administrative data were used to calculate the dropout rates as the data size was much larger than what could be extracted from the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES).

The combination of high dropout rates and low enrolment in the next level leaves a small pool of young people in school. The report estimates that 63% of youth of secondary and tertiary school age (12-22) have left the education system. In 2015/16, although gross enrolment rates for primary school were

110%, only 80% of these students completed the primary education cycle. Enrolment and completion rates continue to cascade down in lower and upper secondary education (Figure 1.8).

**Table 1.8. Gross enrolment in tertiary education, 2004 and 2014**

| | | 2004 | | | 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Gross enrolment rate (%) | Number of tertiary enrolment, all ages | Tertiary school-aged population 18-22 | Gross enrolment rate (%) | Number of tertiary enrolment, all ages | Tertiary school-aged population 18-22 |
| Total | | 4.9 | 412 | 8 375 | 20.3 | 1 131 | 5 570 |
| Male | | 6.6 | 273 | 4 129 | 23.4 | 635 | 2 715 |
| Female | | 3.3 | 139 | 4 246 | 17.4 | 496 | 2 855 |
| Region | Urban | 16.5 | 321 | 1 941 | 36.5 | 641 | 1 754 |
| | Rural | 1.4 | 91 | 6 434 | 12.8 | 490 | 3 816 |
| Wealth quintiles (1 = poorest, 5 = richest) | 1 | 0.2 | 3 | 1 494 | 2.6 | 29 | 1 118 |
| | 2 | 0.1 | 2 | 1 540 | 6.6 | 72 | 1 091 |
| | 3 | 0.4 | 6 | 1 625 | 15.6 | 177 | 1 134 |
| | 4 | 2.1 | 36 | 1 736 | 26.3 | 295 | 1 121 |
| | 5 | 18.4 | 365 | 1 980 | 50.5 | 558 | 1 106 |

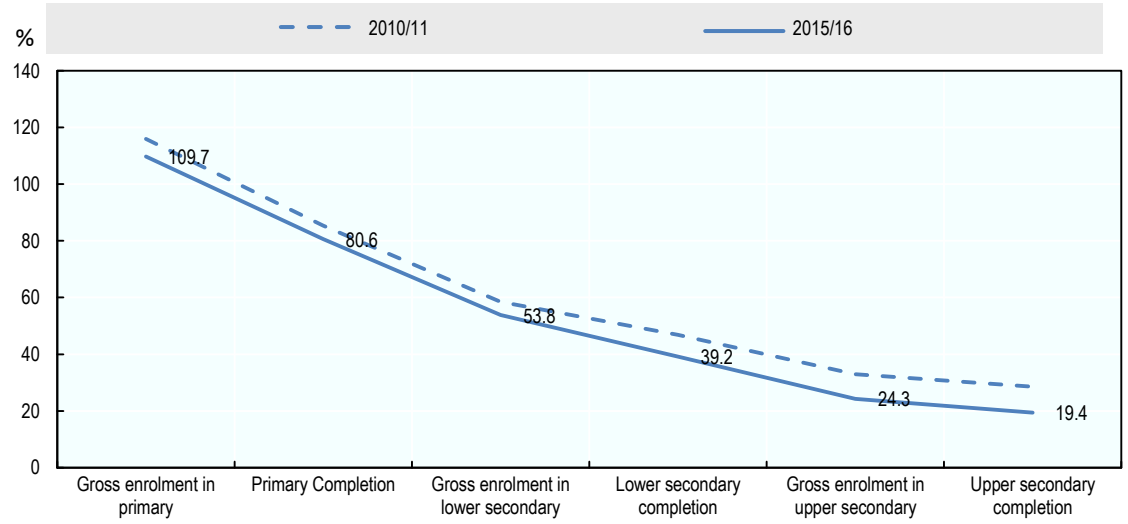
*Note*: Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) data were used as no MoEYS data was available for tertiary education. Tertiary education includes college and university students.
*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

**Table 1.9. Dropout rates 2010/11 and 2014/15**

| | Primary school dropouts | | Lower secondary school dropouts | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2010/11 | 2014/15 | 2010/11 | 2014/15 |
| Total | 9.3 | 6.2 | 20.7 | 19.2 |
| Male | 9.7 | 7.2 | 20.7 | 20.3 |
| Female | 8.8 | 5.2 | 20.8 | 18.2 |
| Phnom Penh | 5 | 4.1 | 11.3 | 12.4 |
| Plain | 6.1 | 4.6 | 22.6 | 19.5 |
| Tonle Sap | 10.1 | 7.3 | 22.8 | 19.9 |
| Coastal | 8.9 | 6.4 | 21 | 18.3 |
| Plateau/Mountains | 11.8 | 7.3 | 17.7 | 19 |

*Source*: MoEYS (2010/11-2015/16), *Education Indicators and Statistics.*

**Figure 1.8. Gross enrolment and completion rates for different levels, 2010/11 and 2015/16**




*Source*: MoEYS (2010/11 and 2015/16), *Education Indicators and Statistics.*

### *Promotion and grade repetition*

The promotion rates are similar for girls and boys, with girls performing slightly better than boys, but both averaging at around 85% for the year 2014/15 at the primary level. Promotion rate is defined by UNESCO as the share of students from a cohort enrolled in a given grade at a given school year who study in the next grade the following school year. The female repetition rate averaged 4.9% in primary education during 2009-14, compared to 6.7% for males over the same period. The repetition rate for females averaged at 1.15% for lower secondary, and at 1.7% for upper secondary over the same period, while for male students it averaged 2.4% and 3.0%, respectively (Table 1.10). While promotion and repetition rates for primary level remained relatively stable 2009/10 and 2014/15, there was a noticeable drop in the promotion rates and an increase in the repetition rates at the upper secondary level after 2013.

**Table 1.10. Promotion and grade repetition rates for school years 2009/10 to 2014/15**

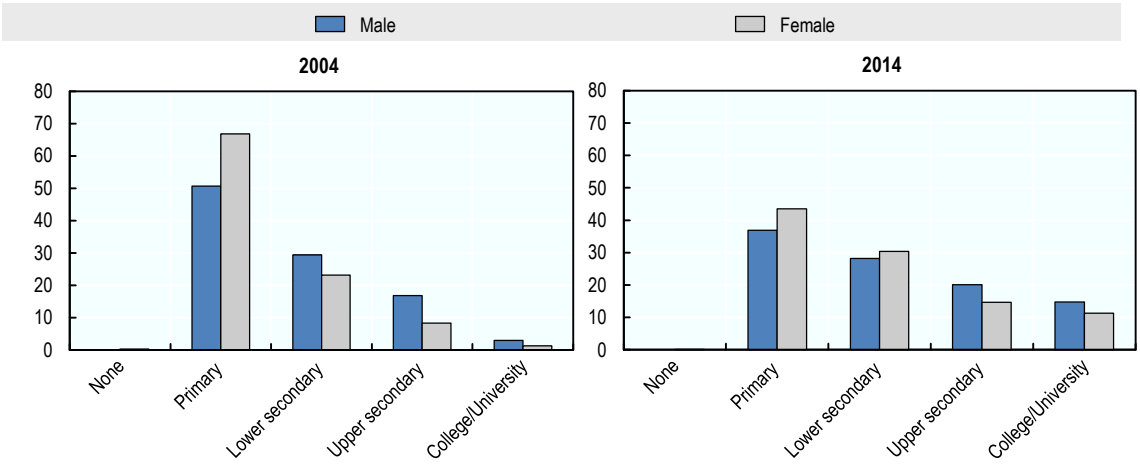
| | | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Primary level | | | |
| Promotion | Female | 85.1 | 87.2 | 90.7 | 87.6 | 88.5 | 89.4 |
| | Male | 83.4 | 84.8 | 91.2 | 82.1 | 84.7 | 84.7 |
| | Total | 84.2 | 85.9 | 91.0 | 84.7 | 86.5 | 87.0 |
| Repetition | Female | 6.2 | 5.0 | 4.5 | 4.1 | 4.3 | 5.3 |
| | Male | 7.9 | 6.5 | 6.0 | 5.5 | 6.0 | 8.1 |
| | Total | 7.1 | 5.8 | 5.3 | 4.8 | 5.1 | 6.7 |
| | | | | Lower secondary | | | |
| Promotion | Female | 78.6 | 76.9 | 80.3 | 78.3 | 78.5 | 80.5 |
| | Male | 78.3 | 76.1 | 76.9 | 76.5 | 75.8 | 76.6 |
| | Total | 78.4 | 76.5 | 78.5 | 77.4 | 77.2 | 78.6 |
| Repetition | Female | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.0 | 0.9 | 1.2 | 1.3 |
| | Male | 2.6 | 2.3 | 1.9 | 2.0 | 2.5 | 3.2 |
| | Total | 2.0 | 1.8 | 1.5 | 1.4 | 1.8 | 2.2 |
| | | | | Upper secondary | | | |
| Promotion | Female | 88.2 | 85.4 | 89.1 | 86.8 | 71.4 | 75.3 |
| | Male | 85.1 | 83.0 | 87.5 | 82.3 | 65.8 | 70.7 |
| | Total | 86.4 | 84.1 | 88.2 | 84.4 | 68.5 | 73.0 |
| Repetition | Female | 1.1 | 1.5 | 1.1 | 1.0 | 3.2 | 2.5 |
| | Male | 2.4 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 4.7 | 3.9 |
| | Total | 1.8 | 2.2 | 1.7 | 1.6 | 4.0 | 3.2 |

*Source*: MoEYS (2009/10-2015/16), *Education Indicators and Statistics*.

### *Educational attainment*

The share of youth aged 25-29 whose highest education obtained is only primary has decreased since 2004. In 2014, the share of youth whose highest level of education achieved was primary education was about 40% and the share of those whose highest level achieved was only lower secondary education was 29% (Figure 1.9). The average number of years spent in school was 8.6 years, which is less than the years required to complete lower secondary school. On the other hand, the share of youth who attained tertiary education increased since 2004. Tertiary education attainment amongst youth increased from around 2% in 2004 to around 13% in 2014. There were practically no youth with no schooling at all. More girls than boys had only primary education as their highest attainment. From upper secondary and above, more boys than girls finished those levels.

**Figure 1.9. Youth educational attainment, 2004 and 2014**
**(in % of all female and male youth aged 25-29)**




*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

### *Learning achievement*

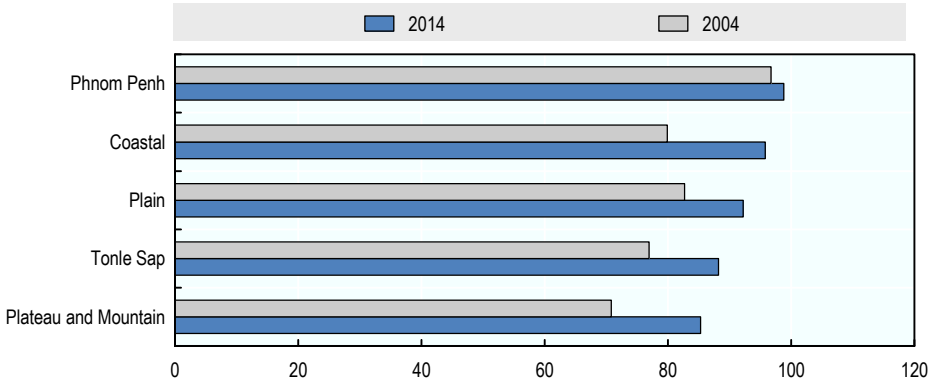
People completing compulsory education should at least be able to read, write and understand simple everyday communication statements. Globally, 9% of youth are illiterate (UNESCO, 2015). According to the CSES 2014, around 29% of the total population lacked basic reading and writing skills. Although this is improvement from 10 years earlier when it was 41%, in 2014 the level is still alarming and questions the quality of primary education. Cambodia has the second lowest literacy rate in ASEAN countries, after Lao PDR. The literacy rate amongst youth aged 15-24 was 91%, compared to 85% for adults aged 18-40 (Table 1.11), which shows that the new generation is better educated than their parents. Household wealth also seems to matter when it comes to literacy. Youth from richer families tend to have a higher literacy rate than those from poor families, with the gap being as wide as 25 percentage points. The region of Tonle Sap lags the most behind in literacy rate compared to other regions (Figure 1.10). At least 50% of disabled youth are able to read and write.

**Table 1.11. Literacy rate for total population and youth by wealth quintile, 2004 and 2014**

| | | 2004 | | | 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Literacy rate (%) | Number of persons with literacy | Number of total population | Literacy rate (%) | Number of persons with literacy | Number of total population |
| Total population | | 59 | 43 788 | 74 719 | 71 | 36 522 | 51 212 |
| | Male | 64 | 23 151 | 35 942 | 76 | 18 562 | 24 476 |
| | Female | 53 | 20 637 | 38 777 | 67 | 17 960 | 26 736 |
| Wealth quintile (1=poorest, 5=richest) | 1 | 42 | 6 322 | 14 947 | 56 | 5 738 | 10 245 |
| | 2 | 53 | 7 923 | 14 941 | 65 | 6 679 | 10 243 |
| | 3 | 58 | 8 659 | 14 945 | 73 | 7 427 | 10 241 |
| | 4 | 65 | 9 639 | 14 944 | 78 | 7 944 | 10 242 |
| | 5 | 75 | 11 245 | 14 942 | 85 | 8 734 | 10 241 |
| Total youth population, aged 15-24 year-old | | 81 | 13 927 | 17 147 | 91 | 9 829 | 10 773 |
| | Male | 85 | 7 209 | 8 490 | 91 | 4 869 | 5 340 |
| | Female | 78 | 6 718 | 8 657 | 91 | 4 960 | 5 433 |
| Wealth quintiles (1=poorest, 5=richest) | 1 | 67 | 2 072 | 3 095 | 82 | 1 757 | 2 144 |
| | 2 | 76 | 2 525 | 3 305 | 88 | 1 844 | 2 107 |
| | 3 | 81 | 2 717 | 3 364 | 94 | 2 072 | 2 204 |
| | 4 | 86 | 3 053 | 3 552 | 95 | 2 025 | 2 124 |
| | 5 | 93 | 3 560 | 3 831 | 97 | 2 131 | 2 194 |

*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

**Figure 1.10. Youth literacy rate by region, 2004 and 2014 (%)**




*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

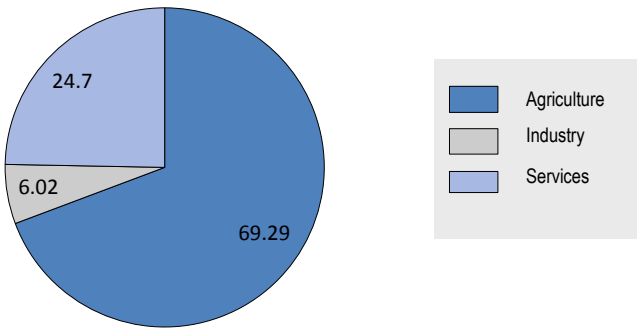
## Employment

Globally, 13.1% of youth are unemployed (ILO, 2016). More than one-third (37.7%) of employed youth aged 15-24 in the developing world are poor and 17.7% live in extreme poverty, on less than USD 1.25 per day (ILO, 2016). Youth from poor households tend to leave school early and accept any kind of work, even with low wages and unsafe conditions. This traps them in low-quality and low-skilled jobs, often in the informal sector, leaving them vulnerable to shocks and with little chance to find a better job. Working poverty affects as many as 14% of youth (or 169 million) in the world, and this share comes close to 25% if the near poor (living below USD 4 per day) are included (ILO, 2015). Indicators to measure employment outcomes in developing countries usually include the rate of NEET youth, the informal employment rate, the share of poorly paid youth and skills mismatch.

### *Labour force participation and job quality*

In Cambodia, the labour force participation rate of youth aged 15-29 was high at 76% in 2014 and the unemployment rate low at around 0.7% (NIS, 2015). The unemployment rate in developing countries is usually low because most youth take any job, regardless of pay or working conditions. This indicator therefore does not reflect the quality of jobs. In 2014, 40% of youth were in self-employment (own account work or unpaid family work), which are considered vulnerable jobs (Figure 1.12). Although this is an improvement from ten years earlier when it was 73%, the share of vulnerable youth workers remains non-negligible. These jobs are usually informal work arrangements without social protection and poorly paid. Close to 70% of youth engaged in vulnerable employment were found in the agriculture sector (Figure 1.11). Young women and youth from poor households were also more likely to be in vulnerable employment. According to the ILO, vulnerable employment is characterised by inadequate earnings, low productivity and difficult work conditions that undermine workers' fundamental rights.

**Figure 1.11. Distribution of youth in vulnerable employment, by sector, 2014**




*Source*: NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

Of the wage-employed youth, 73% were earning below the average wage. In 2014, the average wage of youth aged 15-29 was 4.6% lower than that of adults, and 4.3% lower than the whole working population. Female youth received 11% lower wages than male youth. In real terms, waged employees were paid KHR 86 328 (Cambodia riels) per week in 2014, just 16% more than ten years earlier. The real weekly wage rate of youth working in the Plain region was the lowest amongst all regions, while the highest was in Phnom Penh (KHR 105 107). The wage gap between the two regions was 27 percentage points. Self-employed youth (or own account workers) earned an income of KHR 44 932 per week, that is, 48% lower than the average wage of youth employees. The ILO defines decent work as work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. Whether employee or self-employed, job conditions for youth are precarious and of poor quality.

**Table 1.12. Share of youth earning below average wage or income (as a percentage of total workforce in the respective categories), 2004 and 2014**

| % | | Wage employed | | Self-employed | Total employed |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2004 | 2014 | 2014 | 2014 |
| | Total | 87.5 | 73.0 | 47.4 | 49.1 |
| | Male | 86.5 | 69.1 | 45.8 | 47.9 |
| | Female | 88.5 | 77.4 | 49.0 | 50.3 |
| Regions | Phnom Penh | 66.4 | 57.2 | 53.4 | 50.2 |
| | Plain | 91.3 | 81.1 | 50.6 | 55.7 |
| | Tonle Sap | 92.1 | 72.2 | 42.5 | 41.1 |
| | Coastal | 92.6 | 80.4 | 47.5 | 46.7 |
| | Plateau/Mountains | 93.5 | 79.7 | 51.0 | 50.7 |
| Wealth quintile (1=poorest, 5=richest) | 1 | 94.7 | 82.1 | 62.1 | 60.0 |
| | 2 | 94.9 | 80.4 | 49.5 | 52.3 |
| | 3 | 91.7 | 77.6 | 41.9 | 50.7 |
| | 4 | 89.4 | 70.3 | 40.4 | 45.4 |
| | 5 | 70.6 | 51.1 | 44.1 | 34.2 |

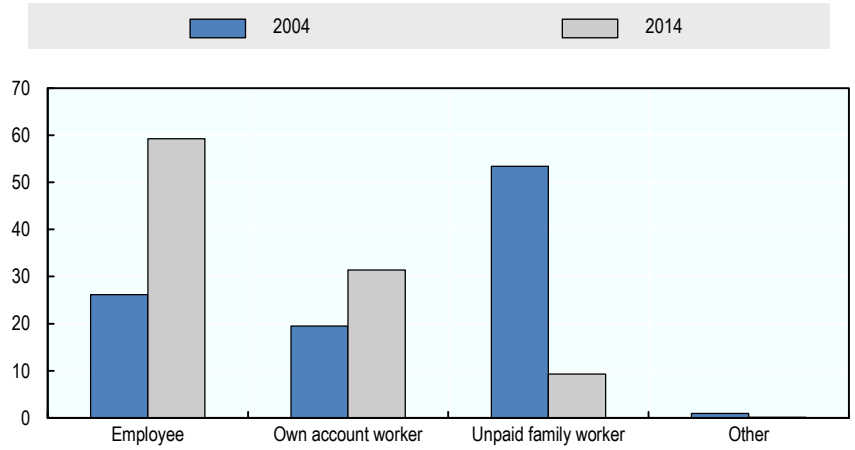
*Note:* 2004 data for self-employed not available.
*Source*: NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

### *Youth employment status*

Following the garment manufacturing and tourism expansion, youth are shifting from agriculture to services and industry, with wage employment making up an increasing share of youth employment. The share of productive employment and decent work are the main means to help young individuals to become financially independent, gain self-esteem and social status, and build a future for themselves. Given that youth aged 15-29 year-old make up about 43% of the total working age population in Cambodia, ensuring that today's youth have access to quality jobs is critical to building a qualified and productive labour force. There has been no improvement in productivity in either the service or industry sectors and most jobs, such as craft-related or elementary occupations in factories, require low skills (ADB, 2015).

The youth employment rate in 2014 was 76%, compared to 86% for adults (18-40). In 2014, 59% of total youth employed were in wage jobs, compared to 26% in 2004. The share of unpaid family workers decreased significantly for the same period, from 53% to 9% (Figure 1.11.A). Youth are moving out of agriculture jobs into services and sales. Yet, the share of managers has declined considerably amongst the total work force in Cambodia (ADB, 2015), which is becoming a real gap to fill.

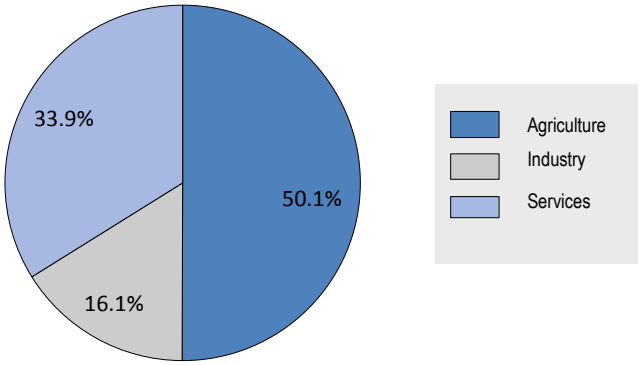
**Figure 1.12. Distribution of employed youth, by employment status, 2004 and 2014**




*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

In 2012, out of the total employed youth aged 15-29, 50% were in agriculture, 16% in industry and 34% in services (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013) (Figure 1.13).

**Figure 1.13. Distribution of youth employment by job status, 2012**




*Source*: Kanol, Khemarin and Elder (2013), *Labour market transitions of young women and men in Cambodia*.

### *NEET and inactive youth*

NEET refers to the number of youth neither in employment nor in education or training. It counts the number of unemployed non-students looking for a job and non-students not actively looking for a job (inactive non-students). The NEET youth rate in Cambodia was 6.4% in 2014, including 6.2% inactive non-students and 0.2% unemployed non-students. This was a decline from 8.7% in 2004. In 2014, 10.4% of young women were NEETs while only 2.2% of young men 2.2% were NEETs (Table 1.13). The NEET youth prevalence in urban areas was 6.7% and 6.3% in rural areas. Household background also made a difference as there were 7.9% NEETs in the poorest quintile compared to 5.2% in the richest, and 38% of NEETs were from agricultural households. At 6.8%, the region of Tonle Sap had the highest number of NEETs (NIS, 2015).

**Table 1.13. NEET rate amongst youth aged 15-29, 2004 and 2014, in percentage by gender and region**

| | | 2004 | | | 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | NEET | Unemployed non-students | Inactive non-students | NEET | Unemployed non-students | Inactive non-students |
| Total | | 8.73 | 0.70 | 8.03 | 6.39 | 0.15 | 6.24 |
| Male | | 4.71 | 0.77 | 3.94 | 2.24 | 0.14 | 2.10 |
| Female | | 12.64 | 0.63 | 12.01 | 10.41 | 0.16 | 10.25 |
| Region (%) | Phnom Penh | 12.18 | 2.36 | 9.82 | 5.08 | 0.11 | 4.97 |
| | Plain | 7.34 | 0.41 | 6.93 | 6.45 | 0.14 | 6.31 |
| | Tonle Sap | 8.29 | 0.64 | 7.65 | 6.77 | 0.23 | 6.54 |
| | Coastal | 12.98 | 0.76 | 12.22 | 6.62 | 0.13 | 6.49 |
| | Plateau/Mountains | 8.61 | 0.10 | 8.51 | 7.02 | 0.08 | 6.94 |
| Disability (% of disabled population) | | 19.66 | 0.75 | 18.91 | 42.59 | 0.00 | 42.59 |

*Note*: NEET = Unemployed non-students + inactive non-students.
*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

In 2014, the majority of the NEETs were inactive youth. Inactive youth accounted for 97% of the total NEET youth, and only 3.0% of non-student youth were actively looking for jobs. Although the majority of the NEETs were women (83%), which could explain the level of inactivity since many women in Cambodia stop working after they marry (see Chapter 4), the NEET rate hides the number of those who are discouraged and give up seeking a job for reasons other than personal choice. Discouragement due to lack of opportunities and resources, particularly in rural areas, combined with low qualifications and low self-esteem, drive youth, including women, to become inactive and give up on job search. The number of those who are discouraged is difficult to capture and is hidden amongst inactive youth.

### *Hours of work*

In 2014, youth's working hours were on average 46 hours per week, similar to that of adults and two hours less than that of the total working population. Young women (15-29) worked fewer hours than young men. In 2014, youth in agriculture worked 36 hours a week, 14 hours a week less than in other sectors. Those employed in the industry and services worked 54 hours and 50 hours per week, respectively. Own account workers worked 36 hours per week, and unpaid family workers worked fewer hours than own account workers (NIS, 2015). Article 137 of Cambodia's labour law states that in all establishments of any nature the number of hours worked by workers of either gender cannot exceed 8 hours per day or 48 hours per week. The majority of working youth (86%) work at least 40 hours per week. Two-thirds of working youth work an excessive number of hours (50 hours or more per week) (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013).

Time-related underemployed affects a small number of the youth working population. Time-related underemployment covers those who are willing and able to increase working time when they are working fewer than a specified time threshold during the reference period (40 hours per week for international comparability). In 2014, around 0.2% of employed youth were underemployed, a decline from 7.2% in 2004 (NIS, 2015).

### *Qualifications mismatch*

The labour force in Cambodia is characterised by low education and skills. Qualification mismatch is the biggest problem in Cambodia's labour market. Employers are unable to fill posts with qualified candidates while youth are struggling in poor-quality jobs. Youth qualification mismatch is calculated by applying the occupational skills categories of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED). Ten occupational groups are matched to six ISCED levels (Table 1.14).

**Table 1.14. ISCO occupation groups and education levels**

| Code | Major ISCO groups | Broad occupation groups | Education levels |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Legislators, senior officials and managers | High-skilled non-manual | Tertiary (ISCED 5-6) |
| 2 | Professionals | | |
| 3 | Technicians and associate professionals | | |
| 0 | Military occupations | Low-skilled non-manual | Secondary (ISCED 3-4) |
| 4 | Clerical support workers | | |
| 5 | Services and sales workers | | |
| 6 | Skilled agricultural and fisheries workers | Skilled manual | |
| 7 | Craft and related trades workers | | |
| 8 | Plant and machine operators and assemblers | | |
| 9 | Elementary occupations | Unskilled | Primary (ISCED 1-2) |

*Note*: ISCO category 6 includes market-oriented skilled agricultural workers as well as subsistence farmers and fishworkers.
*Source*: Kanol, Khemarin and Elder (2013), *Labour market transitions of young women and men in Cambodia*.

In 2014, approximately 31% of employed youth had matching qualifications for their occupations. The share of overeducated employees was 23%, while the undereducated accounted for 46% of the total youth employed. Half of the female workers and 41% of the males were undereducated. Only 27% of female and 36% of male employees had matching qualifications. The share of undereducated youth employment was 49% in rural areas. The rates of undereducated and well-matched employment were moderate in urban areas at 37% and 38%, respectively. The Plains area had a high rate of undereducated employment at 51%, while the overeducated incidence was similar in all regions (around 20%). Phnom Penh had the highest rate of matching employment at 40%. Industry was dominated by undereducated employees and had the fewest overeducated workers. Services had the best matching qualifications for the occupations. Undereducated workers were numerous in vulnerable employment but fewer than in waged employment (Table 1.15). Between 2004 and 2014, the rate of overeducated workers changed drastically, especially amongst the vulnerable employment and agricultural groups.

**Table 1.15. Youth qualification mismatch, 2004 and 2014 (%)**

| (%) | | 2004 | | | 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Well-matched | Under-educated | Over-educated | Well-matched | Under-educated | Over-educated |
| Total | | 38.3 | 55.7 | 6.1 | 31.4 | 45.6 | 23.0 |
| Male | | 41.6 | 50.9 | 7.5 | 35.7 | 41.1 | 23.2 |
| Female | | 34.5 | 61.0 | 4.4 | 26.9 | 50.4 | 22.7 |
| **Employment status** | Vulnerable employment | 35.7 | 60.3 | 4.1 | 31.4 | 38.2 | 30.4 |
| | Wage employment | 45.1 | 44.1 | 10.8 | 31.5 | 50.7 | 17.8 |
| **Employment by sector** | Agriculture, forestry and fisheries | 30.0 | 69.4 | 0.6 | 29.2 | 43.1 | 27.7 |
| | Industry | 45.4 | 44.8 | 9.8 | 23.0 | 64.0 | 13.0 |
| | Services | 51.1 | 33.6 | 15.3 | 43.4 | 28.0 | 28.6 |
| **Regions** | Phnom Penh | 53.3 | 26.9 | 19.8 | 40.4 | 35.4 | 24.1 |
| | Plain | 40.0 | 55.1 | 4.9 | 28.5 | 51.4 | 20.1 |
| | Tonle Sap | 33.3 | 62.3 | 4.4 | 31.7 | 44.2 | 24.0 |
| | Coastal | 39.4 | 55.4 | 5.2 | 34.6 | 42.1 | 23.4 |
| | Plateau/Mountains | 29.0 | 67.7 | 3.3 | 26.4 | 48.3 | 25.3 |
| **Wealth quintiles (1=poorest, 5=richest)** | 1 | 26.6 | 70.6 | 2.8 | 25.7 | 51.0 | 23.3 |
| | 2 | 31.3 | 65.6 | 3.1 | 26.9 | 53.3 | 19.8 |
| | 3 | 36.9 | 59.2 | 3.8 | 31.4 | 48.0 | 20.6 |
| | 4 | 42.3 | 50.9 | 6.9 | 34.9 | 42.3 | 22.8 |
| | 5 | 50.6 | 36.7 | 12.6 | 40.0 | 30.7 | 29.3 |

*Source*: NIS (2005b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2015b), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

## Empowerment and participation

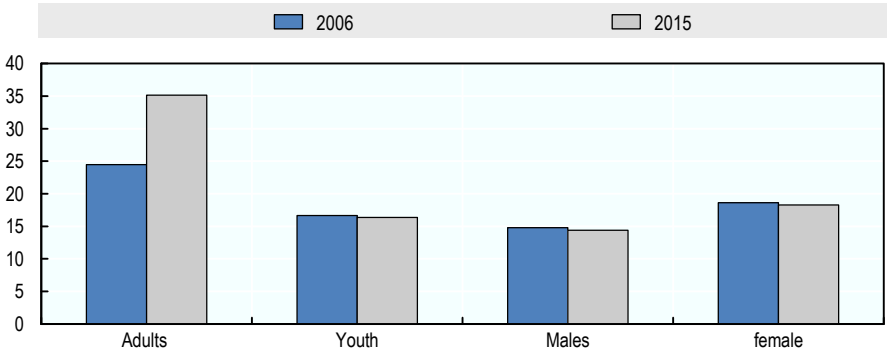
Participation and empowerment are important rights for the well-being of youth. Participation looks at a young person's level of engagement in political and social activities. Empowerment is a broad concept touching on many critical areas of youth well-being and inclusion, including social and human empowerment, economic empowerment, women's empowerment and political empowerment. As put forward in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Youth Strategy 2014-2017*, youth empowerment requires guaranteeing the rights of youth to participate in government decision making and processes at the national, sub-national and local levels (UNDP, 2014). Participation and empowerment can, however, only be made possible by the existence and enforcement of legal frameworks that protect the rights of youth to participate in civic and political activities and to freedom of expression. Participation and empowerment indicators usually include social capital (social support networks and trust), civic and political engagement, as well as crime and violence.

### *Social capital*

The legacy of war and the Khmer Rouge plays an important role in shaping trust amongst Cambodians. During the Khmer Rouge period, when many people died of overwork, disease and starvation, regime policy was to generate mistrust amongst neighbours and even between children and parents. People reported each other's activities to the leadership, which was a matter of life and death. This lack of trust has continued to the present day. A study by Inada (2013), although not focused on youth, found that Cambodians have extremely low trust in people outside their families. When asked, many people said that there were few people they could trust in their communities. The level of trust was higher in rural than in urban settings, and people trusted family members and relatives the most, followed by friends, people in the neighbourhood, public institutions such as hospitals and schools, local government and religious institutions. People expressed low trust of political parties, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), co-workers and employers. The institution that people trust least is the military. Lack of trust inhibits the growth of social capital, which is a catalyst of economic growth. Social capital generates trusting relationships, which in turn produce social capital (Fu, 2004). Building trust amongst youth is therefore an important precondition to improve well-being.

Cambodia is a hierarchical society, where family ties are strong, and people often depend more on family and relatives than on other connections, including institutional ones. This is one of the main reasons that nepotism dominates the country's political culture (Inada, 2013). Youth whose family members and relatives have important positions in government enjoy favouritism such as employment in public institutions and rapid promotion. Youth living in rural areas or without powerful family members and relatives have weaker social connections and networks. Youth have less social support networks than adults (Figure 1.14).

**Figure 1.14. Social network support by age group and gender, 2006 and 2015**




*Note*: Question asked: If you were in trouble, do you have relatives or friends you can count on to help you whenever you need them, or not?
*Source*: Gallup World Polls 2006 and 2015.

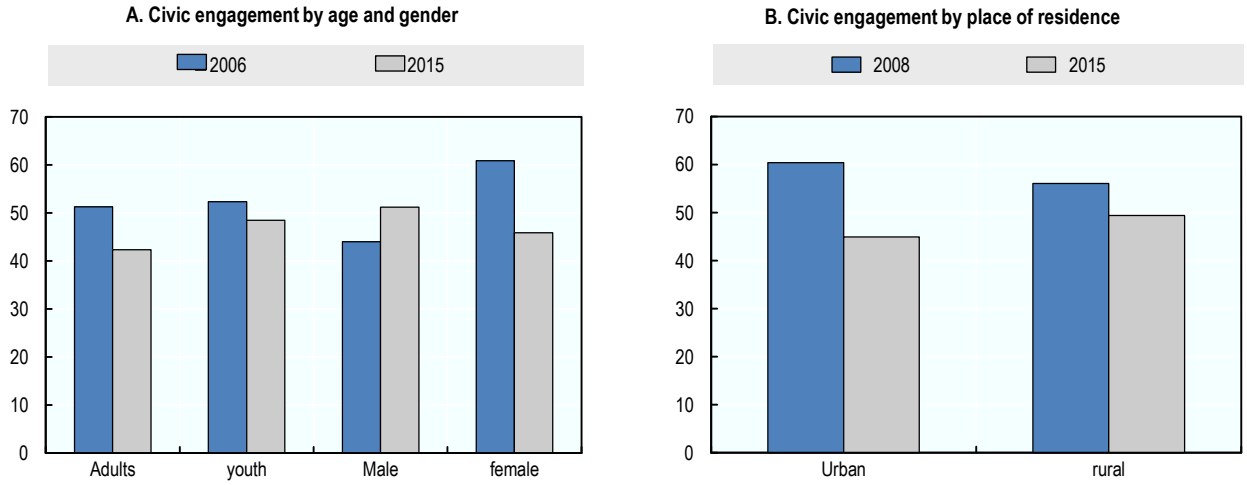
### *Civic and political engagement*

The legacy of war has left youth vigilant regarding their participating in civic and political activities. Engagement in political activities is believed to cause them more harm than benefit, and parents usually do not want their kids involved in politics. Yem Chak, a 59 year-old parent, was quoted in *The Phnom Penh Post* in 2012 as saying, "I don't want my children involved in politics because it makes them waste their time for study and business. Moreover, it can also affect their safety. In my generation, politics were unstable and it caused weak and ordinary people to die" (Phearun and Banung, 2012). Recently, however, with the proliferation of social media like Facebook, increasing numbers of youth are participating in social and political activities, especially urban youth, who have better access to the Internet. Their participation is motivated to some extent by political aspirations and is sometimes backed by politicians, thus becoming polarised. There are now both pro-government and anti-government youth movements. Other activists such as garment workers' unions, who are mostly young, are having increasing influence on negotiations and policy making. They campaign to improve the welfare of garment workers. In 2014, big unions' rallies were demanding higher wages and had a measure of success.

Elections are another important activity through which youth can express their political opinions. For the 2013 elections, according to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) 65% of 18-19 year olds registered to vote (NDI, 2013). The registration rate for those aged 25-45 was 84%. Though there were no data for youth aged 18-30, according to the National Election Committee (Theara, 2013), only 37% were registered. Due to the widespread use of social media, however, youth tend to express their opinions through virtual platforms, and politicians have been adapting their communication means to reach the youth population. Youth are increasingly present in management positions within governments as well as becoming elected officials in local governments (Heng, Mun and Sreang, 2014).

Youth participation may also be in the form of volunteerism. Several government institutions have set up youth volunteer groups such as the Red Cross Youth (RCY). RCY is one of the biggest youth volunteer groups in Cambodia. It organises various activities such as raising awareness about traffic safety rules to citizens. On the other extreme, the government has enlisted thousands of student volunteers to work on land titling in various provinces, which has raised controversy over the legitimacy of such an exercise.

**Figure 1.15. Youth civic engagement**




*Note*: The question asked: In the past month, have you donated money to a charity, volunteered time to an organisation, or helped a stranger or someone you didn't know who needed help?
*Source*: Gallup World Polls 2006 and 2015 (Figure 1.14.A) and Gallup World Polls 2008 and 2015 (Figure 1.14.B).

Besides government-led groups, university student groups, political parties and NGOs and other volunteer groups are beginning to open up more space for Cambodian youth to participate in politics, social networks and volunteerism. In 2015, about half of the youth population participated in some kind of civic act (donation, volunteering or help to a stranger). Overall civic engagement amongst youth has however slightly decreased between 2006 and 2015. In 2015, young men were more civically engaged than young women, and rural youth more engaged than rural youth (Figure 1.15).

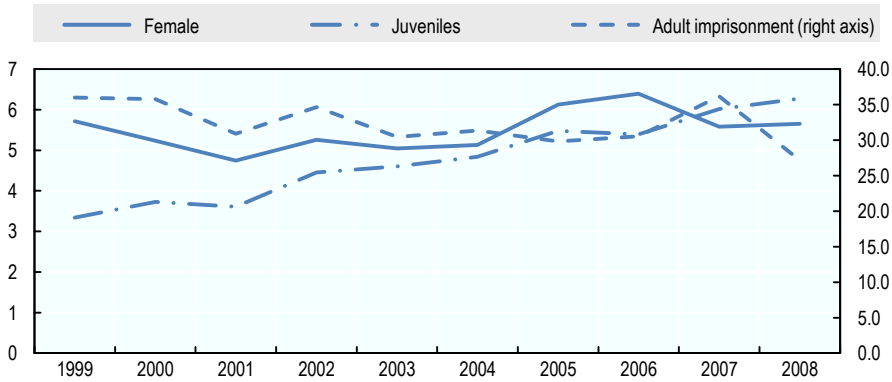
### *Juvenile justice*

In areas where crime rates are high or social norms induce young people to have criminal and risky behaviour, it is unlikely that social capital can be built and young people freely engage in civic and political activities. Cambodia has faced several challenges in social and economic development due to the traumatic period of the civil war. Personal insecurity such as fear of torture or cruel and unusual punishment is an obstacle to a prosperous society because it restrains individuals from movement and self-development. Hence, reducing injustice, crimes and violence would reduce vulnerability, especially that of youth. The legal age of criminal responsibility in Cambodia is 18. According to Article 39 of the criminal code, however, minors 14 years old and older may be tried if their character is dangerous to others. Children confined with adult criminals are at risk of violence, exploitation and abuse, but the overcrowded prison system does not allow separation between juveniles and other inmates. Although the law grants some protection to children, it is not applied because of a dysfunctional criminal justice system. This is an obstacle to juvenile rehabilitation.

According to the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR), in 2014, 92% of accused juveniles were put in pre-trial detention in 2012, while the figure was 71% for adults (CCHR, 2014). The pre-trial ratio of imprisonment was 63%. The rate of pre-trial incarceration was 70% for females and 83% for juveniles. The country was ranked 23rd out of 211 countries for pre-trial detention (LICADHO, 2015). This high rate was due to most accused juveniles not having a permanent address and to judicial supervision requiring too many resources. The privacy of juveniles on trial should be carefully maintained, because publicity is harmful and affects their reintegration into society, but this is not done in Cambodia.

Out of 100 000 people in 2009, stealing and burglary (minor crimes), which largely involve juveniles, were the most common crime with 8.07 cases, whilst there were 7.2 cases of assault with injury and 2.5 cases of homicide (Broadhurst, Bouhours and Keo, 2013). The imprisonment rate rose from 24 to 84 per 100 000 adults between 1999 and 2008. Female prisoners were 5.6% of the total inmates in 2008, and juveniles 6.3% (increased from 3.3% in 1999) (Figure 19). In 2011, total prisoners had increased by 13% from 2010, reaching 15 001 (98.1 inmates per 100 000) (LICADHO, 2011).

**Figure 1.16. Prison population, 1999-2008 (in numbers per 100 000 adults)**




*Source*: Adapted from Broadhurst, Bouhours and Keo (2013), "Crime and Justice in Cambodia".

### *Youth victims of assault and violence, especially against young women*

Youths exposed to serious or prolonged attacks may later act violently themselves. It can cause them to commit crimes, drop out of school, run away from home or become physically or emotionally disabled. According to CSES data (NIS, 2015), in 2014, victims of violence were 0.3% of the total population, compared to 1.2% in 2004. The majority (96%) were victims of physical attack, including slapping or pushing, punching or beating, burning and other forms of violence that cause serious injury. Of the victims, youth were 30% and female victims were 17%. Amongst the youth victims, 92% were exposed to physical attacks and of those, 61% were female. Domestic abuse against young women was 29% (NIS, DGH and ICF, 2015). Women belonging to the poorest and the richest households experienced more violence than other groups (Table 1.16). An analysis of the determinants conducted by the study concludes that there are strong links between domestic violence and the low level of education of the victim, as well as the husband's behaviour (alcoholic or jealous tendencies).

**Table 1.16. Incidence of violence against young women aged 15-29, 2014**

| | | Physical or sexual violence against young women (%) |
|---|---|---|
| **TOTAL** | | 29.0 |
| Region | Plain | 43.8 |
| | Tonle Sap | 24.2 |
| | Coastal | 27.5 |
| | Plateau/Mountains | 38.5 |
| | Phnom Penh | 28.5 |
| Wealth quintiles (1=poorest, 5=richest) | 1 | 31.5 |
| | 2 | 24.7 |
| | 3 | 27.6 |
| | 4 | 30.5 |
| | 5 | 30.5 |

*Note:* Calculated for young women who are married or living with a partner.
*Source*: NIS (2015a), *Cambodia Demographic Health Survey 2014*.

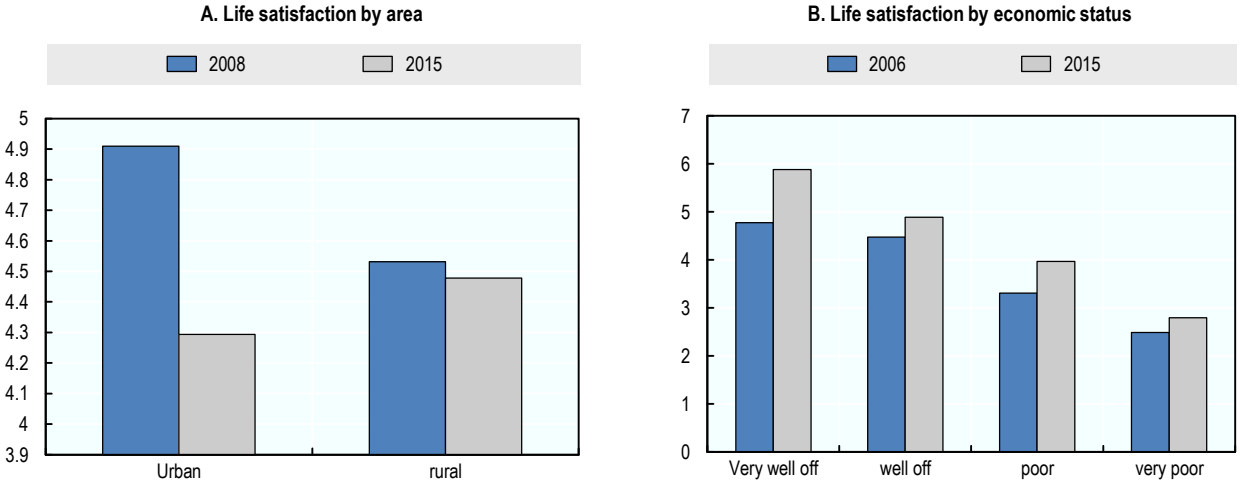
## Subjective well-being

Cambodian youth are in general quite positive about their lives. Despite the fact that measuring and comparing well-being amongst countries is controversial because of the subjective nature of the question, Gallup conducted life satisfaction surveys in many countries. According to their 2012 global poll, 72% of Cambodians said they were happy with their lives in general. Although in general they expressed being happy, Cambodian youth had major concerns and fears. Their top preoccupation was unemployment. According to a survey conducted by Analyzing Development Issues Center, out of 630 high-school and university students aged 15 to 35 in Phnom Penh, Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, the border areas of Poipet and Banteay Meanchey, and Kampong Thom, 49% said they feared unemployment (David and Rollet, 2015). Low-quality education and lack of qualified teachers were the main reasons that students feared joblessness. With the ASEAN economic community drawing closer, students feared that they would not be able to compete with students from other countries. According to Sok Chanbormey, a student from the Royal University of Law and Economics, "[y]ouths in other ASEAN countries have prepared themselves for the past five or ten years, but we just started this year, so I am worried that we cannot catch up with them" (Mony, 2014).

Even university graduates have difficulties finding a job. The unemployment rate amongst tertiary educated youth, at 3.8%, is higher than for those with primary (1.6%) or secondary (1.5%) levels (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013). Being unemployed for long periods may generate, amongst youth, social stigma, isolation and psychological problems such as depression and discouragement. The unemployed experience more mental problems than those who never experienced unemployment. Being unemployed is associated with economic problems and feelings of shame, and being employed is associated with

increased well-being (Reneflot and Evensen, 2014). Since unemployment remains the biggest issue for Cambodian youth, and many of them are unemployed (or underemployed), or fearful of being unemployed, their future prospects and well-being are at stake. The life satisfaction of Cambodian youth is at 4.5 on a scale of 10, with 10 being the best possible life and 0 being the worst.

**Figure 1.17. Life satisfaction of youth (on a scale of 1 to 10)**




*Note:* The question asked was: "Please imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. Suppose we say that the top of the ladder represents the best possible life for you, and the bottom of the ladder represents the worst possible life for you. On which step of the ladder would you say you personally feel you stand at this time, assuming that the higher the step the better you feel about your life, and the lower the step the worse you feel about it? Which step comes closest to the way you feel?".
*Source*: Gallup World Poll 2015.

## Conclusion and recommendations

With one-third of the country's population aged between 15 and 29, the potential to achieve a demographic dividend in Cambodia is real. The window of opportunity is however narrow, and as Cambodian youth face several challenges, policy responses will need to be multidimensional.

In terms of health, priority should be given to improving SRH services for youth, especially in rural areas. Youth-friendly health services and gender-sensitive clinics should be made accessible. SRH education should be implemented in schools and in communities to overcome gender-discriminatory social norms that prevent young men and women from seeking treatment for STIs. Rehabilitation centres for drug users should be made youth-friendly so that youth are not mixed with adults. Preventive programmes and public campaigns on alcohol and tobacco consumption targeted at teenagers should be reinforced, together with road safety measures. Cigarette advertisements should be regulated and minimised, and a legal drinking age should be introduced.

The issue of early school dropout is the biggest problem for secondary- and tertiary-school aged youth. Children from the poorest households have the lowest enrolment rate in secondary education, underscoring that financial constraints are an important reason for leaving school. Conditional cash transfer programmes could help remove poor households' economic constraints. On the other hand, the quality of education is low due to low qualified teachers, but also low salary incentives for them. Without properly training teachers and providing them with the right incentives, the quality of education will be compromised and an investment in education difficult to justify for parents. Physical access to school is also an obstacle for children living in remote rural areas, like in the Plateau and Mountain region. Access by both road and river must be improved. These children are also likely involved in agriculture work. In

those regions where agriculture is a dominant activity, the school year cycle could be adapted to take into account the seasonality of agricultural activities.

Unemployment and NEET rates in Cambodia are relatively low. Wage jobs are increasing, but the share of youth in vulnerable employment stands at a non-negligible 40%. Job quality remains low, and the majority of youth earn below the average weekly wage. Today's youth will need to upgrade their skills through on-the-job training or flexible TVET programmes that will allow studying while working. As most youth work in the informal sector, a scheme to certify past experience would help youth validate themselves to employers. As the majority of NEETs are inactive women who are constrained by family care, job centres should provide better information about job opportunities within the vicinity of their residence, and childcare support services should be developed.

More than 80% of youth live in rural areas and the majority of youth work in the agriculture sector. Yet if they had an opportunity to migrate to the city or another country, or find jobs in another sector, they would. The potential to develop the agriculture sector along the agro-food value chain is high. First, agricultural productivity should be improved in order to increase farmers' income. Rural areas will need better infrastructure such as irrigation and production techniques, and young farmers should be trained in business development and marketing skills. Motivated young entrepreneurs in rural areas could develop new value-added products and services along the agro-food value chain. Access to finance and social protection will be crucial to enable rural youth to become entrepreneurs. There should be more support for the development of SMEs in the agriculture sector, as they have the greatest potential to generate jobs for youth.

Skills shortage is the biggest challenge in the labour market. Employers are unable to find qualified workers to fill posts. Only 31% of youth have matching qualifications for their occupations, while 23% are overeducated and 46% are undereducated. Under-qualification is most severe in the industry sector. As a result of high dropout rates, 63% of youth aged 12-22 are out of school. These young people often enter the labour force with no basic skills. While some of the younger people can be reintegrated into the general education system, the older cohort will need support through apprenticeship or vocational training. These second-chance programmes should carefully assess the labour market needs and train young people in hard and soft skills so they can find wage employment. In addition, the increase in the share of overeducated over the years points to the quality of education but also to the need to diversify the economy from industries needing low-skilled workers in order to create jobs that require higher skills.

Civic participation in Cambodia is usually associated with political activities, which are believed to be unsafe. Parents discourage their children from joining political groups or volunteering their time for social activities. Youth themselves are reluctant to engage in politics for fear of retribution. Concepts such as democracy, national assembly or commune council are unfamiliar to the majority of youth. Volunteerism is one of the four pillars promoted by the National Youth Development Strategy. The rationale is that volunteering not only helps the community but also equips young people with soft skills needed in the workplace. The space for NGOs is growing but limited. Traditional mass youth organisations still monopolise the youth civic engagement scene and maintain connections with high-level politicians. Civic activities should be integrated as part of the regular school curriculum and more campaigns to raise awareness about how youth can become engaged citizens should be organised. More open debates and the formal inclusion of youth in decision making, e.g. youth representation in the national assembly or local development councils, should be established. Through use of the social media, there is an opportunity to create an environment conducive to open political debate. Freedom of speech should be respected so that youth can voice their opinions without fear of retribution. Social media and an online code of conduct should be defined through clear rules and regulations so that youth can participate freely and respectfully.

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# Chapter 2. Policies and institutional framework for youth

Many governments are demonstrating growing political will to develop comprehensive policies to provide a better response to the needs and aspirations of young people. Nearly two out of three countries in the world today have a national youth policy. National youth policies, however, are often not sufficiently integrated into overall national development plans or sectoral policies and remain ill-funded. In addition, lack of horizontal and/or vertical co-operation and co-ordination amongst sectoral actors can, and often does, distort youth policy outcomes and generate inefficiencies, such as overlapping or counteracting policies. Improving youth well-being thus requires assessing the broader youth environment and determining how policies and social norms may contribute to enable or disable youth's development potential and how youth can in turn participate in these policy processes.

This chapter examines the policy gaps, especially for disadvantaged youth, the policy coherence and co-ordination between government institutions involved in youth policies and programmes, the capacities of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), especially through the newly established National Youth Development Council and its General Secretariat, in carrying out its role as co-ordinating agency for youth policies. Finally, it examines the state of civic participation and what legal and practical mechanisms are needed to improve youth participation in policy processes.

## Socio-economic context

Cambodia achieved an average gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of 7% since 2011, and reduced poverty from 50% in 2003 to 17.7% in 2012 (World Development Indicators).[1] With over 30% of its population between the ages of 15 and 30, youth is a strong asset for the nation's future prosperity. Cambodian youth today have greater mobility and connectivity and as a consequence higher aspirations for their future. Compared to the economic progress achieved, however, the well-being of youth has not been improved. In 2009, a study by the UNDP states that the current economic structure has failed to meet youth needs, especially in the areas of employment, education and skills, and health. There are also a group of disadvantaged youth which have received little public support (ODM, 2009). The labour market has not been able to absorb the 300 000 new workforce entering the labour market every year.

Over 80% of youth live in rural areas, but only a few of them wish to become farmers like their parents and prefer to migrate to the city or a neighbouring country to look for wage jobs. Better roads and mobile communication, and easier access to loans from micro-finance institutions (MFIs) have made rural-urban migration easier (Bylander, 2013). The boom of the garment and tourism industries, especially, has been attracting many young people to the cities, especially Phnom Penh and Siem Reap. In 2013-14, the garment industry accounted for 16% of the country's GDP (Kane, 2015) and in 2015, it employed about 630 000 workers, a majority of them women and migrants (Turton, 2015; UNDP, 2015). Anecdotal evidence suggests that early school dropout is linked to employment opportunities, which is making a high share of Cambodian youth enter the job market as unskilled workers (CCASVA, 2015). Although the minimum wage for garment workers was increased from USD 140 to USD 153 starting January 2017, it remains low compared to the cost of living.

Health and nutrition are critical aspects of youth well-being, in particular sexual and reproductive health. In this regard, the government, with financial and technical support from donors, has done an impressive job in reducing HIV transmission and promoting effective family planning practices. The country has however been struggling when it comes to other aspects of youth health, namely nutrition and food

safety. The high level of malnutrition amongst Cambodian children is directly related to the nutrition of young mothers (MoH, 2008). Food safety is another emerging concern for the general population but is particularly acute for migrant workers, especially those working in garment factories (CARE, 2015).

With increased access to the Internet and use of social media, young people have been ever more engaged in politics. The 2013 elections were the youngest Cambodian election in history, with an unprecedented political engagement from youth under 25 years old, who sent a clear message that the government had not done enough for them. Social media had a lot to do with this new civic and political engagement. The ruling party also had to change its approach in reaching out to young people and to open doors for a new generation of leadership, both in the party and in the government. The government is now using the Internet and social media to reach out to young people and trying to build a new youth-friendly image. Since 2013, a new generation of politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen, professionals, community leaders and managers in NGOs have emerged.

Youth participation in policy processes must be understood in the historical context of the country. The current young generation was born after the war and genocide and thinks differently from its parents about civic engagement and the expected role of the government. Until recently, state-controlled mass youth organisations were the only way for civic engagement, mostly in the form of volunteerism. Though many youth-led NGOs have emerged, civic activism and political engagement is still not well perceived by adults. A 2009 UN report on youth participation recommended to push for decentralisation and de-concentration efforts in order to give young people a chance to be involved in the local development process (UN, 2009).

## Youth policy mapping

Several policies and mechanisms have been put in place to improve the situation of youth. National development frameworks and sectoral policies are concerned with youth development issues, in particular employment. New institutional mechanisms have been set up to facilitate youth participation and representation in policy processes. Implementing these measures has faced some challenges. This section reviews the key contents of the 2011 National Youth Development Policy (NYDP) and the National Youth Action Plan (NYAP), and their linkages to relevant sectoral policies, the budgetary process and reform, and the service delivery mechanisms at the sub-national level.

### *National development frameworks*

The Rectangular Strategy Phase III and the National Strategic Development Plan set out to ensure 7% annual economic growth, create more jobs for youth through private sector promotion, protect the environment and strengthen good governance at both the national and sub-national levels (RGC, 2013). Other macro-policies such as the Industrial Development Policy (RGC, 2015a), the National Employment Policy (RGC, 2015b) and the Labour Migration Policy (RGC, 2014) also include measures to improve youth employment. The Industrial Development Policy has four main axes: attracting FDI; developing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); improving the investment climate; and developing human resources for the workforce, the latter having a direct impact on youth development. The National Employment Policy 2015-2025 seeks to promote employment and skills, especially amongst youth, using three pillars: increasing decent and productive employment opportunities; enhancing skills and human resource development; and enhancing labour market governance. The Labour Migration Policy is mostly concerned with cross-border migration and harnessing labour migration for development (see Box 2.1 on the effect of employment services and vocational training on migration).

The NYDP, which was adopted in 2011, and the draft NYAP initiated in 2015 need to be understood within the context of the above broader macro policies. Both the NYDP and NYAP are comprehensive in their scope and address the needs of young people. The NYDP sets a long-term vision "to mobilize all effort available in the country to contribute positively to youth development and to provide them with

opportunities to develop their potential, to access education, employment and health services and to participate in decision making, and to contribute to family, community, national and global development." However both documents exclude budget details and financing mechanisms.

The NYDP lays out 12 strategies: i) developing a legal framework and mechanism; ii) promoting education, training and capacity development; iii) enhancing health education, health care and health service provision; iv) developing an entrepreneurial spirit and the labour market; v) promoting protection, security, safety and justice; vi) enhancing youth participation; vii) promoting leisure, recreational and sport activities; viii) promoting arts and cultural activities; ix) promoting awareness of the environment, agriculture, tourism and businesses; x) promoting volunteerism; xi) promoting gender equality; and xii) preventing drug abuse amongst youth and rehabilitating drug users. The NYAP, in a first phase, focuses on six strategies: i), ii), iii), iv), vi), and x).

The NYAP, which aims to operationalise the NYDP, indicates that all government ministries and agencies, sub-national administrations and non-state actors are expected to contribute to its implementation. The National Youth Development Council (NYDC), established in 2013, is to play a co-ordinating role, bringing together the activities carried out throughout the country, identifying the best practices, adopting and adapting the NYAP for the local context while conducting monitoring and evaluation to ensure that those activities work for the benefit of Cambodian youth. Despite a sophisticated planning approach, the NYAP does not provide information on budget and delivery mechanisms at sub-national levels.

**Box 2.1. Employment agencies and vocational training could help curb emigration**

A recent survey-based study by the OECD finds that the main driver of migration is employment opportunity. Nearly two-thirds of current emigrants reported to have left the country to take or search for jobs abroad. Popular destinations include Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea, where wages are higher than at home. Amongst those migrating, one-third does so to help the household. Employment services, such as those provided by the National Employment Agency (NEA), offer guidance to job seekers and provide labour market information. The OECD finds, however, that only 4% of Cambodians employed in the public or private sector found jobs through government employment agencies (6% for men and 2% for women). Most people used their personal networks or approached the employers directly. An interesting finding is that for those who did find employment through government employment agencies, few (6%) had intentions to emigrate, while a much bigger share, 17%, who found jobs on their own, planned to emigrate.

Despite the potential of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to reinforce the labour force and narrow the skills gap in Cambodia, currently only 5% of the labour force participates in TVET. The study finds that, unlike in other countries where vocational training usually helps would-be migrants to become more employable overseas and hence promotes emigration, in Cambodia trained people are less likely to migrate and more likely to find jobs in the domestic labour market.

*Source*: OECD/CDRI (2017), *Interrelations between Public Policies, Migration and Development in Cambodia*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273634-en.

### *Inventory of policies relevant for youth*

This section lists the different policies from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT), the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSAVY) (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1. Inventory of key policies for youth by line ministries**

| Sector | Strategic framework | Key programmes and issues addressed |
|---|---|---|
| **Education** | **Education Strategic Plan 2014-18** | **1) Equitable access to education services**:<br>▪ Child friendly school (CFS) policy, in effect since 2001: The objective is to contribute to the goal of education for all through the establishment of a proper learning environment enabling children to stay in school longer or at least complete the nine years of basic education. CFS implemented in 70% of primary schools and to be expanded to all provinces.<br>▪ Early childhood care and development (ECCD) expansion programme: The ECCD programme, which started in 2010, aims to provide early childhood care and development services to 5-year-old children, but in particular disadvantaged children and children at high risk of developmental retardation, malnutrition and disabilities. In 2013, the programme had reached a 53% enrolment rate of 5-year-olds, out of an objective of 60%. The current target is to enrol 80% of children by 2018.<br>▪ Education for Children with Disabilities (ECD) project: A pilot project, which started in 2000 in co-operation with the Disability Action Council funded by UNICEF, aims to integrate children with disabilities into communities and relevant institutions, to provide physiotherapy and health services, quality education and life skills. ECD has now expanded to 80 schools in 15 provinces and continues to increase its coverage.<br>▪ Literacy and lifelong learning programme.<br>▪ Second-chance education: Non-formal education programme including functional literacy, equivalence programme, community learning centre, re-entry programme, supplementary programme.<br>▪ Scholarships as cash and food for non-formal education learners.<br>**2) Quality and efficiency of educational services**:<br>▪ School quality system and quality assurance programme.<br>▪ General secondary and technical education through school operational budget for General Secondary Education and Technical Education High School curriculum development, life skill, Elective Vocational Education Programme (EVEP), vocational orientation service and career counselling.<br>▪ National and international student assessment systems strengthening programme.<br>▪ Higher education development programme.<br>▪ Results-based management system development programme.<br>▪ Education financial management reform and financing programme.<br>▪ Health education services.<br>▪ Scholarship programme for lower and upper secondary education, technical education and higher education.<br>▪ Technical and vocational education programme.<br>▪ Technical skill and soft skill development programme for youth.<br>▪ Children and youth council work, peer-to-peer programmes, youth volunteer programme and students association activities.<br>▪ Physical education and sports improvement programme<br>**3) Institutional and capacity development for educational staff for decentralisation**:<br>▪ Teacher performance management and appraisal programme to improve quality of teaching. |
| **Health** | **Health Strategic Plan 2008-15** | ▪ Family planning and birth spacing; safe abortions; maternal and child nutrition (mothers at young ages); integrated postnatal care of mothers and new-borns.<br>▪ Adolescent/Youth health services.<br>▪ HIV/AIDS/STI prevention and care.<br>▪ Mental health, including substance abuse.<br>▪ Tobacco<br>▪ Food safety |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Employment** | **National Strategic Plan for Developing Employment and Vocational Training 2013**<br><br>**Labour and Vocational strategic plan 2014-18**<br><br>**TVET Development Plan 2008** | ▪ Job shops: Employment service within Technical Colleges to assist graduates and community members find employment.<br>▪ Skills bridging: A 168-hour programme offered for out-of-school youth who have completed grade 7 but not completed grade 9, and have been out of school for at least two years. TVET programmes only accept students with at least a grade 9 diploma. The programme is managed by local technical schools who know the villages in their area (budget: USD 2 million from the Asian Development Bank [ADB] and the French development agency, *Agence française de développement, AFD*.<br>▪ Voucher skills training: Short training programmes from 2 weeks to 3 months, organised by technical colleges, as per request from villages to meet the employment needs of out-of-school youth and community members. An example is the Informal Apprenticeship programme, with local craftsmen who receive a small stipend for training new apprentices. The programme trains 100 000 to 200 000 young persons each year (started with an initial funding from the ADB and is now part of the national budget).<br>▪ Career counselling programme, offered through each technical college. In addition the NEA, a department of the MoLVT, has an active career counselling programme for all students through its career centres in each province.<br>▪ Vocational training certificate 1, 2, 3: The TVET system of 39 technical institutes offers post grade 9 certificate programmes of 3 years leading to certification in the Cambodia Qualifications Framework. The target is 22 000 graduates a year (budget: USD 5 million from the national budget).<br>▪ Internships: The National TVET policy supports internships and a new format for apprenticeships linking technical colleges and employment. A new national internship programme is being developed with the ADB.<br>▪ Other programmes: Wage-setting mechanisms; Social security fund insurance scheme; Scholarship programme; Mobile employment service; and National job and career fair. |
| **Women's affairs** | **Neary Rattanak Strategic Plan 2014-18 for gender equality and women's empowerment** | ▪ Women's economic empowerment.<br>▪ Social services and social protection.<br>▪ Education for women and children and attitude change.<br>▪ Promotion of women and children's health and nutrition, and prevention of AIDS.<br>▪ Legal protection for women and children.<br>▪ Women in decision making and mainstreaming gender in decentralisation and policy formulation.<br>▪ Gender, climate change and disaster-risk management.<br>▪ Strengthen institutions and capacity development towards gender equality.<br>▪ Provide skills training, employment, productive resources and economic empowerment; improve access to education for girls and women; improve women's health services.<br>▪ Ensure safety and fight against gender-based violence.<br>▪ Improve aid co-ordination and institutional capacity to address women's issues. |
| **Social affairs** | **Strategic plan 2014-18** | ▪ Welfare of the vulnerable groups and their families.<br>▪ Child welfare and youth rehabilitation.<br>▪ Psychological support services to orphans and disadvantaged children, and street children.<br>▪ Training, consultation services for women who are victims of sexual abuse or trafficking, domestic violence, for reintegration. |

*Source*: Based on questionnaire answered by ministries, 2016.

### *Youth programme budget*

Starting in 2016, the government has significantly raised the budget to ministries mainly responsible for youth and human resource development. Although specific sectoral budget allocated for youth programmes could not be calculated, the increase in the overall national budget according to the 2016 Budget Law put a lot of emphasis on human resource development and TVET, issues mainly related to the youth population. Budget allocation in 2016 to the MoEYS increased by 37% and to the MoLVT by 50% compared to the previous year. In 2016, the domestic revenue was estimated at 17.5% of GDP (a 22% increase compared to 2015), allowing more fiscal space for such investment.

To improve the efficiency of budget spending, the government started to implement programme-based budgeting (PBB) in all 25 line ministries. PBB is expected to improve the policy-budget linkages and allow tracking of budget spending and expected outputs, including those related to youth. The current budget classification system does not allow disaggregation by youth-specific budget nor other cross-cutting issues like gender. With the PBB, youth-specific spending could be tracked by creating a tag for each of the existing budget items, but for this to happen, the NYDC will need to engage with each line ministry and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, which is in charge of the Public Financial Management Reform Program.

**Table 2.2. National budget execution and allocation by sector (in USD million)**

| Sector | 2013 | % | 2014 | % | 2015 | % | 2016 | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total national recurrent spending** | 1 820 | 100 | 2 051 | 100 | 2 243 | 100 | 2 789 | 100 |
| **MoEYS** | 264 | 14.5 | 324 | 15.8 | 370 | 16.5 | 507 | 18.2 |
| **MoH** | 213 | 11.7 | 206 | 10.1 | 234 | 10.5 | 277 | 10.0 |
| **MoLVT** | 25 | 1.4 | 22 | 1.1 | 28 | 1.3 | 42 | 1.5 |
| **MoSVY** | 99 | 5.5 | 128 | 6.3 | 149 | 6.7 | 178 | 6.4 |
| **MoWA** | 7 | 0.4 | 7 | 0.4 | 7 | 0.4 | 10 | 0.4 |

*Note*: The data for 2013-2015 are executed budget, while for 2016 the data are the planned budget.
*Source*: Ministry of Economy and Finance Budget Execution Report (2011-2015); National Budget Law (2016).

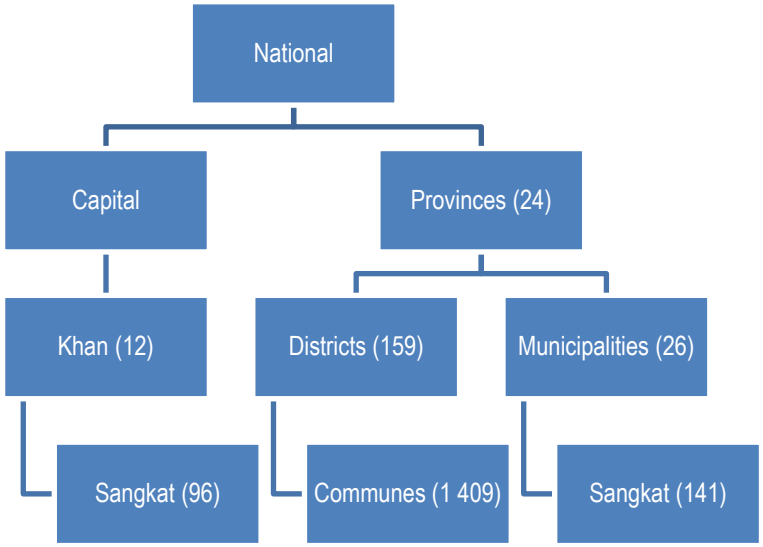
## Youth institutional landscape

### *The sub-national level*

Cambodia is a unitary state consisting of national and sub-national levels. The sub-national administration comprises three levels, starting with the provincial administrations and the capital city, then the municipal and district administrations (DM) and finally the communes and sangkats (CS). The capital city is subdivided into khans, which do not have separate administrations. In 2016, the sub-national administration (SNA) comprised one capital city, 24 provinces, 12 khans, 185 DMs and 1 646 CSs (Figure 2.1). A total of 14 139 villages fall under CS but do not have a separate administration.

The NYDP and NYAP expect sub-national authorities to implement the youth development policies. For this to happen, human and financial capacity at the local levels must be aligned with the development agenda as well as with the decentralisation reform led by the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD).

**Figure 2.1. The sub-national structure in Cambodia**




*Source*: Interview with key informant at the Ministry of Interior (May 2016).

In 2010, the government designed and approved the 10-year National Programme for Sub-National Democratic Development (NP-SNDD) (RGC, 2010). The NP-SNDD aims to transfer functions and resources to build capacity at the local level, but thus far, the SNAs do not have clear and substantial roles nor a budget to meet the needs of their people, including youth. The CS level has been given an unconditional grant of about USD 30 000 per year to make various investments, mostly in infrastructure development. The DM level has been receiving similar funds, called the District/Municipal Fund, of about USD 110 000 per year, about 80% of which is for administrative costs. The CS and DM levels do not have their own sources of revenues. The province level also relies heavily on national transfers, although it has been given some authority to raise some taxes and fees. SNA spending accounts for roughly 12% of the total national recurrent spending (NCDD, 2014).

Since 2013, the government has made efforts to accelerate the decentralisation process. In 2015, it was agreed that some major functions, including primary education, primary health, rural water supply and sanitation, and alternative care for vulnerable children, would be transferred to the sub-national level, starting as pilots in selected provinces, districts and municipalities. The transfer will however need to be done gradually due to the already limited capacity at the sub-national level. Therefore, while it is desirable that SNAs take an active role in implementing and/or co-ordinating the implementation of the youth development policy, reinforcing capacity at those levels will be crucial for the realisation of such decentralised processes.

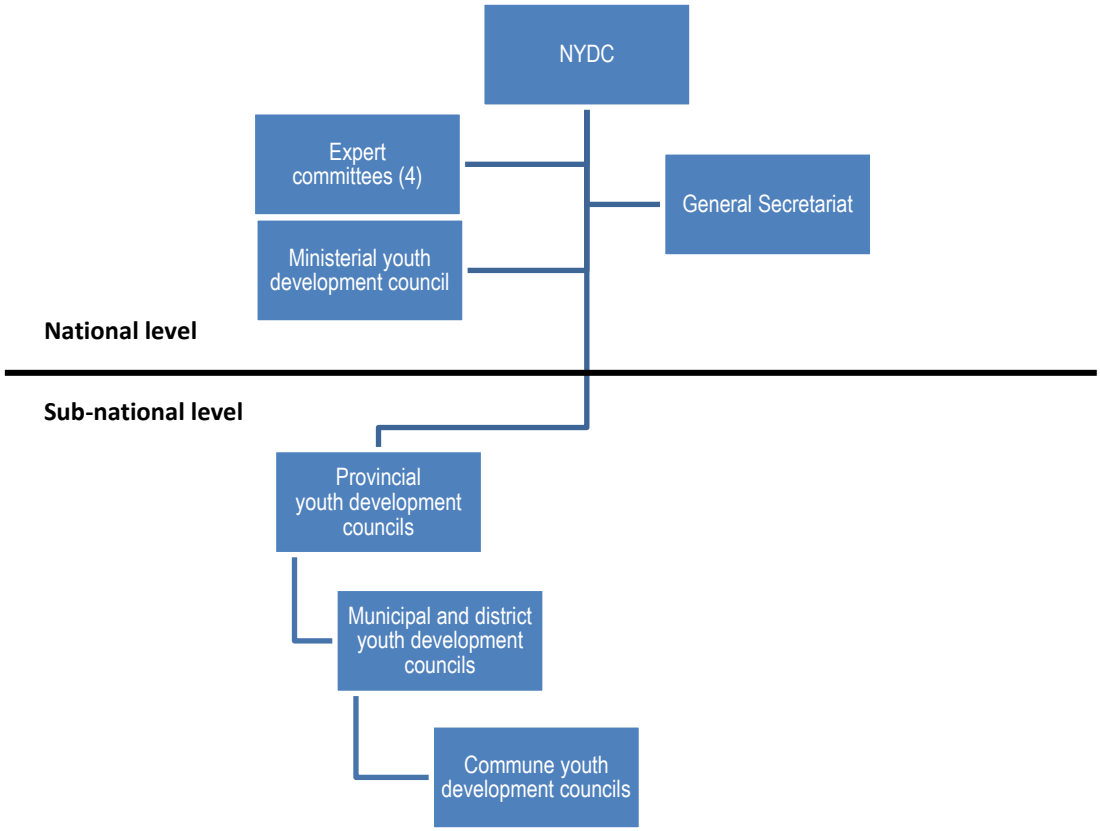
### *The National Youth Development Council*

The Royal Government of Cambodia considers youth as a key and valuable resource for the economic, social, cultural and peaceful development of the country, both present and future. The official age of youth in Cambodia is 15 to 30 years old. In order to have human resources with capacity, quality and virtue for national development, the Government has set a long-term vision and is mobilising resources to contribute to the development of youth. To achieve this vision, the Government prepared the 2011 National Youth Development Policy (NYDP).

Envisioned by the NYDP, the National Youth Development Council (NYDC) was established in 2013 by Royal Decree No. NS/RKT/0213/141 as an independent body to: i) co-ordinate and implement the NYDP; ii) approve the National Youth Action Plan for the implementation of the NYDP; iii) promote and mainstream youth development into national policies and government development programmes; iv) guide and facilitate youth participation in the economic sector to achieve education and training; v) gather the forces of young people and fund in order to support the development of Cambodian youth; vi) conduct research, monitor and evaluate the development and implementation of the NYDP (Royal Decree 141, 11 February 2013).

The NYDC is chaired by the Prime Minister, with a Deputy Prime Minister and the Vice Minister of Education, Youth and Sport appointed as Vice-Chairmen. Representatives from 32 government ministries, institutions, NGOs and youth associations are members. The Union of Youth Federation Youth of Cambodia (UYFC) nominates a representative from a youth organisation to become member. A General Secretariat was established to assist the NYDC in daily operations. With the General Secretariat housed within the MoEYS, the ministry is generally the main implementing institution for the NYDC and responsible for the monitoring and evaluation.

**Figure 2.2. National Youth Development Council structure**




*Source*: Interview with key informant at MoEYS (May 2016).

The council members and representatives meet twice a year, with possibility of extraordinary session at the initiative of the President. An annual report is submitted to the Prime Minister for approval. The council has complete authority to communicate with various government ministries and institutions, civil society organisations, national and international organisations, and development partners to participate in meetings and support in relevant activities. The council is also mandated by the Royal Decree to create the Ministerial Youth Councils and National Technical Committees (for each priority field or sector) to help support the co-ordination and implementation of the various tasks and activities within each respective ministry, the General Secretariat and the NYDC. The General Secretariat is proposing the establishment of four inter-ministerial expert committees to ensure consultations with stakeholders in the selected four priority areas: education, training and youth capacity development; youth employment; youth health; and youth volunteerism. The committees would consist of relevant ministries, youth organisations, UN agencies and the private sector. Ministries have been requested to assign focal point members to each committee.

The Ministerial Youth Development Council (MYDC) was established by Decision No.03/NYDC dated 27 July 27, 2016, as a co-ordination mechanism between ministries and the Expert Committees under NYDC and its General Secretariat. MYDC has a secretariat serving as a focal point to fulfil daily work. NYDC requested the 32 ministries and institutions to send a list of the composition of the council to the General Secretariat. The President of NYDC will then appoint the members of the council within each ministry. This work is scheduled to be completed in August 2017.

In terms of membership of the NYDC, each ministry is to assign a focal point or representative to co-ordinate and correspond with the NYDC to implement the action plan successfully. Youth organisations involved in the NYDC include the Union of Youth Federation of Cambodia (UYFC), the SSEAYP International Cambodia and the Youth Committee for Unity and Development, which is a coalition of prominent youth organisations (Khmer Youth Association, Youth for Peace, Youth Council of Cambodia, Youth Resources Development Program, Khmer Youth and Social Development, Khmer Institute for National Development and People Center for Development and Peace). Co-operation with schools, universities and the private sector has not yet been established.

The Royal Decree 141 also makes provision to create youth development councils in 25 provinces. The provincial youth development councils should be staffed from within the Department of Education, Youth and Sports. The governor of the provincial capital will act as the vice president of the council. Members of these councils should be representatives from the relevant line ministries at their respective provincial departments. For example, the composition of a Phnom Penh Municipality Youth Council will include the governor as chairman, a deputy governor as deputy chairman, the Director of Phnom Penh Municipality, Department of Education, Youth and Sports as permanent deputy chairman, and other Phnom Penh municipality department directors or representatives as members, and so on. The expected roles of the provincial and district councils are similar to those of the Ministerial Youth Development Councils, except that they operate at the sub-national levels. There are plans to establish development councils at the district and commune levels.

The rationale for this decentralised institutional set-up is that the SNAs and the CBOs are those closest to youth and therefore should have a greater role in the implementation the action plan. The local administrations are therefore expected to integrate youth issues into their local development plans, and inform and mobilise youth accordingly. The local administrations are also expected to appoint a focal person to conduct youth needs assessment, prioritisation and targeting, and prepare budgeting for and reporting on development activities relating to youth. Through local government, youth development councils SNAs are expected to reflect youth development needs within local development agendas.

### *The General Secretariat of the NYDC*

The General Secretariat of NYDC was established in 2013 by Sub-Decree No. 66. It has three sections: Administration and Accounting, Financial Planning, and Policy Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation. Establishment of other sections such as Youth Services and International Relations are being discussed. Staff members are generally civil servants but can also be contracted experts. At the time of the report release in October 2017, the General Secretariat was headed by a Secretary-General and had six deputy secretary generals and three unit heads. Two additional posts, a vice-chairperson and a deputy bureau chief were requested. It is clear that new recruits will be needed to operate this structure effectively and unburden existing ministry staffs, who have been assigned additional tasks. The capacity needs expressed by the General Secretariat are staff with competencies in information technology, statistics, project management and M&E to implement the NYAP. A one-stop information platform is also needed to gather all documents on youth. There are also ten youth centres currently operational but underutilised.

An Expert Committee was established by Resolution No. 2 to support the General Secretariat in implementing national policies on youth development and poverty reduction. An organisational analysis of the General Secretariat reveals that one of the main challenges it faces is the lack of youth representation within the NYDC. Although the NYDC works closely with the UYFC, the mass youth organisation, the latter is often associated as having political motivations, making their representation of youth somewhat biased. At the national level, inter-ministerial co-ordination will be crucial for a successful implementation of the NYAP, but similar structures for other topics already exist. Inter-ministerial co-ordination meetings have not yet been institutionalised, and newly appointed focal points are reluctant to take on new responsibilities. At the sub-national level, the decentralisation process is not complete, and sub-national officials have limited capacity to implement the NYAP at the local level, let alone their own existing development agenda. On the other hand, the NYDC enjoys strong leadership support from the Prime Minister and is housed within the MoEYS, making the General Secretariat potentially an effective convener of different stakeholders.

**Table 2.3. SWOT analysis of the General Secretariat of NYDC**

| Strengths | Opportunities |
|---|---|
| • Strong leadership support from the government (e.g. having the Prime Minister as Chairman of the NYDC)<br>• A strong legal framework<br>• Able to gather support from relevant stakeholders – civil society organisations, youth organisations and international NGOs<br>• Hosted by the General Directorate of Youth within the MoEYS<br>• Nationwide coverage, meaning the NYDC has mandates to establish its networks of councils down to local government levels<br>• Sustainability of the activities (since it is structured with established government officials) | • Demographic dividend<br>• Ongoing economic growth<br>• Available news media, including social media (easier access to information and interactive)<br>• Regional connection – able to integrate with ASEAN Youth Work plan, SSEAYP networks, etc.<br>• Numerous existing youth organisations |
| **Weaknesses** | **Threats** |
| • Unclear structure and limited understanding of roles and responsibilities.<br>• Insufficient infrastructure such as office equipment, meeting rooms, website, information database, etc.<br>• Unclear budget framework<br>• Staffed with existing government officials whose workload is already congested<br>• Only a few focal staff will be active<br>• Difficulty to find officials for each needed position; capacity of assigned staff might be limited (e.g. experienced in working with youth)<br>• Resentment of existing staff who are not assigned to the General Secretariat (e.g. political appointment of candidates external to the UYFC) | • Politically influenced (e.g. connection with the UYFC, SSEAYP and other political youth organisations)<br>• Many existing youth unions (competing mandates, budget)<br>• Lack of youth representation and participation within the NYDC<br>• Stuck to government work environment, which is slow, bureaucratic and hierarchical<br>• Inter-ministerial co-ordination is difficult<br>• Sub-national authority capacity is low<br>• Newly appointed focal points within the ministries think of this as an additional burden |

*Source*: Based on interviews at the MoEYS in 2016.

To increase its legitimacy amongst youth stakeholders at its early establishment stage, the NYDC's first task will be first to improve the representativeness of youth within its structure. The implementation of the NYDC and NYAP depends on how well the council system is integrated and gains policy influence in the respective ministries and sub-national administrations. It will also depend on how the youth agenda is mainstreamed, not just into policy statements but into concrete activities and budget allocation. The vertical connection between the NYDC and the councils at the provincial, and particularly, district and commune councils will be crucial to ensure effective implementation of the action plan. The mainstreaming of youth issues into the SNA will require the new roles and functions related to youth to be institutionalised by making them officially part of the general mandate of the SNAs. This should happen through the existing decentralisation reform process.

The NYDC mechanism has many similarities to that of the UYFC. The UYFC is headquartered in Phnom Penh, and it has a branch in each ministry and one office in each province. The central committee, consisting of 78 members, meets every year to discuss the implementation and planning of youth activities. The UYFC has representation from enterprises, the government, ministries and each head of the UYFC provincial offices, and a total of 200 000 members. Many of the roles and activities of the UYFC in fact overlap with those of the NYDC, such as providing vocational training and education in science, technology and life skills to youths; promoting equitable and quality education in healthcare, and physical health; and integrating youth's needs into all levels of the development plan. The UYFC is considered as having political influence, given that the President of the UYFC is elected by the representatives of each office in the provinces. Its current president is the son of Prime Minister Hun Sen. The NYDC officially recognises the UYFC as a key member in its steering committee and some members of the UYFC are appointed into staff positions within the General Secretariat of the NYDC. Over time, a clear differentiation between the NYDC and the UYFC will be needed.

## Youth participation in policy processes

Strong economic growth and demographic dividends with the currently widely available news media and social networks, such as Facebook, are facilitating youth participation in politics and development. Cambodia's involvement in the ASEAN economic integration, the ASEAN Youth Work Plan and SSEAYP International networks are also helping boost youth participation within the NYDC and NYAP. The degree of freedom of expression and the level of inclusiveness still remain questionable but nonetheless, nowadays, youth have increasingly better access to policy-related information and are able to express their opinions and debate over public issues.

### *Participation through youth organisations and forums*

Mass organisations like the UYFC are the first platform through which youth engage in civic and political activities. The UYFC organises social work programmes to encourage youth to contribute to society. Young people usually get involved because they want to have fun and get some work experience in social and development activities. Other youth participate because these mass organisations are well connected to high-level political networks within the government body.

Youth NGOs are a new phenomenon in Cambodia's civic scene. As of 2014, there were 35 active and registered NGOs working exclusively on youth issues. The majority of these work on improving skills and employment opportunities as well as on spreading democracy, for instance by encouraging youth to express their voices. Some young people have formed professional associations, e.g. CamPro and Politikoffee, to share information about politics, and social and economic issues, while others prefer to focus on information on business opportunities for its members, e.g. the Junior Chamber International Cambodia.

The emergence of a diverse group of youth NGOs is a positive development, but debate needs to be backed up by evidence and more rigorous empirical research. Social and policy research is still weak in the country and young people in general have not adopted the habit of reading the news or other socio-political analyses. The debate is not fed by reliable data and research, which in the eyes of policy makers makes youth proposals sometimes emotional and politicised.

### *Participation through the social media and political parties*

The social media have significantly enhanced youth's capacity to become informed, express their voice and participate in all the stages of the policy-making process. Youth participation in the 2013 elections sent a strong message to the ruling party that youth can no longer be ignored. Youth's voices were amplified after the elections through the social media, the Internet and mobile phones. About 40% of Cambodians had direct access to the Internet in 2015 (almost double from 2013), making the new media the second most important channel, after television, for Cambodians to access information (Phong and Solá, 2015). Since the election, an increasing number of politicians and policy makers, including the Prime Minister himself, have been using Facebook to connect directly with the people (Socheata, 2015). Facebook has been regularly used by the Prime Minister to broadcast his speeches live, receive information and comments, and give his responses.

The social media have become very effective outlets through which various public issues such as public safety, education and corruption are raised and discussed. Some social media debates have led to the removal or condemnation of high-ranking officials (CARE, 2015). What seems evident is that the social media have made youth more vocal about issues like corruption. A recent survey conducted by Transparency International Cambodia finds that 98% of Cambodia's youth agree that corruption is a key hindrance in the development of the nation. A non-significant number of them are however also engaged in corruption, with 27% reporting having paid a bribe to receive medical treatment and 48% agreeing that such corrupt payments are necessary to provide for themselves and their families (Graham and Serey Vicheth, 2015).

Youth movements and activities are on the rise, but are still at an early stage in terms of inclusiveness, freedom of speech and substance. Initiatives and movements set up by the ruling party and NGOs seek to mobilise youth to participate in specific public matters. For example, the Land Measuring Youth Group, initiated by the Prime Minister was implemented by the UYFC, headed by the Prime Minister's son, and many other associations whose leadership were affiliated to the ruling party. This controversial movement mobilised thousands of young people to measure and demarcate land plots in rural areas as part of the government's land titling reform (Pak and Tim 2014).

Cyber freedom is another issue of concern observed by many human rights groups. While embracing the social media, the government issued a warning that users abusing freedom of expression via Facebook may face charges (Wilwohl, 2015; Khemara, 2015). Initiatives run by smaller NGOs also encourage young people to voice their opinions and teach them about democracy and civic-mindedness, and other social norm behaviour such as alcohol and drug abuse or violence against women. These activities, however, do not carry the same weight as initiatives affiliated with the ruling party. A majority of youth especially that live in rural areas or abroad as migrant workers is not informed and often left out of these initiatives (CARE, 2015). Freedom of expression is restricted in Cambodia (Freedom House, 2016).

### *Participation in government bodies and local development*

An increasing number of youth are getting jobs within the government. After the 2013 elections, the government paid more attention to youth issues in its policy formulations and it has given key positions to young talents within public institutions. The emergence of young policy makers and technocrats bring new ideas and dynamism into the government but also allows other young professionals outside the government to voice their opinions through their peers in the government. For example, the CamPro

network, which has approximately 400 members including both public officials and non-governmental professionals, debates informally over key policy issues such as education and employment. Though this new blood is giving hope that youth issues will be more prominently featured in development agendas, the generation gap and tension within the government persists with older policy makers controlling the decision-making process and sticking to the old ways (Hunt, 2015).

At the local level, schools and local governments are the two entry points for young people to engage. Schools teach about governance and anti-corruption but political debate in general is not encouraged in secondary schools (Sotheary and Phak 2015). According to the decentralisation policy, youth are expected to express their opinions and contribute to local development and decision-making processes. In reality, young people show little interest in such matters except in areas where NGOs support youth activities. Part of the reason is that local governments often do not have enough resources and lack the willingness to address youth issues (FCM International 2013; Save the Children, 2014; Save the Children, 2015). Parents are also partly responsible as they do not look favourably upon youth becoming engaged in politics or volunteering because they consider it both dangerous and as time away from studying.

**Box 2.2. Key findings from a study on young women participation in politics**

In 2014, the National League of Communes/Sangkats conducted a survey with 181 young women from two universities, one in Phnom Penh and the other in Battambang, about their perceptions of and participation in local politics. The survey produced the following key findings:

- The most significant concerns expressed by young women include challenges in finding a job (32%), household financial problems (15%) and community safety concerns such as gangs and drugs (24%).
- Radio is likely the best medium to engage young women, with more than half listening to the radio every day. In comparison, 37% watch television every day, nearly a one-fourth access the Internet daily and 12% read a daily newspaper.
- More than half (57%) of young women have not been involved in solving problems in their communities; 77% are willing to help, but many say they do not know how.
- Building roads and bridges stands out for young women as the biggest achievement of their communes/sangkats (78%).
- Teachers and commune chiefs have the greatest influence on youth.
- Nearly all strongly believe that women should become more engaged in local politics.
- The top reasons mentioned were to prove that women are equally as capable as men for the job and to promote women's values.
- The biggest obstacles to getting involved in local politics are low education, lack of confidence to deal with discrimination and lack of time due to family obligations.
- 87% of the respondents indicated that they planned to get involved in local government by voting in the next local election, engaging in community development activities and/or assisting the council if requested.

*Source*: FCM International (2013).

### *Participating through volunteerism*

Volunteerism is one of the priorities highlighted in the YDAP as well as in the ASEAN Youth Work Plan. Volunteerism is gaining importance amongst policy makers as a form of youth participation. The rationale for promoting volunteerism is that young people do not only make a positive contribution to society, they will also develop both hard skills and soft skills. Volunteerism is being promoted across the ASEAN countries. The National Youth Development Council is working closely with United Nations Volunteers in Cambodia (UNV) and the Cambodia Volunteering Network (VolCam) to promote volunteerism in Cambodia. UNV is planning to introduce a new project on youth employability and skills development through volunteerism. The project looks at youth initiatives in local economic development and youth's active involvement in job generation and entrepreneurship.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Youth are a key driver in Cambodia's development, and their involvement in policy-making processes will be essential. Since the 2013 elections the government has been paying more attention to youth issues. The NYDP and the NYAP reflect this policy engagement, but they lack systematic mainstreaming into the budget process and service-delivery mechanisms at the sub-national levels. The establishment of the NYDC and its General Secretariat show further government commitment to advance the youth agenda. These newly created institutions will need to be properly funded and set up for operationalisation at both the national and sub-national levels.

As for youth participation, the rapid spread of social media use amongst young Cambodians has made young people better informed and more active and vocal citizens. If we consider that the degree of youth participation can be differentiated into four levels, from a passive to an active form of participation – information sharing, consultation, collaboration and empowerment – Cambodian youth are mostly at the information sharing and consultation stages. Collaboration only happens with a few well-connected mass organisations like the UYFC. The quality of youth engagement in social media debates, however, need to be improved as much of the content and many of the assumptions are not always evidence-based but perceived as emotional. Policy makers and youth organisations should invest in more empirical social and political research.

Volunteerism is also a rising trend, with more youth engaged in social work and community development. Volunteerism is considered a positive experience for young people as they can gain both soft and hard skills that will be useful later on for employment. Youth volunteerism has also however been traditionally associated with political motivations through mass youth organisations. Youth should be well-informed about the organisations they join or the activities in which they engage.

In terms of institutional strengthening, the NYDC and its General Secretariat should mobilise technical assistance from relevant development partners to help push the adoption and implementation of the various legal and policy documents, such as the NYAP, by line ministries. The successful institutionalisation and operationalisation of the NYDP will depend on the involvement and buy-in of line ministries and youth organisations.

The NYDP will need adequate funding and institutional capacity to implement the action plan. The annual national budget must include a budget for the implementation of the NYAP. Programmes and budgets dedicated to youth activities will need better identification and analysis to understand programme and funding gaps as well as overlaps between ministries. The capacity of the NYDC's General Secretariat must be reinforced. The secretariat must be able to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the NYAP. An M&E system with youth-specific indicators should be designed. Capacities of sub-national structures will also need to be made stronger if a decentralised approach is to be taken to implement the NYAP.

Representativeness is perhaps the most crucial point raised by youth about the new NYDC structure, because in 2017 the UYFC was still the only youth organisation represented in the council. As the NYDC is housed within the MoEYS, its independent status is blurred. To ensure unbiased co-ordination amongst the different stakeholders, a clear internal and external administrative communication procedure between the Royal Government of Cambodia, line ministries and the sub-national administration level must be established. Regular consultation with youth must also be organised. The NYDC should set up a consultation mechanism with youth, such as a quarterly provincial consultation meeting, a six-monthly regional consultation and annual national youth congress, as mandated in the NYDP.

## Notes

[1] National poverty headcount ratio is the percentage of the population living below the national poverty line.

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# Chapter 3. Characteristics and pathways of school dropouts

The youth population in Cambodia represents a tremendous demographic dividend if youth can enter the labour market with a good level of education and skills. Yet, in 2015, 63% of the secondary- and tertiary-school aged youth (12-22) had already left the education system (see Chapter 1). The out-of-school rate for adolescents of secondary school age (12-17) was 23%. The enrolment rate for primary school is close to universal at 94%, but drops drastically to 39% in lower secondary and 19% in upper secondary school (MoEYS, 2015/16). Girls are more likely to leave school early to help with housework or to marry at a young age. Rural youth also tend to drop out of school to look for jobs in the cities, but without basic skills, they have limited opportunities to improve their economic and social well-being.

This chapter looks at the reasons for school dropouts and the life choices of young people who have left the formal education system. It describes the main consequences of dropping out of school on the livelihoods of different groups of the youth population and explores policy options to improve employment prospects of dropout youth. Administrative data from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS), the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2014 and the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s School-to-Work Transition Survey (SWTS) 2014 were used to carry out the analysis.

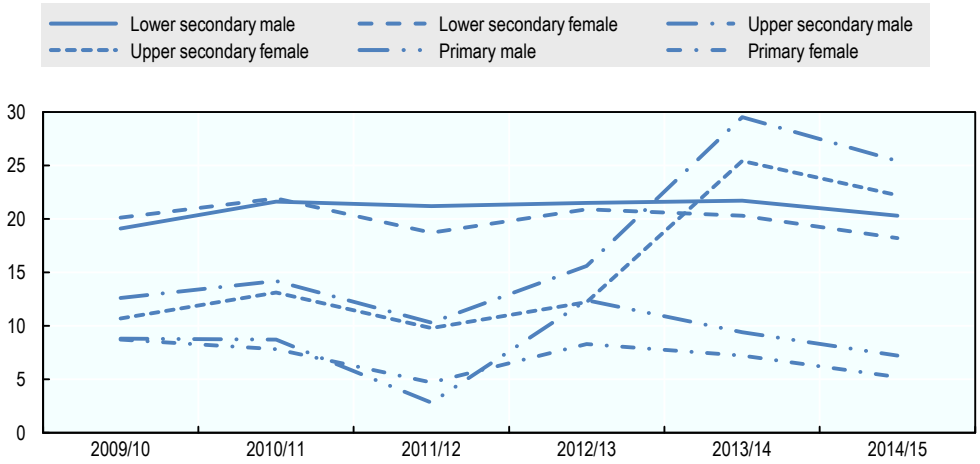
## School dropout trend

The Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s wiped out most of the country's physical infrastructure as well as its human resources, particularly professionals, intellectuals and teachers. In the reconstruction of the country, education was prioritised in development policies, particularly by increasing the number of primary and secondary schools and colleges. Between 2005 and 2015, the number of schools increased by 32%, from 6 990 to 9 232 (MoEYS, 2015/16). Despite these investments, early school dropout amongst young people is a persisting phenomenon.

According to UNESCO, a school dropout is defined as one enrolled in a given school year, but not enrolled in the following year, whether the grade was completed or not. Other definitions consider a school dropout to be an individual who leaves school before completing the current school grade or requirements, not including those who transfer to another educational institution (Williams, 1987; Yokozeki, 1996). This study uses the UNESCO definition to capture those who do not complete the full school cycle.

The dropout rate in primary school remained constant between 2009 and 2013 at around 8%, falling to 6.2% only in 2014/15. The dropout rate in lower secondary school also remained constant at around 20%; since 2012, however, the dropout rate in upper secondary school increased from 10% in 2011 to about 24% in 2014. This may be due to the booming garment and footwear industry's demand for low-skilled labour. There is little difference between boys and girls, with a slightly better performance for girls. This is a surprising result when considering the social norms around gender-based roles that prevail in Cambodia (see Chapter 4).

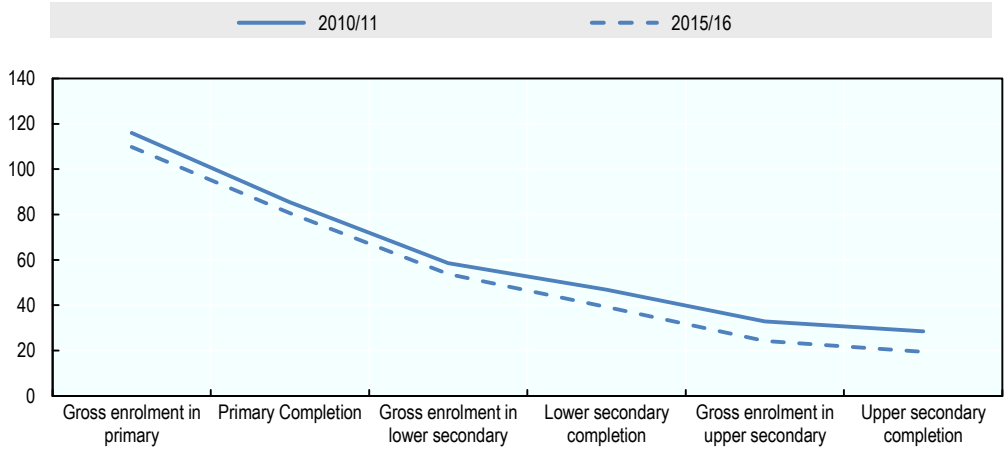
**Figure 3.1. Dropout rates (%) by gender and education levels, school years 2009/10 and 2014/15**




*Source*: MoEYS (2009/10-2015/16), *Education Statistics and Indicators.*

About only one in five students who enters primary school completes upper secondary school. The enrolment rate in primary school is nearly universal but drops starting at lower secondary school despite its being compulsory. As presented in Chapter 1, the net enrolment rate in primary education remained high at around 94% between 2009 and 2015, with no difference between boys and girls. Lower secondary and upper secondary education net enrolment rates, however, dropped to 39% and 19%, respectively. Amongst those enrolled in primary school, 81% complete the full cycle, and in lower and upper secondary schools, 39% and 19% complete the full cycle, respectively. Combining the level of enrolment and completion rates, Figure 3.2 shows the exponential decline of children and youth in schools.

**Figure 3.2. Gross enrolment and completion rates (%), school years 2010/11 and 2015/16**




*Source*: MoEYS (2010/11 and 2015/16), *Education Statistics and Indicators*.

Parents and youth perceive the cost of going to school as high. The older the youth, the less likely he or she will stay in school as he or she seeks paid employment. As compulsory education is not fully enforced, parents also see the opportunity cost of sending children to school as high and prefer their children to contribute to family or paid work. The situation perpetuates as the quality of education and incentives for teachers remain low, especially in the rural areas, while demand for low-skilled labour increases. School dropout rates remain high in all the non-capital regions (Table 3.1). The high dropout

rates and low enrolment and completion rates in secondary school are a serious threat to ensuring adequate literacy and basic skills of the youth population entering the labour force.

**Table 3.1. School dropout rates (%) by region, school years 2009/10-2014/15**

| | 2009/10 | 2010/11 | 2011/12 | 2012/13 | 2013/14 | 2014/15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Primary level | | | | | |
| Phnom Penh | 5.2 | 5.0 | 5.5 | 6.9 | 3.8 | 4.1 |
| Plain | 6.5 | 6.1 | 5.5 | 8.5 | 6.3 | 4.6 |
| Tonle Sap | 10.7 | 10.1 | 8.8 | 12.5 | 10.7 | 7.3 |
| Coastal | 9.4 | 8.9 | 10.2 | 11.2 | 8.1 | 6.4 |
| Plateau/Mountains | 11.2 | 11.8 | 12.4 | 12.5 | 11.5 | 7.3 |
| | Lower secondary | | | | | |
| Phnom Penh | 9.1 | 11.3 | 14.9 | 13.7 | 13.7 | 12.4 |
| Plain | 21.1 | 22.6 | 21.7 | 21.9 | 21.8 | 19.5 |
| Tonle Sap | 20.9 | 22.8 | 23.0 | 22.3 | 22.2 | 19.9 |
| Coastal | 17.7 | 21.0 | 16.6 | 18.8 | 20.4 | 18.3 |
| Plateau/Mountains | 16.5 | 17.7 | 20.7 | 19.6 | 20.2 | 19.0 |
| | Upper secondary | | | | | |
| Phnom Penh | 5.4 | 4.4 | 7.1 | 5.7 | 18.5 | 16.6 |
| Plain | 13.2 | 14.1 | 15.3 | 15.7 | 29.0 | 26.3 |
| Tonle Sap | 14.2 | 16.9 | 19.3 | 16.4 | 27.7 | 24.6 |
| Coastal | 12.5 | 15.0 | 15.8 | 11.3 | 29.8 | 21.6 |
| Plateau/Mountains | 17.9 | 16.8 | 18.2 | 17.2 | 30.7 | 23.2 |

*Source*: MoEYS(2009/10-2015/16), *Education Statistics and Indicators*.

## Reasons for dropping out of school

Individual, household and school characteristics affect school dropouts. Individual characteristics such as gender and age can influence school dropout, but parents have the biggest say in the educational pathways of children. The educational decision is often linked to socio-economic background factors. Dropout rates amongst poor households at all levels of general education are higher than amongst richer households because returns from education are not well-perceived. The CSES was used to analyse the determinants of school dropouts. The highest level of school attended by each individual not currently in school determined the dropout status of the youth.

### *Individual characteristics*

The age of the youth affects the school dropout rate. In rural areas, some students start school late compared to the expected age. This is often due to the socio-economic situation of the family, which forces them to contribute to housework and economic activities. A study by Mike, Nakajjo and Isoke (2008) finds that being older than their classmates contributes to youth's dropping out. Amongst those aged 20-24, 31% did not complete lower secondary education and another 31% did not finish primary level. Repetition also contributes to dropout as the student becomes older than his or her classmates. In the academic year 2014/15, the dropout rate in grade 12 was 46% and the repetition rate was 8% (MoEYS, 2014/15).

Being a girl does not necessarily increase the chances of dropping out. Early marriage, although not common in Cambodia, does, however, affect girls' school dropout. Amongst the dropouts aged 15-24, 26% were married or divorced. Amongst the dropouts who were married or divorced, only 2.5% were aged 15-17 (NIS, 2015). In fact female dropouts were a little less frequent than male dropouts, although in general, social norms in Cambodia favour investing in boys' education before girls', as evidenced by lower school attendance rate for girls from upper secondary school upwards (NIS, 2015).

**Table 3.2. Marital status of population aged 15-24, 2004-2014 (in percentage of that category)**

| | Dropouts | | | Currently attending school | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 |
| Never married/lived together | 73.2 | 72.2 | 73.9 | 99.6 | 98.9 | 98.7 |
| Married | 25.4 | 26.0 | 24.1 | 0.4 | 0.7 | 1.1 |
| Divorced/widowed/separated | 1.4 | 1.8 | 1.9 | - | 0.4 | 0.1 |

*Source*: NIS (2005), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2010), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009*; NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

The majority of school dropouts are working. Amongst school dropouts aged 10-24, 90% were employed in 2014, an increase from 84% ten years earlier. While in 2004 more than half of them were engaged in agriculture, this share fell to 37% in 2014 and increased to 42% in the industry sector (Table 3.3). More women than men can be found working in industry while the reverse is true in agriculture. The share of working children aged 10-15 amongst those aged 10-24 is 10%. Some work of this group is considered child labour. In 2014, 81% of children aged 10-15 worked at least one hour per week, an increase from 76% in 2004. More than half of them (58%) were employed in agriculture, a decrease from around 70% in 2004. A positive trend is that the number of children working and attending school at the same time has dropped from 40% in 2009 to 13% in 2014.

**Table 3.3. Distribution of population aged 10-24 by employment sector, gender and school attendance status, 2004, 2009, 2014 (%)**

| | 2004 | | 2009 | | 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| | | | Dropouts | | | |
| Agriculture | 62.2 | 50.8 | 62.1 | 50.6 | 41.8 | 32.3 |
| Industry | 17.3 | 26.3 | 21.7 | 29.8 | 36.9 | 47.7 |
| Services | 20.5 | 22.8 | 16.1 | 19.6 | 21.3 | 19.9 |
| | | | Currently attending school | | | |
| Agriculture | 79.8 | 72.7 | 83.4 | 75.4 | 73.3 | 63.3 |
| Industry | 5.5 | 7.4 | 6.8 | 9.6 | 5.2 | 6.6 |
| Services | 14.7 | 20.0 | 9.8 | 15.0 | 21.5 | 30.1 |

*Source: NIS (2005), Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004; NIS (2010), Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009; NIS (2015), Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

Youth in Plain, Coastal and Plateau/Mountains regions are engaged more in industry than in other sectors (Table 3.4). While they were mostly working in agriculture ten years earlier, many have moved to the industry and services sectors. Only in the region of Tonle Sap are the majority of youth still working in agriculture, although this share is also declining.

The employment status of dropout youth shifted from self-employment and unpaid family work to waged work following the growth of the industrial sector. Children attending school and working at the same time were generally engaged in self-employment or unpaid family work. The share of dropout youth working in this type of vulnerable employment remained at over 60% between 2004 and 2009. This number dropped to 38% only in 2014, while the share of wage employment increased to 62% (Table 3.5).

**Table 3.4. Distribution by sector of employment of dropouts and students aged 10-24, by region, 2004 and 2014 (in percentage of total employed aged 10-24)**

| | 2004 | | | 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Agriculture | Industry | Service | Agriculture | Industry | Service |
| | | | Dropouts | | | |
| Phnom Penh | 2.4 | 40.4 | 57.2 | 0.9 | 61.7 | 37.4 |
| Plain | 58.3 | 25.1 | 16.6 | 34.5 | 47.9 | 17.6 |
| Tonle Sap | 63.4 | 15.5 | 21.1 | 50.5 | 27.8 | 21.7 |
| Coastal | 55.7 | 16.2 | 28.1 | 37.8 | 43.2 | 19.1 |
| Plateau/Mountains | 63.9 | 21.3 | 14.7 | 36.5 | 48.2 | 15.3 |
| | | | Currently attending school | | | |
| Phnom Penh | 5.3 | 14.6 | 80.1 | 3.4 | 3.4 | 93.1 |
| Plain | 81.7 | 6.4 | 11.9 | 74.1 | 8.2 | 17.7 |
| Tonle Sap | 78.0 | 5.4 | 16.6 | 73.4 | 3.9 | 22.7 |
| Coastal | 74.9 | 4.6 | 20.5 | 87.7 | 4.9 | 7.4 |
| Plateau/Mountains | 84.4 | 6.2 | 9.4 | 74.9 | 5.8 | 19.3 |

*Source:* NIS (2005), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004;* NIS (2010), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009;* NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

**Table 3.5. Distribution of employment status of population aged 10-24, 2004 and 2014 (%)**

| | Dropouts | | | Currently attending school | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 |
| Waged employee | 31.0 | 37.9 | 62.1 | 4.6 | 5.1 | 18.2 |
| Self-employed/unpaid workers | 68.3 | 61.6 | 37.7 | 94.1 | 94.7 | 81.7 |
| Other | 0.8 | 0.5 | 0.3 | 1.3 | 0.2 | 0.1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source:* NIS (2005), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004;* NIS (2010), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009;* NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

Wages of youth employees have also increased in 2014 compared to 2009. The average real wage of youth aged 10-24 in waged employment was KHR 355 992 per month in 2014, 68% higher than in 2009, and in vulnerable employment KHR 164 039 per month, a 49% increase. Dropout youth received wages 5% higher than those of youth combining work with school, and they also worked 18% longer – 53 hours per week in their main occupation. Wages and hours of work for dropout youth were similar in 2014 to those in 2009. Dropouts were more likely to be exploited in terms of salary, even in formal wage employment. In 2014, 63% of the dropout youth (66% of females and 60% of males) in waged employment were paid below the average wage for youth aged 10-24.

### *Household characteristics*

Household characteristics have a strong influence on children's education. Household wealth, parents' educational attainment, parents' occupations and parents' perceived value of education are some of the determinants of children's educational outcomes. Household wealth is probably the most influential factor in dropping out. Even though education up to secondary level is free in Cambodia, costs related to going to school such as uniforms, lunches and textbooks, amongst others, impose additional expenditures on households. Education becomes expensive for poor children as their parents cannot afford to pay for these associated direct costs (Fall and Roberts, 2012; Huisman and Smiths, 2009; Mingat, 2007; Ingrum, 2006).

Household wealth matters when it comes to children's education. In primary school, household wealth does not have a significant impact on the school dropout rate, but as the children get older and move up in grades, those from poorest households are more likely to drop out in order to work (Table 3.6). This is driven by the opportunity cost of going to school instead of working. More than a quarter (28%) of youth who found jobs immediately after leaving school did so before the age of 15 (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013).

**Table 3.6. Dropout rate by wealth quintiles, 2004-14**

| | | 2004 | | 2009 | | 2014 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Wealth quintile | Male | Female | Male | Female | Male | Female |
| Primary level | 1 | 0.68 | 1.08 | 2.07 | 3.06 | 2.88 | 1.09 |
| | 2 | 1.10 | 0.97 | 1.10 | 1.03 | 1.34 | 2.00 |
| | 3 | 0.61 | 1.18 | 0.84 | 0.92 | 0.40 | 0.66 |
| | 4 | 1.02 | 0.96 | 1.04 | 0.95 | 0.24 | 0.45 |
| | 5 | 0.52 | 0.29 | 0.85 | 0.68 | 0.00 | 0.30 |
| Lower secondary level | 1 | 7.14 | 18.18 | 20.97 | 19.10 | 6.05 | 13.29 |
| | 2 | 3.90 | 15.28 | 19.80 | 10.28 | 7.98 | 8.90 |
| | 3 | 5.26 | 9.62 | 9.30 | 11.38 | 7.49 | 5.49 |
| | 4 | 3.50 | 5.19 | 7.43 | 13.38 | 2.27 | 5.35 |
| | 5 | 2.53 | 2.91 | 3.26 | 8.33 | 2.52 | 3.47 |
| Upper secondary level | 1 | 50.00 | 33.33 | 18.18 | 75.00 | 18.57 | 21.52 |
| | 2 | 42.86 | 35.29 | 27.91 | 48.57 | 16.67 | 20.97 |
| | 3 | 17.50 | 27.59 | 18.31 | 30.51 | 10.20 | 21.35 |
| | 4 | 9.09 | 28.95 | 12.73 | 32.00 | 5.61 | 12.79 |
| | 5 | 12.50 | 7.64 | 3.18 | 9.41 | 5.19 | 10.57 |

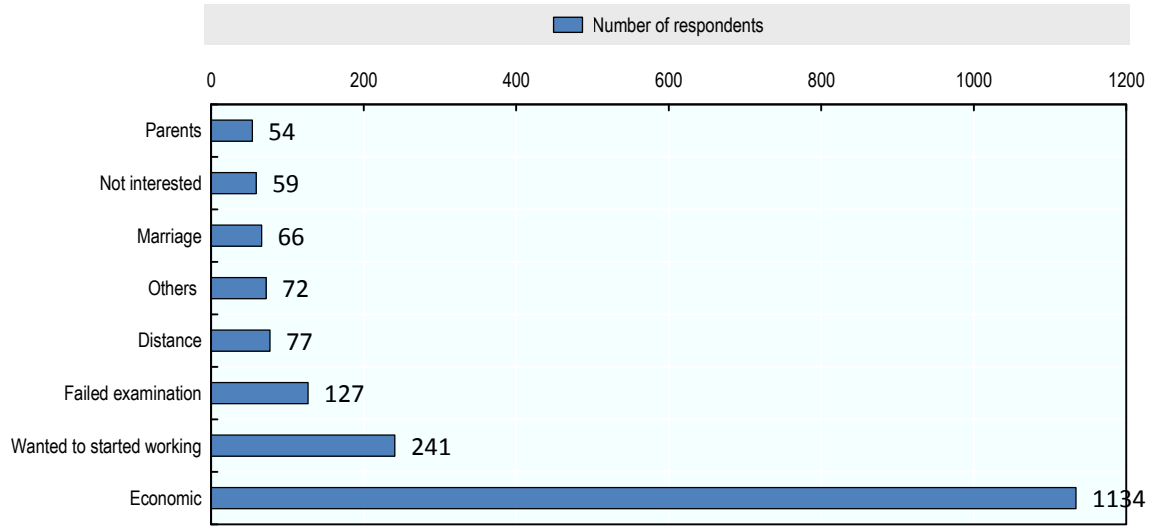
*Note*: 1 is poorest, 5 is richest.
*Source:* NIS (2005), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004;* NIS (2010), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009;* NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

Indeed, the opportunity cost of schooling is a strong driver of early school dropout. School discontinuance occurs largely amongst children from poor households because they have to help their parents with house chores or economic activities to meet their basic needs. Particularly in rural areas where poverty is high, children assist their parents with cleaning the house and fetching water and firewood, and even generating income by working in agriculture or rural industries. As youth engage in activities at home, they become tired and are frequently absent from school or lose interest in going. This pushes them eventually out of school (Jonker, 2006; Kirazoglu, 2009).

The high cost of education due to informal charges is another important driver for dropping out (Tan, 2007; USAID, 2015). Informal extra fees also add to the burden of poor families. Since teachers' salaries are generally very low, many primary and secondary teachers charge extra fees by providing additional classes during lunch time, in the evening or at the weekend, or by selling copies of lessons at a high profit margin. The extra fees, although not compulsory, exert pressure on poor students, because if they do not buy lessons or do not participate in extra classes, they will be treated differently or unfairly. This is linked to the low incentives for teachers (see section on school environment). A school-to-work transition survey confirms economic constraints to be the most frequent reason given for dropping out (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013).

Traditional gender roles for women restrict educational opportunities. In rural areas, girls are primarily expected to carry out domestic work and other household chores. The need for their education is therefore poorly understood. Furthermore, since girls are expected to be taken care of by their possible future husbands, investing in a girl's education is not seen as beneficial to the family. As a consequence, girls' school attendance drops from upper secondary onwards and is also lower than boys'. Students tend to quit school and work as soon as they reach the minimum legal age for working, which is 15. Many start younger, falsifying their identity cards to get a job in the growing garment industry. The skills required to work in garment factories are low, which specially attracts young women. About 85 to 90% of garment factory workers are young women with little or no education (Derks, 2008).

**Figure 3.3. Reasons for dropping out, 2014**




*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

The parents' education level plays an important role in the schooling of children. Educated parents are more likely to have a better paying job and ensure financial stability for the family, which will decrease the chances of their taking their children out of school (Polesel, Nizinska and Kurantowicz, 2011). Educated parents are also more likely to value education and encourage their children to achieve at least the same educational level (Breen and Goldthorpe, 1997). Educated mothers with at least a primary education can help their children with homework and supervise their academic progress, and also be role models for their daughters to stay in school. They motivate their children, especially daughters, to stay in school longer (Mike, Nakajjo and Isoke, 2008; Huisman, Rani and Smits, 2010).

A regression analysis done by the present study shows that the probability of a child's dropping out of school decreases with the increase in the level of parents' education, with the highest significant effect observed for parents who have achieved secondary education or higher. Children of families whose head of household had only finished primary education or less were more likely to drop out. In 2014, more than half of dropout children lived in agricultural households, while 23% belonged to households working in services. These shares persisted between 2004 and 2014 (Table 3.7).

The expected return on investment in education plays an important role in keeping children in school. Attending school is expected to lead to better employment outcomes and better wages. Nonetheless, many parents and youth themselves do not perceive education as a worthwhile investment (Tan, 2007). Even university studies are perceived as a waste of time due to the high unemployment rate amongst university graduates. In the public sector, merit-based promotion is difficult to implement because one's seniority, wealth and social standing is more important than qualifications. Failing meritocracy, it is difficult to convince people to invest in education.

**Table 3.7. Household characteristics of population aged 6-24, 2004, 2009 and 2014**

| | Dropouts | | | Currently attending school | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 |
| Household size (average) | 6.0 | 5.8 | 5.5 | 6.2 | 5.9 | 5.4 |
| Education of head of household (%) | | | | | | |
| Less than primary education | 24.1 | 23.4 | 24.2 | 21.6 | 19.2 | 17.6 |
| Primary | 50.4 | 52.0 | 49.1 | 44.2 | 44.9 | 40.7 |
| Secondary | 21.6 | 22.5 | 24.0 | 29.0 | 30.4 | 31.0 |
| Higher education or not classified | 3.9 | 2.1 | 2.7 | 5.2 | 5.6 | 10.7 |
| Education of head of household (average years) | 5.6 | 4.7 | 4.6 | 5.9 | 5.6 | 6.3 |
| Occupation of head of household (%) | | | | | | |
| Agriculture, fishing and forestry | 52.5 | 57.0 | 52.5 | 48.7 | 51.8 | 40.7 |
| Industry | 9.5 | 12.0 | 13.3 | 10.0 | 11.7 | 15.3 |
| Services | 24.6 | 20.8 | 22.5 | 32.5 | 29.9 | 35.7 |
| No occupation | 13.5 | 10.3 | 11.7 | 8.9 | 6.6 | 8.3 |
| Employment status of head of household (%) | | | | | | |
| Waged | 17.0 | 20.4 | 26.0 | 23.4 | 24.3 | 34.0 |
| Self-employed | 65.7 | 68.2 | 61.8 | 64.3 | 67.9 | 57.0 |
| Unpaid family worker | 2.9 | 0.7 | 0.3 | 2.5 | 0.7 | 0.3 |
| Other | 14.4 | 10.7 | 11.9 | 9.8 | 7.1 | 8.6 |
| Household consumption quintile (%) | | | | | | |
| 1st (poorest) | 18.1 | 21.6 | 25.8 | 19.2 | 19.7 | 19.8 |
| 2nd | 21.2 | 22.8 | 24.4 | 20.5 | 20.3 | 19.5 |
| 3rd | 21.3 | 21.5 | 21.9 | 19.9 | 19.9 | 20.3 |
| 4th | 22.1 | 19.9 | 16.7 | 19.2 | 19.5 | 20.3 |
| 5th | 17.4 | 14.2 | 11.3 | 21.1 | 20.6 | 20.1 |

*Source*: NIS (2005), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004;* NIS (2010), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009;* NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

### *School environment*

The school's learning environment is an important motivator for studying. Class size and student-teacher ratios are much discussed aspects of education quality. Smaller classes are often perceived as a better teaching environment, as teachers can focus more on the needs of individual students and the amount of class time needed to deal with disruptions is lesser. While there is some evidence that smaller classes may benefit specific groups of students, such as those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Krueger, 2002), overall, the evidence of the effects of class size on student performance is weak. There is more evidence to support a positive relationship between smaller class size and aspects of teachers' working conditions and outcomes, such as allowing greater flexibility for innovation in the classroom, improved teacher morale and job satisfaction (Hattie, 2009; OECD, 2009).

In Cambodia, the combination of crowded classrooms and teachers' lack of care have a negative effect on student achievement and attendance. From the MoEYS administrative data for 2015/16, the total number of primary, lower and upper secondary schools was 9 232, an increase from 8 363 five years earlier (Table 3.8). The average school comprised 7.4 classrooms for 240.7 pupils and 7.2 teachers. Primary schools were less crowded than those of higher levels. The pupil-classroom ratio was 48 for primary level and 49 for secondary level. The pupil-teacher ratio was 45 for primary, 20 for lower secondary and 21 for upper secondary classrooms. As a comparison, in OECD countries, the average

class size at the lower secondary level is 23 students and the average pupil-teacher ratio is 16 in primary schools and 14 in secondary schools (OECD, 2011).

**Table 3.8. Schools, classes and teachers by levels, school years 2010/11 and 2015/16**

| | 2010/11 | | | | 2015/16 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Pre-primary | Primary | Lower secondary | Upper secondary | Pre-primary | Primary | Lower secondary | Upper secondary |
| Number of schools | 2 092 | 6 767 | 1 189 | 407 | 3 706 | 7 085 | 1 684 | 4 63 |
| Number of classes | 3 343 | 5 697 | 12 504 | 6 786 | 5 974 | 60 224 | 12 590 | 6 020 |
| Students | 103 315 | 2 191 192 | 560 868 | 334 734 | 173 893 | 2 010 673 | 558 621 | 266 449 |
| Teaching staff | 3 711 | 56 339 | 30 012 | 11 686 | 4 537 | 44 844 | 28 354 | 12 570 |

*Source*: MoEYS (2010/11-2015/16), *Education Statistics & Indicators.*

The place of residence matters for schooling. There are large differences between capital and non-capital regions in dropout rates, particularly as grades go up (Table 3.9). Phnom Penh had the most crowded primary and secondary classrooms, while the Coastal region was the least crowded. In regions where there are many factories or industries, children tend to drop out early to join the low-skilled labour force. Garment and footwear are the main recruiters of young students, but other industries that need low-skilled workers include construction and the agro-food industry. A principal of a secondary school in Svay Rieng, a province that has special economic zones and many factories, expressed his worries about the high dropout rate amongst his students going to work in nearby factories. In an agriculture-dominant province like Kratié, the dropout pattern is seasonal. During the harvesting season, parents usually take their children out of school for a few weeks to work on the farm. This gap usually drives students to quit school completely as they cannot catch up with the rest when they go back to school.

The biggest obstacle to education quality is the qualification of teachers. The Khmer Rouge period caused acute shortage of teachers and rebuilding a pool of qualified teachers is taking time. Great progress has been made in improving teacher education, with only 3% having only primary education level (MoEYS, 2014). Still, 35% of primary school teachers only have lower secondary school education, and only a tiny fraction have degrees beyond upper secondary education (ADB and ILO, 2015). In addition, the poor working conditions of teachers – low salaries, living in remote areas, poor infrastructure – make teaching an unattractive career choice. Recruiting and training a new generation of teachers is needed but will take time. The urgency is to upgrade current teachers through better salary incentives and skills training.

**Table 3.9. Pupil-teacher and pupil-classroom ratios* by level, 2010/11-2015/16**

| | Primary school | | | | | | Secondary school | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2010/11 | | 2013/14 | | 2015/16 | | 2010/11 | | 2013/14 | | 2015/16 | |
| | Pupil-teacher ratio | Pupil-classroom ratio | Pupil-teacher ratio | Pupil-classroom ratio | Pupil-teacher ratio | Pupil-classroom ratio | Pupil-teacher ratio | Pupil-classroom ratio | Pupil-teacher ratio | Pupil-classroom ratio | Pupil-teacher ratio | Pupil-classroom ratio |
| **Phnom Penh** | 32.2 | 62.3 | 32.3 | 57.8 | 35.3 | 62.6 | 18.6 | 66.0 | 14.8 | 66.4 | 14.3 | 64.1 |
| **Plain** | 49.7 | 50.1 | 50.1 | 47.3 | 51.8 | 46.6 | 27.6 | 47.1 | 22.7 | 46.1 | 23.3 | 46.6 |
| **Tonle Sap** | 49.9 | 54.9 | 45.7 | 49.9 | 42.4 | 46.7 | 25.4 | 50.6 | 20.4 | 47.4 | 20.4 | 47.5 |
| **Coastal** | 40.1 | 50.3 | 34.0 | 44.4 | 30.3 | 40.8 | 21.0 | 44.4 | 16.8 | 43.5 | 16.2 | 42.2 |
| **Plateau/ Mountains** | 48.9 | 50.4 | 43.4 | 45.8 | 40.1 | 44.5 | 23.1 | 44.6 | 17.2 | 44.5 | 17.0 | 45.9 |
| **Whole country** | 48.3 | 53.7 | 46.2 | 49.7 | 44.8 | 47.7 | 25.2 | 50.5 | 20.4 | 48.8 | 20.2 | 48.7 |

*Note*: *2 shifts schools.
*Source*: MoEYS (2010/11-2014/15), *Education Statistics & Indicators*.

Many teachers in Cambodia live in poverty and do not have adequate resources to prepare and deliver lessons to the best of their ability (CITA, 2013). The Cambodia Independent Teachers Association's assessment on the state of the teaching profession found in 2013 that teachers received vastly inadequate basic pay, affecting the quality of education. In 2012, a primary school teacher received USD 60 per month and a secondary school teacher received USD 80-USD 110. A newly appointed teacher without experience started at USD 50. As USD 20 is considered necessary to meet basic calorie requirements, these salary levels make it practically impossible for teachers to cover all other livelihood expenses such as rent, clothes, medication, etc. In an effort to improve the quality of education, in 2016, the government announced that teachers' salaries would be increased to USD 200 for primary school teachers and USD 250 for secondary school teachers. Smaller pupil-teacher ratios or classroom size will not be enough to improve the quality of education if the working conditions of teachers are not significantly improved. Higher salaries, increased professional development and teacher training, investment in teaching technologies and use of assistant teachers and other paraprofessionals will be needed to make a change.

## Employment outcomes of school dropouts vs. graduates

One of the most important expected returns to education is decent employment opportunities. Yet Cambodian youth are pessimistic about the return to investment in education. Indeed, the salaries of those who complete secondary school compared to those who drop out are no different, if not lower. All levels combined, employment outcomes for school graduates is better than for dropouts, but this difference is more distinct at tertiary education levels. A large share of primary and secondary school graduates end up in unpaid family work or with low wages. A school-to-work transition survey, which captured the job prospects and experiences of 3 303 youth aged 15-29 in 2014 was used to further analyse the employment outcomes of school graduates compared to dropouts.

### *Employment status*

Young people who completed secondary level education or higher obtained stable and satisfactory employment. Young people with higher education levels also experience shorter school to work transition periods than those with lower levels of completed education. Those youth with no education or below the primary level spent an average of 123.7 months in transition. Primary school graduates spent an average of 89 months, secondary school graduates 57.4 months, university or higher graduates 21.5 months (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013). The transition is considered completed when the youth has found a stable job in contract terms or satisfactory self-employment or temporary employment.

In 2014, a large majority of dropout youth, or 64%, were in vulnerable employment (40% unpaid family work and 23% self-employed) while 36% were in wage employment. By comparison, a significant 52% of school graduates were also in vulnerable employment (16% self-employed and 36% unpaid family work). A higher share of school completers (47%) found jobs in wage employment (Table 3.10).

**Table 3.10. Employment status of school graduates and dropouts, in percentage of total youth aged 15-29 for that category, 2014**

| % | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| **Wage** | 47.1 | 35.5 |
| **Employer** | 0.6 | 0.8 |
| **Self-employed** | 16.3 | 23.2 |
| **Unpaid family work** | 36.0 | 40.4 |
| **Other** | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 |
| **Total (number)** | 497 | 1 645 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

The greatest effect of education on employment is when a young person completes higher education or vocational training. Completing a higher-education or vocational-training degree has led to better chances of getting a wage job, an employment status favoured by most young people. In 2014, 62% of higher education graduates and 78% of vocational training graduates found wage jobs, compared to 33% and 38% respectively for dropouts. There was little difference in finding a wage job whether one completed primary or secondary education or not (Table 3.11). Similar proportions of graduates and dropouts of primary and secondary schools ended up in unpaid family work and self-employment, considered a vulnerable employment status (Table 3.11).

**Table 3.11. Employment status of graduates and dropouts aged 15-29 by education level, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | | | | | Dropouts | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Primary | Secondary | Higher education | Vocational training | Other | Primary | Secondary | Higher education | Vocational training | Other |
| **Wage** | 35.1 | 42.5 | 62.4 | 78.7 | 0 | 33.5 | 39.1 | 33.3 | 38.1 | 41.7 |
| **Self-employed** | 21.6 | 15.4 | 14.1 | 12.8 | 50 | 24.8 | 21.9 | 16.7 | 14.3 | 22.2 |
| **Unpaid family work** | 43.3 | 42.1 | 23.5 | 8.5 | 50 | 41.7 | 39 | 50 | 47.6 | 36.1 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Note:* Read the table as follows: "Amongst graduates of primary school, 35.1% are in wage employment."
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

A large share of higher-education and vocational-school graduates work as professionals or in sales and services. Dropouts from higher education and vocational schools manage to get jobs in sales and services and to a lesser extent in clerical support. Practically none get professional or managerial positions. There is little difference in terms of occupation between graduates and dropouts of primary and secondary education. Both categories of youth work a lot in skilled agriculture. Amongst school dropouts, 44% went into skilled agriculture, 22% into crafts and trade-related areas and 17% into sales and services (Table 3.12).

**Table 3.12. Occupation and education levels of population aged 15-29, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | | | | | Dropouts | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Primary | Secondary | Higher education | Vocational training | Other | Primary | Secondary | Higher education | Vocational training | Other |
| Armed forces | - | - | 3.5 | 4.3 | - | 0.4 | 0.1 | - | - | - |
| Managers | - | 0.4 | 4.7 | 2.1 | - | - | 0.8 | - | - | - |
| Professionals | 1.0 | 4.1 | 22.4 | 66.0 | - | 0.6 | 0.8 | - | 9.5 | - |
| Technicians and related professions | - | 2.6 | 5.9 | 2.1 | - | 1.3 | 1.4 | - | 4.8 | - |
| Clerical support | - | 2.3 | 12.9 | 6.4 | - | 0.2 | 1.3 | 33.3 | - | - |
| Services and sales | 15.5 | 22.2 | 28.2 | 10.6 | - | 13.5 | 20.1 | 66.7 | 33.3 | 19.4 |
| Skilled jobs in agriculture | 45.4 | 36.5 | 11.8 | 6.4 | 50.0 | 52.3 | 37.0 | - | 23.8 | 38.9 |
| Craft and related trades | 20.6 | 24.4 | 10.6 | 2.1 | 50.0 | 17.8 | 27.8 | - | 23.8 | 16.7 |
| Plant and machine operations | 1.0 | 2.3 | - | - | - | 2.5 | 4.6 | - | 4.8 | - |
| Elementary jobs | 16.5 | 5.3 | - | - | - | 11.4 | 6.1 | - | - | 25.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Note:* Read the table as follows: "Amongst graduates of primary school, 45.4% hold skilled jobs in agriculture".
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

Differentiating the occupations by age group shows that in 2014, 15-19 year olds who completed primary school did not fare much better than those who dropped out. The majority, 43% of graduates and 53% of dropouts, worked in skilled agricultural jobs and in fact a greater share of graduates (21%) ended up in elementary jobs than dropouts (14%) (Table 3.13). A significant share of secondary school graduates and dropouts were also found working in services and sales, skilled agriculture and trade-related jobs. More youth aged 15-29 who completed secondary education (9.1%) found jobs in higher skilled occupations such as professionals, technical and clerical assistance than secondary school dropouts (3.1%) (Table 3.12).

**Table 3.13. Occupations of primary school graduates and dropouts aged 15-19, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| Managers | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Professionals | 3.6 | 0.4 |
| Technicians and associated professions | 0.0 | 1.3 |
| Clerical support | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Services and sales | 10.7 | 10.2 |
| Skilled jobs in agriculture, fisheries and forestry | 42.9 | 52.8 |
| Crafts and related trades | 21.4 | 20.4 |
| Plant and machine operations | 0.0 | 0.9 |
| Elementary jobs | 21.4 | 14.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| Total (number) | 28 | 235 |

*Note:* Read the table as follow: "Amongst graduates of primary school aged 15-19, 42.9% hold skilled jobs in agriculture, fisheries and forestry".
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

Both young men and young women aged 15-19 with primary education were employed in unskilled occupations, while females were found largely in skilled manual positions (Table 3.14). Both male and female workers were helping family farms or businesses, or were in waged employment. Fewer were observed in self-employment (Table 3.15).

**Table 3.14. Skills level of primary school graduates and dropouts aged 15-19 by gender, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Female | | Male | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Graduates | Dropouts | Graduates | Dropouts |
| High-skilled non-manual | 10.0 | 3.1 | 1.4 | - |
| Low-skilled non-manual | 20.0 | 12.3 | 5.6 | 7.6 |
| Skilled manual | 50.0 | 75.4 | 59.9 | 72.4 |
| Unskilled | 20.0 | 9.2 | 33.1 | 20.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| Total (number) | 10 | 130 | 142 | 105 |

*Note:* Read the table as follows: "Amongst female graduates of primary school aged 15-19, 50% are in skilled manual jobs".
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

**Table 3.15. Employment status of primary school graduates and dropouts aged 15-19, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| Waged | 46.4 | 36.6 |
| Employers | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Own account workers | 7.1 | 4.3 |
| Unpaid family workers | 46.4 | 59.1 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

*Note:* Read the table as follows: "Amongst graduates of primary school, aged 15-19, 46.4% are unpaid family workers".
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

More school graduates were employed in high-skilled occupations than dropouts (Table 3.16). More secondary school graduates found jobs in wage employment than in other employment. For dropouts, the share of wage employed was smaller than unpaid family work (Table 3.17).

**Table 3.16. Skills level of secondary school graduates and dropouts aged 20-24, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| High-skilled non-manual | 5 | 2.6 |
| Low-skilled non-manual | 16.7 | 7.9 |
| Skilled manual | 70 | 78.3 |
| Unskilled | 8.3 | 11.2 |

*Note:* Read the table as follows: "Amongst graduates of secondary school aged 20-24, 70% are skilled manual workers".
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

**Table 3.17. Employment status of secondary school graduates and dropouts aged 20-24, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| Wage | 48.7 | 36.7 |
| Employers | 0 | 0 |
| Own account workers | 12 | 22.3 |
| Unpaid family workers | 39.3 | 40.8 |

*Note:* Read the table as follows: "Amongst graduates of secondary school aged 20-24, 48.7% are wage workers".
*Source:* Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

A large share of tertiary education graduates found jobs as professionals. Tertiary level dropouts found jobs in services and sales as well as in skilled agriculture, but few found jobs as professionals. Few graduates worked in crafts and craft-related trades while 12% of dropouts were in those fields (Table 3.18).

**Table 3.18. Occupation of tertiary school graduates and dropouts, aged 25-29, 2012-14**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| Armed forces | 5.7 | N/A |
| Managers | 5.7 | N/A |
| Professionals | 40 | 12.5 |
| Technicians and associate technicians | 7.1 | 0 |
| Clerical support | 10 | 12.5 |
| Services and sales | 21.4 | 62.5 |
| Skilled agriculture, fishing and forestry | 4.3 | N/A |
| Crafts and related trades | 5.7 | 12.5 |
| Plant and machine operation | N/A | N/A |
| Elementary jobs | N/A | N/A |

*Note*: Read table as follows: "Amongst graduates of tertiary school aged 25-29, 40% are professionals".
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

Overall, both graduates and dropouts of tertiary education found decent occupations. The majority (76%) of graduates found wage employments in both low-skilled and high-skilled non-manual jobs. Three-quarters of the dropouts were hired in low-skilled non-manual jobs, and one-eighth was in high-skilled non-manual work. Graduates did much better. More than half were in high-skilled non-manual work. Waged employment was common for both graduates and dropouts. Unpaid family workers were fairly rare amongst tertiary graduates, but considerably higher amongst dropouts (Table 3.19).

**Table 3.19. Skills level of tertiary school graduates and dropouts aged 25-29, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| High-skilled non-manual | 52.9 | 12.5 |
| Low-skilled non-manual | 37.1 | 75 |
| Skilled manual | 10 | 12.5 |
| Unskilled | - | - |
| Waged | 75.7 | 37.5 |
| Self-employed | 14.3 | 12.5 |
| Unpaid family work | 10 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

**Table 3.20. Employment status of tertiary school graduates and dropouts aged 25-29, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| Wage | 75.7 | 37.5 |
| Self-employed | 14.3 | 12.5 |
| Unpaid family work | 10 | 50 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

### *Wages*

For many occupations primary and secondary school dropouts earn more than school graduates. Primary school dropouts earn three times more than graduates in low skilled non-manual jobs. Secondary school dropouts earn twice as much in high skilled non manual jobs than graduates (Table 3.21). This can be explained by the fact that many school graduates end up in the same occupations than dropouts even after they finish school. Dropouts earn more due to the years of experience already accumulated. It is only from higher education and vocational training that graduates earn more than dropouts.

**Table 3.21. Wages by school level and skills of youth aged 15-29, 2014 (in KHR/hour)**

| Distribution (%) | Primary | Secondary | Higher education | Vocational training | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Graduates | | |
| High-skilled non-manual | 5 177 | 3 608 | 5 623 | 5 746 | N/A |
| Low-skilled non-manual | 1 474 | 2 800 | 5 002 | 4 724 | N/A |
| Skilled manual | 3 260 | 4 146 | 10 563 | N/A | N/A |
| Unskilled | 5 553 | 3 212 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| | | | Dropouts | | |
| High-skilled non-manual | 2 265 | 7 878 | N/A | 4 393 | N/A |
| Low-skilled non-manual | 4 733 | 2 337 | 4 115 | 1 244 | 4 375 |
| Skilled manual | 3 554 | 3 963 | N/A | 3 333 | 1 962 |
| Unskilled | 3 580 | 4 440 | N/A | N/A | 3 977 |

*Note*: KHR 1 000 = USD 0.25.
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

In 2014, the hourly pay of primary school dropouts aged 15-19 was 37% higher than that of those who completed it. Female wages amongst graduates were higher than male wages, but dropout males earned more than dropout females (Table 3.22). By region, the highest pay observed amongst school completers was in Phnom Penh, while amongst dropouts, it was highest in Tonle Sap. The lowest wage amongst primary school completers was in the Plain region, while amongst dropouts it was in Phnom Penh (Table 3.23).

**Table 3.22. Wage of primary school graduates and dropouts aged 15-19 by gender, 2014**

| KHR/hour | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| **Male** | 2 056.9 | 4 176.0 |
| **Female** | 2 969.9 | 3 121.5 |
| **Total average wage** | 2 548.5 | 3 501.6 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

**Table 3.23. Wage of primary school graduates and dropouts aged 15-19 by region, 2014**

| KHR/hour | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| **Phnom Penh** | 3 937.4 | 1 860.1 |
| **Plain** | 1 666.7 | 2 612.2 |
| **Tonle Sap** | 2 235.5 | 6 677.7 |
| **Coastal** | 2 544.1 | 2 818.4 |
| **Plateau/Mountains** | N/A | 2 451.9 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

For secondary school graduates, the highest pay was observed in the Plain region, but the difference amongst regions was not so large. Meanwhile, secondary school dropouts living in Tonle Sap got the highest hourly pay – more than twice the wage of their graduate counterparts (Table 3.24). This could be explained by the high concentration of garment factories in this region. Workers in the Plateau and Mountains area on the other hand received the least pay amongst graduates. Dropouts received the lowest pay in Phnom Penh.

**Table 3.24. Wages of secondary school graduates and dropouts aged 20-24, 2014**

| KHR/hour | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| **Phnom Penh** | 3 334.4 | 3 379.1 |
| **Plain** | 5 659.8 | 4 089.2 |
| **Tonle Sap** | 4 328.9 | 9 766.1 |
| **Coastal** | 2 853.3 | 5 383.0 |
| **Plateau/Mountains** | 2 557.0 | 4 580.9 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

At the tertiary level, having a degree or not makes a substantial difference. In 2014, the average wage of dropouts was 46% less than that of tertiary-level graduates.

**Table 3.25. Wages of tertiary school graduates and dropouts aged 25-29, by gender and by region, 2014**

| KHR/hour | Graduates | Dropouts |
|---|---|---|
| **Male** | 6 995.7 | 5 150.0 |
| **Female** | 9 392.9 | 2 500.0 |
| | **Regions** | |
| **Phnom Penh** | 5 530.5 | N/A |
| **Plain** | 13 681.0 | 5 300.0 |
| **Tonle Sap** | 5 139.8 | N/A |
| **Coastal** | 6 758.1 | N/A |
| **Plateau/Mountains** | 4 657.7 | 3 750.0 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

### *Job satisfaction*

There is a large gap between youth's job aspirations and what they are actually doing. Overall, the majority (95%) of working youth declared that they were satisfied with their current job. When further asked if they wanted to keep their current job, however, less than half (47%) said they did. In terms of job satisfaction, there was not much difference between graduates and dropouts, with the latter slightly more satisfied with their jobs than graduates of secondary and tertiary education.

Amongst those with secondary school education, occupational dissatisfaction of school completers and dropouts was almost the same, at around 5.9%. Dissatisfaction was rare amongst high-skilled non-manual workers; only 1.4% of tertiary graduates were somewhat unhappy. Job dissatisfaction commonly occurred amongst low-skilled non-manual workers.

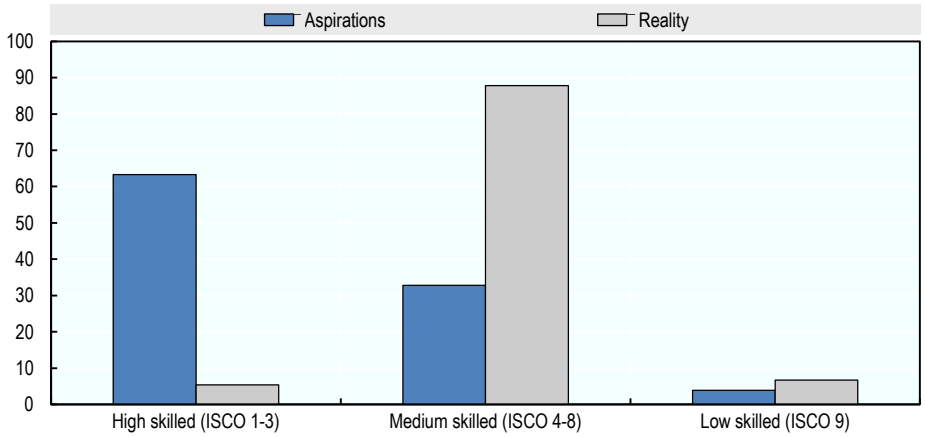
**Table 3.26. Level of job satisfaction of school graduates and dropouts by education level, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Primary | | Secondary | | Tertiary | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Graduates | Dropouts | Graduates | Dropouts | Graduates | Dropouts |
| **Very satisfied** | 46.4 | 44.7 | 46.2 | 53.9 | 75.7 | 87.5 |
| **Somewhat satisfied** | 50.0 | 48.1 | 47.9 | 40.1 | 22.9 | 12.5 |
| **Somewhat unsatisfied** | 0.0 | 6.4 | 5.1 | 4.7 | 1.4 | 0.0 |
| **Very unsatisfied** | 3.6 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 1.3 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| **Total** | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

The preferred field of study of young students is by far general curricula. In the 2012 school-to-work transition survey, 40% of youth aged 15-29 responded that they would like to study general programmes such as business, and only 15% selected hard sciences like mathematics and computing. Less than 5% chose engineering, manufacturing and construction, and a bare 3% chose agriculture and veterinary training. Considering the fact that agriculture accounts for close to one-third of GDP, the aspiration gap of youth is alarming. The gap is striking between career aspirations of students (15-29) and the actual employment situation of young workers (15-29). The majority of students (63.3%) aspire to hold jobs in high-skilled occupations, but in reality only 5.4% of 15-29 years old manage to get these kinds of jobs. Only 32.8% wish to have jobs in medium-skilled jobs, but in reality 88% end up in these job categories (Figure 3.4). These findings question the quality of education but also point to a clear lack of career guidance and management of expectations. On the other hand, aspirations gaps among tertiary educated is small, with 66% of university students wanting jobs in high skilled occupations and 63% of university graduates working in those jobs. Tertiary education is paying off.

**Figure 3.4. Youth's aspirations gaps**




*Note*: Students aged 15-29 were asked about their aspirations and compared with actual jobs of 15-29 year olds.
*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

Almost no workers at primary school level received any training that would allow them to upgrade their skills and jobs, except for interns. Only 2.6% of secondary school graduates received short training, especially those in non-manual jobs. Amongst tertiary graduates, 11% attended work-related training during their job. None of the tertiary dropouts, however, received or sought training (Table 3.26).

**Table 3.27. Share of youth receiving training during/as part of their job in the last 12 months, 2014**

| Distribution (%) | Primary | | Secondary | | Tertiary | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Graduates | Dropouts | Graduates | Dropouts | Graduates | Dropouts |
| Yes, currently in apprenticeship/internship | 3.6 | 1.7 | 4.3 | 3.4 | 10.0 | 0.0 |
| Yes (not apprenticeship/ internship) | 0.0 | 0.4 | 2.6 | 0.0 | 11.4 | 0.0 |
| Not receiving any training | 96.4 | 97.9 | 93.2 | 96.6 | 78.6 | 100.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source*: Authors' calculations based on data from SWTS-Cambodia 2014.

### *Decent jobs*

The quality of individuals' lives and their well-being is strongly related to work. In OECD countries, a person spends on average 37 hours a week at work and an increasingly larger share of their adult lives in paid work. Moreover, quality jobs are an important driver of increased labour force participation, productivity and economic performance. The youth unemployment rate in Cambodia is very low, but the World Bank estimates that 73% of young workers are in vulnerable employment (World Bank, n.d.). Decent work is defined by the ILO as employment that provides workers a fair income, job security, social protection for their family, prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom to express, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

The OECD has developed a framework to measure and assess the quality of jobs that considers three measurable dimensions. "Earnings quality" captures the extent to which earnings contribute to workers' well-being in terms of average earnings and their distribution across the workforce. "Labour market security" captures aspects of economic security related to the risks of job loss and its economic cost for workers. It is defined by the risks of unemployment and benefits received in case of unemployment. "Quality of the working environment" captures non-economic aspects of jobs including the nature and content of the work performed, working-time arrangements and workplace relationships. These are measured as incidence of job strain characterised as high job demands with low job resources. Together, the three dimensions provide a comprehensive assessment of job quality.

Own-account workers and unpaid family workers – job categories considered as vulnerable employment – have been a significant part of the labour force in Cambodia. From 2009 to 2014, the share of unpaid family workers decreased significantly, from 24% to 6%, but the share of own-account workers remains high at 43%, a slight decrease from 49% in 2009 (NIS, 2015). Child labour is another concern in the country. The number of working children remains high as many school dropouts help with house chores or the family business. According to the NIS, the rate of child labour in 2014 was 19% in 2014, a slight fall from 24% in 2012. In addition, occupational injuries in Cambodia are on the rise (ILO, 2012). Without opportunities for decent work, investment in education is not valued. Enforcing strict laws against child labour and improving working conditions can already help to prevent early school dropouts.

## Non-formal education

The Cambodian educational system is made up of formal and non-formal education. Because the illiteracy rate amongst the population and the dropout rate amongst youth are high, non-formal education is an important alternative to provide a second chance to youth who have left the formal education system. According to the MoEYS Non-Formal Education National Action Plan 2008-2015 (MoEYS, 2008), the objective was to extend the possibility of free quality education to vulnerable and dropout children, ethnic minority groups and illiterate adults. Cambodian non-formal education covers three main areas: literacy, continuing education and community education. The objective of non-formal education is to equip people with basic skills so that they can improve their livelihoods and to offer out-of-school youth a chance to reintegrate the formal education system.

### *Functional literacy classes*

In the Non-Formal Education National Action Plan 2008-2015, the Ministry of Education set a target of opening 2 400 literacy classes with 60 000 students every year. The goal is to help the large number of people who were not able to study due to the war that lasted from the early 1970s to the late 1990s. Functional literacy classes teach students to read and solve basic calculations. All programmes are financed by the Department of Non-Formal Education within the MoEYS.

The number of female students is much higher than that of male students. The number of classes offered has decreased from its peak in 2005, but the average number of students per class had remained at 22 in 2014. The prevalent age of the students stood between 25 and 45 (MoEYS, 2014).

**Table 3.28. Functional literacy classes, 2000-14**

| Year | No. of classes | No. of students | | | No. of graduates | | | Students per class |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Total (in numbers) | Male (%) | Female (%) | Total (%) | Male (%) | Female (%) | |
| **2000** | 1 574 | 30 449 | 24 | 76 | 55 | 66 | 51 | 19 |
| **2005** | 5 410 | 119 686 | 41 | 59 | 64 | 51 | 74 | 22 |
| **2010** | 1 314 | 30 806 | 35 | 65 | 82 | 80 | 83 | 23 |
| **2014** | 1 190 | 26 601 | 32 | 68 | 83 | 80 | 84 | 22 |

*Source*: MoEYS (2014), *Non-Formal Education Statistics & Indicators 2014*.

### *Continuing education*

Continuing education is intended for people with some basic skills to continue learning. Post-literacy classes with libraries are designed to help people who have taken the literacy class to not fall back. Re-education programmes aim to bring children who dropped out less than three years earlier back to formal education. The programme especially targets girls who had to leave school to help with family chores. They receive two months of training before being reintegrated into formal education. The third programme is the primary and secondary school equivalence programme, which provides youth and adults who left primary and secondary school a second chance to study and obtain an equivalent degree. This programme can be followed part-time so that working persons can participate.

### *Community Learning Centres*

Community Learning Centres (CLCs) target adults who are outside of formal schooling. CLCs provide training in basic income-generating skills, including farming and local-resource management. They provide communities with information about other income-generating experiences but also teach about human rights, democracy, gender equality, agriculture, and hygiene and sanitation. The majority of students are women. In 2014, there were 344 CLCs in operation, mostly by the government and some by development partners and NGOs. The MoEYS plans to set up at least one in each of the 1 600 communes.

**Table 3.29. CLCs and students, 2006, 2010 and 2014**

| Year | No. of centres | | No. of students | | | No. of graduates | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Operational | Total | Male% | Female% | Male% | Female% |
| **2006** | 57 | 57 | 2 155 | 33 | 67 | 33 | 67 |
| **2010** | 217 | 164 | 6 994 | 44 | 56 | 46 | 54 |
| **2014** | 347 | 334 | 9 916 | 37 | 63 | 37 | 63 |

*Source*: MoEYS (2014), *Non-Formal Education Statistics & Indicators 2014*.

A review of CLCs (CRCC, 2015) found that NGO-run CLCs focused more on vocational training than government-run CLCs, which focused more on re-entry into formal education and literacy classes. The vocational training provided by NGO-run CLCs varied in subjects such as sewing, hairdressing, rice and vegetable farming, silk and mat weaving, food processing, income-generating projects, motor repair, electricity and appliances repair, sculpture, and music and the arts. Financing was the main problem for government-run CLCs. The total allocated funds for CLCs in 2013 were only 1.1% of the total education budget.

Other short-term training programmes provided by the government include: basic entrepreneurial skills to start income-generating activities or small businesses; basic training to the poorest on health, hygiene, environment and agriculture; and capacity-building for provincial and district officials and NGO staff.

### *Technical and vocational education and training*

Out of the 250 000 post-secondary graduates in 2014, only 3% were from technical and vocational fields like agriculture, science and engineering while 50% studied business administration (MoEYS, 2015). The Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT) estimated that in 2016, 36 120 students were enrolled in 39 public technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and MoLVT registered institutions (all programmes combined), 80% of which were between the ages of 15 to 29 (MoLVT, 2017). Compared to the number of out-of-school youth in Cambodia, TVETs have a very low enrolment rate. This was partly due to the quality of these institutions, but a big reason was that parents considered TVETs as training for low-skilled jobs and not as a professional pathway. The potential of TVET to train youth to meet the needs of the labour market is vastly underestimated.

After lower secondary school graduation, students can choose to pursue another three years of general education to obtain a secondary school diploma or to enrol in the formal TVET programmes. These upper secondary TVET programmes last only one year and students are trained in technical skills including vehicle repair, general mechanics, agricultural mechanics, electricity, electronics, repair of cooling machines, civil engineering and computer technology. TVET is under the responsibility of the MoLVT and operated through provincial and vocational training centres. TVET programmes are linked to the general education programmes offered by MoEYS.

**Table 3.30. Enrolment by training level (public TVET and MoLVT registered institutions), 2015-16**

| Total number of institutions: 39 (whole country) | Short courses | C1 | C2 | C3 | Higher Diploma | Bachelor's | Master's | PhD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total** | 12 074 | 1 478 | 309 | 203 | 6 888 | 15 116 | 52 | 0 |
| **Female** | 6 601 | 358 | 41 | 23 | 948 | 3 412 | 2 | 0 |

*Note*: C1, C2 and C3 are 3 Technical and Vocational Certificate levels.
*Source*: MoLVT (2017), *Technical and Vocational Education and Training Statistics*.

Students who graduate from upper secondary school in general education can also enrol in TVET. Unlike the upper secondary TVET, however, the duration of training in this type of TVET depends on the programme and lasts at least one year. Technical and professional training programmes, for instance, offer training lasting up to two or three years, and after graduation, students receive a "Diploma of Technician".

The non-formal and informal TVET programmes offer short courses aimed at reducing poverty in the rural areas. The duration is very short, from one to four months, and is run in provincial vocational training centres. Training is offered for instance in basic agricultural production, construction, motor repair skills, craft and basic food processing.

The connection between TVET and general education is illustrated in the following Table 3.31.

**Table 3.31. Formal TVET and the general education system**

| Cambodian NQF Level | General education system | TVET system | Higher education system |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | | Doctoral degree | Doctoral degree |
| 7 | | Master's degree in technology/business | Master's degree |
| 6 | | Bachelor's degree in technology/engineering/business | Bachelor's degree |
| 5 | | Higher diploma in technology/business | Associate degree |
| 4 | Upper Secondary School Certificate | TVET Certificate III | |
| 3 | Upper Secondary School Certificate | TVET Certificate II | |
| 2 | Upper Secondary School Certificate | TVET Certificate I | |
| 1 | Lower Secondary School Certificate | Vocational Skills Certificate | |

*Source*: CRCC (2015), *Final Report on Desktop Study on Non-Formal Education in Cambodia*.

### *Experiences in other countries*

This section describes examples of TVET and non-formal education in other countries.

#### *Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Ghana*

In Ghana, the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) was established in 2006 to co-ordinate and oversee all aspects of TVET in the country. Upon completing lower secondary school, young people can choose to continue their studies at the upper secondary level by attending senior high school, secondary technical school or a technical institute. Informal training is also provided, mostly through apprenticeships with master craftsmen, while non-formal training is provided mainly by community organisations and NGOs. Ghana has pursued efforts to establish a TVET national qualification framework with the objective of improving the career progression of TVET graduates. COTVET is also responsible for implementing the National Apprenticeship Programme (NAP), a one-year training programme that pairs young people who have limited education with master trainers operating small businesses. The programme is mostly targeted at young people who are unable to continue their education beyond lower secondary. As with the traditional apprenticeship model, COTVET has committed to paying master trainers and to providing a toolkit to each participating apprentice. The NAP incorporates an innovative performance-pay scheme for training providers that ties compensation to apprentices' skills level and outcomes. The NAP will offer students the opportunity to carry out apprenticeships in the informal sector.

#### *Community Learning Centres in Indonesia*

The Indonesian government has a strong commitment to promoting CLCs, as evidenced by the increase from 484 centres in 1999 to 3 064 in 2008, distributed quite evenly throughout the country. The main programmes include functional literacy, early childhood care and education, education equivalency, vocational skills, entrepreneurship, sport and recreation and women's education. The CLCs have been found to be effective in improving the knowledge within the community. Effectiveness was measured based on indicators such as learners' attendance, social status of learners, instructors' educational background and types of CLC building. The impact was also found to be positive; thanks to these programmes, communities were able to improve their socio-economic status. Youth had the opportunity to attend formal schooling after attending the CLC course. In the income-generating programme, people were able to form a group and run a mechanics shop as well as set up other small industries. In early childhood care and education, parents became motivated to send their children to school. In family education and sport and recreation programmes, communities started to practise a healthy lifestyle (UNESCO, 2008).

Most Indonesian CLCs are financed by the government, which may not be sustainable in the long run. UNESCO's evaluation found that transparency in the management structure of CLCs was correlated with

sustainability. In addition, community participation and the contribution of learners to the CLC's operational budget may increase sustainability.

Important lessons from the Indonesian experience are that CLC staff and management should continuously assess the needs of the community, especially for income-generating programmes. This enables centres to provide in-demand skills to the community. In addition, the manager and staff should possess the ability to generate income for the centre, in order to not be too dependent on funds from the government, and also generate income for the community.

### *Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative, Haiti*

Haiti's Out-of-School Youth Livelihood Initiative (*Initiative pour le développement des jeunes en dehors du milieu scolaire* – IDEJEN) 2003-11 targeted out-of-school youth aged 15-24. The project aimed to develop the literacy skills of young people who had little or no schooling through non-formal basic education. IDEJEN used an integrated flexible learning systems approach that combined literacy and numeracy instruction, life skills education, technical training and preparation for livelihood opportunities. Youth centres provided students with instruction in basic education, life skills and technical/vocational education through which participants mastered essential work-readiness skills. Young people were equipped with core skills (that taught them how to learn a trade) and specific trade skills that they could use to support their livelihoods. Basic Employability Training was followed by a six-month Livelihood Accompaniment Phase, during which trained staff provided bridging support, counselling and other services as youth either returned to school or sought employment in the formal or informal economy.

### *National Qualifications Framework, South Africa*

South Africa implemented a national qualifications framework in 1998. It was designed as an integrated system with a transformational agenda to promote lifelong learning for all South Africans in a non-racial and non-sexist democracy. The framework is intended to: create a single integrated national framework for learning achievements; facilitate access to mobility and progression within education, training and career paths; enhance the quality of education and training; and accelerate the redress of past unfair discrimination. The government conducted reforms of the framework to simplify it and limit the proliferation of different qualifications. The revised qualifications framework distinguishes ten levels of learning achievement and identifies three sub-frameworks (General and Further Education and Training Qualifications; Higher Education Qualifications; and Trades and Occupations Qualifications). These reforms aim to improve school-to-work transitions and to support more effective career guidance and recognition of prior learning. Another objective of the reform is to enhance co-ordination amongst the different institutions and stakeholders involved in the education system. Policies have been developed and assessments completed for the recognition of prior learning, the registration of qualifications, the recognition of professional bodies, credit accumulation and transfer. A national career advice service project has been developed to help users navigate the education and training system, while a repository for information on learner achievements (National Learners' Records Database) provides insights into the status of the system.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The dropout rate amongst secondary school students remains high. Combined with low enrolment rates, the share of secondary-school-aged adolescents already out-of-school is nearly one-fourth. The drivers of dropouts are complex and numerous, starting with the low value parents placed in investing in education due to the poor quality of education.

Indeed, the quality of education – evaluated by the types of job youth are able to find after completion – does not help convince parents to keep children in school. This is particularly true for poor households, as the older the youth becomes, the more likely he or she is to find paid employment and contribute to household income. As most young people who drop out of primary and secondary schools find paid

work, the opportunity cost of sending children to school is high, particularly when job qualities are not much different whether one has completed secondary education or not. Financial constraint is therefore the first reason for youth to drop out. Policies must first be aimed at helping families overcome the financial constraints of sending children to school. Conditional cash transfer programmes linked to educational outcomes of the children have proven effective to keep children in school and help them perform better.

Informal school fees are also a driver of school dropout, adding to the financial burden of poor families. This is linked to teachers' low salary incentives, which pushes them to give extra classes to compensate for their poor earnings. As a result, teachers have no time to attend training to upgrade their own teaching skills, maintaining the vicious cycle of poor quality education. Quality of education must be improved through a comprehensive approach tackling both the low salaries of teachers and their skills. Higher salaries, increased professional development and teacher training, investment in teaching technologies and use of assistant teachers and other paraprofessionals will be needed to make a change.

Cambodian youth themselves are pessimistic about the return on investment in education. A large share of primary and secondary school completers end up in vulnerable jobs (either unpaid family work or self-employment). The share is only slightly higher amongst secondary school dropouts and in fact, for some occupations requiring low skills, primary school dropouts earn more than graduates. School degrees from higher education and vocational training make a difference in wages. Although not all youth should be pushed to go on to higher education, primary and secondary education (dropouts and graduates) clearly end up in low-skilled jobs with low pay while higher education and vocational training graduates get wage jobs and higher pay.

The potential for vocational training is vastly underestimated. A well-functioning TVET system with accredited institutions following national skills standards could absorb the massive number of out-of-school and low-skilled youth and train them for jobs in the private sector and industries as well as shape some of them into opportunity-driven entrepreneurs. TVET programmes will need to consider the variety of profiles of out-of-school youth and offer business-skills development as well basic literacy and math skills. Work-based training in large firms has proven successful in grooming potentially high-skilled workers. Mass training schemes for certain growing industries (tourism, services) and business clusters (agro-food business) could help firms hire trained and certified out-of-school youth. As jobs in the informal sector are common for low-skilled youth, skills recognition schemes that will validate their informal experience will also help employers in making recruitment decisions.

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# Chapter 4. Employment challenges for young women in Cambodia

Cambodia has made great progress for women's empowerment since the late 1990s. Gender disparities in education have been significantly reduced at all levels with more girls than boys finishing primary and lower secondary education. Cambodian girls today are much more likely to access school facilities and be literate than women from the older generations. Female participation in the labour force has also risen since 2004, but the labour force participation gap between young women and men remains at around 12% in 2014. The majority of employed young women are in unpaid family work and other informal employment arrangements where they are subject to low or irregular income and unstable conditions, or at risk of being the subject of trafficking and exploitation (ADB, 2013). The share of inactive and out-of-school young women is much higher than that of young men. In addition, women have limited access to, and control over, economic resources, and few opportunities for increasing their skills and decision making outside of the household, whilst social norms also often affect job decisions for women.

This chapter explores the employment challenge for young women in Cambodia through the findings of 18 focus group discussions (FGDs) with 125 women, mostly aged between 15 and 30, in urban and rural areas. The objective was to reach a better understanding of the situation of young women in and out of the labour market and of the factors that influence their decision to engage or not in economic activities. Discussions were focused around local labour market conditions in the communities interviewed, informality, prevailing socio-cultural norms on the role of women, access to social network support and opportunities for vocational training.

The remainder of the chapter is structured in four parts: first, it outlines the current labour market situation in Cambodia; second, it examines labour market realities for women, including informality, social norms, information gaps and social networks, vocational training and employment services, and school dropout; third, it highlights policies and strategies undertaken by Cambodian governments to promote female economic empowerment and inclusive growth; fourth and finally, it outlines key conclusions and policy recommendations.

## Labour market situation

### *The labour force*

Since 2010, Cambodia has achieved an annual average growth rate of 7% (World Bank, 2017). This growth has significantly contributed to poverty reduction, which was down to 17.7% in 2012, compared to 50% in early 2000s (World Bank, 2017). Along with economic growth, there has been noticeable progress in the employment rate. In 2014, Cambodia had a labour force population of 8.26 million, 13% of which were in Phnom Penh, 12% in other urban areas and the remaining 75% in rural areas (Table 4.1). The labour force participation rate in 2014 was 83% and the employment rate was 82%. The employment rate is higher in rural areas.

**Table 4.1. Population and labour force aged 15-64 by gender and geographical area, 2014**

| | Cambodia | Phnom Penh | Other urban | Rural |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Total population ('000)** | 15 848 | 1 794 | 1 796 | 11 594 |
| **Total working age population ('000)** | 10 001 | 1 361 | 1 219 | 7 421 |
| **Labour force ('000)** | 8 259 | 1 060 | 961 | 6 238 |
| **Labour force participation rate (%)** | | | | |
| **Women** | 77.5 | 72.2 | 71.1 | 79.6 |
| **Men** | 87.9 | 84.1 | 87.3 | 88.7 |
| **Both genders** | 82.6 | 77.9 | 78.8 | 84.1 |
| **Employment rate (%)** | | | | |
| **Women** | 77.4 | 72.0 | 71.0 | 79.4 |
| **Men** | 87.8 | 84.0 | 86.9 | 88.6 |
| **Both genders** | 82.4 | 77.8 | 78.6 | 83.9 |

*Source*: NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

The most active age group in terms of the labour force participation rate in 2014 were those aged 25-34 (91%) and 35-44 (91%). The labour force participation rate of youth aged 15-24 was 72%. The labour force participation rate for girls and boys aged 15-19 in 2014 was 60% for both (Table 4.2). Starting at age 20, the participation rate for men becomes higher than for women by 9 percentage points and the difference continues to widen as they grow older. The women's labour force participation rate increased by 2.5 percentage points in 2014 compared to 2004 despite a dip between 2009 and 2014. The labour force participation rate in rural areas was also higher than in the capital or other urban areas (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.2. Labour force participation rate by age group and gender in 2014 (%)**

| Age group | 2014 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Women | Men | Both genders |
| **15-19** | 60.1 | 60.5 | 60.3 |
| **20-24** | 78.1 | 87.1 | 82.8 |
| **25-34** | 85.1 | 97.0 | 90.9 |
| **35-44** | 84.6 | 97.9 | 91.0 |
| **45-54** | 81.4 | 95.9 | 88.1 |
| **55-64** | 66.8 | 86.1 | 74.7 |
| **Total (15-64)** | 77.5 | 87.9 | 82.6 |

*Source*: NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

**Table 4.3. Labour force participation rate in 2004, 2009 and 2014, by gender and region (%)**

| | 2004 | 2009 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Total (15-64)** | 79.9 | 84.4 | 82.6 |
| **Women** | 75.0 | 80.3 | 77.5 |
| **Men** | 85.4 | 88.8 | 87.9 |
| **Capital** | 67.7 | 68.7 | 77.9 |
| **Other urban** | 77.2 | 77.0 | 78.8 |
| **Rural** | 82.4 | 87.6 | 84.1 |

*Source:* Economic Institute of Cambodia (2008), *Cambodia Country Economic Memorandum*; NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014.*

Despite a high employment rate, 47% of the population suffer from multidimensional poverty (calculations based on data on household deprivations in education, health and living standards) (UNDP, 2015). As Cambodia's economic growth is narrowly based and highly dependent on shifts in external demand and capital flows, the country faces several challenges in ensuring good quality jobs, including diversifying the economy, attracting investment, upgrading skills and transitioning people from informal and vulnerable jobs to formal ones.

Decent work is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as comprising four components: i) upholding fundamental rights at work; ii) ensuring adequate livelihoods; iii) providing social protection, including a safe work environment; and iv) promoting social dialogue between employers, workers and government. Vulnerable employment – own-account workers and unpaid family workers – makes up more than half (53.6%) of total employment in Cambodia (Kanol, Khemarin and Elder, 2013).

Women are more disadvantaged than men in employment outcomes. Around 60% of female workers were engaged in vulnerable employment in 2014, compared to 51% of men (NIS, 2015). This is due to a variety of reasons, a major one being that women do the majority of unpaid domestic work. Most Cambodian workers still engage in primary industrial activities (farming, forestry and fishing) with 45% of the working population engaged in this sector in 2014 (Table 4.4). With the boom of the garment industry, a large number of workers, especially women, have been able to find wage employment, which may explain the increase in paid employees and the drop in unpaid family workers between 2004 and 2014 (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.4. Distribution of employed persons by sector, 2004-14 (%)**

| | 2004 | 2007 | 2009 | 2014 | Female | Male |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Agriculture** | 58.7 | 58.1 | 57.6 | 45.3 | 46.7 | 43.9 |
| **Industry** | 13.8 | 14.7 | 15.9 | 24.3 | 24.1 | 24.5 |
| **Services** | 27.5 | 27.2 | 26.5 | 30.4 | 29.2 | 31.5 |

*Source:* NIS (2005), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2008), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2007*; NIS (2010), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009*; NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

**Table 4.5. Distribution of employed persons by main occupation, 2004-14 (%)**

| | 2004 | 2007 | 2009 | 2014 | Female | Male |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Paid employee** | 22.5 | 25 | 26.9 | 44.4 | 39.3 | 49.1 |
| **Employer** | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.3 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.2 |
| **Own-account worker** | 38.7 | 38.7 | 49.2 | 49.6 | 54.2 | 45.4 |
| **Unpaid family worker** | 38.2 | 36.2 | 23.5 | 5.6 | 6.1 | 5.2 |
| **Other** | 0.5 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 0.2 |

*Source:* NIS (2005), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2004*; NIS (2008), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2007*; NIS (2010), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2009*; NIS (2015), *Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey 2014*.

One reason for unequal labour market outcomes between women and men is variation in educational attainment. Although girls have a higher enrolment rate than boys in primary and lower secondary education, female-male ratio of primary, secondary and tertiary completion rates drops from 0.89 to 0.56 to 0.33, respectively (ADB, 2013). As the majority of workers in Cambodia only possess primary and lower secondary education (Table 4.6), it is difficult for them to find skilled jobs. The following section explores these labour market realities for women in more depth, in particular for young women aged 15-30.

**Table 4.6. Working age population age 15 and older by educational attainment, 2012 (%)**

| | 2012 | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Women | Men |
| Currently attending school | 11.8 | 10.2 | 13.6 |
| Never (or partially) attended school | 15.9 | 20.5 | 10.9 |
| Completed primary | 40.4 | 43.5 | 37.0 |
| Completed secondary | 28.8 | 23.9 | 34.1 |
| Completed vocational | 1.0 | 0.6 | 1.5 |
| Completed university | 2.1 | 1.3 | 3.0 |
| Total | 100 | 100 | 100 |

*Source*: Kanol, Khemarin and Elder (2013), *Labour market transitions of young men and women in Cambodia*.

## Labour market realities for women

The employment growth achieved since mid-2000s has not benefited men and women equally. Gender inequality in the Cambodian labour market persists despite the increasing female labour force participation rate and women's educational attainment. The gap between men and women in the labour force participation rate (LFPR) in Cambodia was 12 percentage points in 2014 (NIS, 2015) and the Asian Development Bank (2013) finds the wage gap to be 27 percentage points. The lower LFPR for women is a consequence of labour market constraints such as informality, prevailing socio-cultural norms about the role of a Cambodian woman in society, lack of information about job opportunities and social networks, limited access to vocational education and training programmes and early school dropouts.

This section outlines the FGDs conducted in four provinces (Phnom Penh, Kampot, Siem Reap and Modulkiri) to gain insights from women about these labour market constraints. A total of 125 women were interviewed through 18 FGDs, mostly young women aged 15-30, but also older women who could provide insights into socio-cultural factors affecting young women's lives and economic activities. Key informant interviews (KIIs) with village chiefs were also conducted. The interview protocols were developed to tap gender-related and other information and barriers to women's job choices (See Annex 4.A1 for methodology). The following sections discuss the focus group insights on these labour market constraints.

### *Informality*

Cambodia has a large informal economy characterised by low-quality jobs categorised by the ILO as "vulnerable" (ADB, 2013). Vulnerable employment includes own-account work, unpaid family work, work in informal enterprises or at home, and work with a short-term contract or no contract (ILO, 2004). Women in many developing and transition economies are more likely than men to be in informal and vulnerable employment.

This is true for Cambodia, where the share of vulnerable employment was 73% for women and 64% for men in 2011 (ADB, 2013). Little progress to change the situation has been made. Nonetheless, informal and vulnerable employment has slightly changed. Participation in own-account work has remained unchanged since 2009 at around 50%. The share of unpaid family work decreased sharply from 38.2% in 2004 to 5.6% in 2014 (6.1% for women) (NIS, 2015). This change results from both the push and pull factors leading women, especially young ones, to seek more stable paid work to diversify household income streams.

On the one hand, economic pressure caused by the higher cost of living and the decrease in agricultural productivity, have pushed women to look for paid work to augment family income streams. On the other hand, the government has diversified the Cambodian economy away from agriculture, resulting in job creation in services and manufacturing (ILO, 2004). The mushrooming of jobs available (almost exclusively) for young women in the garment sector is the most telling example of this structural change.

The large transfer of women in the labour force from unpaid family work to wage employment is crucial for the economy. Nonetheless, the absorptive capacity of the economy has remained limited to certain geographies, as attested to by the experiences of the villages used for these FGDs. Given its vicinity to the capital, the suburban village of Phnom Penh analysed for this chapter has experienced a dramatic diversification in livelihood activities from farming to the services and garment sectors (FGD 1). The village has become a hub of restaurants for city people as well as of commuter residences for the villagers working in the city centre. In addition, the village has experienced significant improvements in infrastructure, which has attracted investments, notably the establishment of a garment factory in the community. All of these factors have brought about opportunities for many young women to be engaged in wage employment, formal and informal (FGD 1; field observation).

Little has changed for the rural village in Kampot Province used for this chapter, however. At the time of the FGD, women's lives were largely as they always had been. Traditional rice cultivation and cow breeding remained the core livelihoods of the village. The village was somewhat different from its other rural counterparts, which were marked by a huge transfer of young women into formal employment in nearby garment factories. The village's proximity to Kampot town, where the tourism sector had become rapidly popular since 2014, allowed some young women to seek jobs in tourism-related businesses. These young women were reportedly enthusiastic about wage job hunting, leaving the seasonal rice cultivation and traditional handicraft work (collecting bamboo from a nearby forest to make baskets), and had created positive changes in the village in terms of both the economy and gender roles.

The province of Siem Reap, one of the poorest provinces in the country, is divided between the fast growing town of Siem Reap itself and poorer rural villages. As one of the world's tourist hotspots, Siem Reap town hosts the country's largest number of visitors annually. As a result, many jobs have been generated in the services sector. The suburban village analysed for this chapter has benefited greatly from this tourism boom; most working-age persons here are only able to seek informal wage employment, however, because they have low educational attainment. For the young women from the area, their most viable paid employment options are beer-garden hostesses and traditional masseuses – both of which are highly vulnerable occupations (FGD 5). The rural village of Siem Reap shares very similar characteristics with those of rural Kampot; rice cultivation is the primary livelihood and women are constrained by traditional ways of life – family contributors to caretaking, household chores and farming. Some young women are reportedly working in Siem Reap town as housemaids and waitresses in restaurants (FGD 6).[1]

The core livelihood activity of the villages in the mountainous Mondulkiri province is cash crop cultivation of cassava, pepper and fruit trees. This results in apparently better living conditions amongst the rural inhabitants (FGDs 7 and 8; field observation).

Overall, with the exception of a few outliers in each village chosen for the FGDs, many young women in rural areas are still caught up between the traditional practice of being unpaid family contributors and being engaged in informal employment of some sort.[2] While the garment sector represents the most likely and desirable option of formal employment for rural young women, its absorptive capacity and accessibility is limited in terms of the number of jobs available and geographical locations. Such limitations, coupled with the absence of other alternatives in the formal category, has prevented young women from getting out of unpaid domestic work or other forms of informal employment (ADB, 2013). Comprising a disproportionate share of informal employment, women frequently experience substandard working conditions (Economic Institute of Cambodia, 2006).

For young women, employment diversification has remained extremely limited (see, for example, ILO, 2004; Economic Institute of Cambodia, 2006; ADB, 2013). The remainder of this section explores the different types of informal employment young women generally undertake and their experiences of them.

In both the centre and vicinity of the capital city, young women in informal employment work as street vendors, construction workers, waitresses (in local restaurants), self-employed tailors and contributing family workers (KIIs 1-2). In three other study sites, both in provincial towns and rural villages, they are

farmers and workers in off-farm activities such as handicraft making, street vending, fish processing, construction work, domestic work, restaurants (as waitresses and hostesses) and massage parlours (FGDs 3-8). According to an ILO report in 2013, the agriculture sector was then still the predominant sector in the informal economy, in which workers were generally without income security and had no entitlements to social protection benefits (ILO, 2013). Apart from employment in the garment sector and the very few paid work opportunities in the informal economy, most young women interviewed for this study were engaged in subsistence farming and small non-farming activities (FGDs 3, 4 and 6-8).

In FGD 14, a young female respondent from Mondulkiri Province who ran a small grocery store in the village highlighted the difficulties associated with such informal work:

> *The business here [as she referred to her small grocery store] is getting difficult. It was good before as there were not many shops around. But here women do not have many options so they could only think of a grocery shop like me. Here there are no factories. Farming is our main livelihood activity and normally men are in charge and we [women] assist them in addition in family duties like cooking and cleaning. But you know depending on farming yield is quite worrying. Our crop cultivation depends on nature [rainfall], which is so irregular. Also, the market price for our harvests is so unpredictable. In short, it is tough for us, especially women like us since we usually think more about family welfare than men.*

"The problem is that informal workers face poor working conditions and their rights are not protected. They do not enjoy legal and social protection and have no voice to protect their interests" (Economic Institute of Cambodia, 2006, p.11). These problems are even more pronounced for young women who are generally engaged in risky informal wage occupations such as waitressing in restaurants in the outskirts of Phnom Penh, and as hostesses in beer gardens and traditional massage service providers in Siem Reap town. As a female village assistant in Phnom Penh outlined:

> *. . . local restaurants here created a lot of jobs for young men and women in the community. However, unlike garment factory work, it is rather difficult for those young women working in the restaurants. Usually, we, the village leadership, are very cautious of their work, which may secretly involve child labour and sex work. However, there is little we [village authority] can do to ensure they have a safe working environment. We have heard of sexual harassment they [young women] have experienced from customers. It is also reported that indirect sex services also exist in some restaurants and involve some of the young waitresses as well as young women in the community.*

The same concern was shared by our key informant (male) from a village near Siem Reap:

> *. . . given its proximity to the centre of Siem Reap town, which hosts a huge variety of tourism services, many people from the village can get a job in one of the services regardless of their education attainment. As I observed, a big number of [young] women from the village are working either as hostesses in a beer garden or as massage service providers. And as you know, both jobs highly expose them to sexual harassment or more seriously to being involved in indirect sex service provision. They tend to be vulnerable, with limited protection provided to them.*

As attested to by these experiences, and as noted by the Economic Institute of Cambodia (2006), for young women engaged in informal employment decent, secure work was difficult to find in the vacuum of institutional mechanisms to provide protection, security, organisation and voice. Cambodian labour law does not cover all employment types; this results in the absence of legislated protection for a disproportionately large group of working people, including own-account and family workers (ILO 2012). A sizeable number of jobs reported by our participants (both in FGDs and KIIs) fell in the category of "precarious work", which the ILO defines as "work that by contractual status is of casual,

seasonal, temporary or short term nature" (ILO, 2012) and are thus vulnerable and risky for workers. These vulnerabilities are particularly acute for young women, who often face sexual harassment in the informal labour market, as described above. The following section on social norms explores some of the reasons why it is difficult for young Cambodian women to exit the informal labour market.

### *Social norms*

Traditional codes of conduct still have a strong influence on the role of women in Cambodian society. Women's roles are traditionally tied to household responsibilities, ranging from cooking and cleaning to caring for children, parents and relatives. The traditional code of conduct like C*hbap Srey* as well as folk stories, which encourage submissiveness, make it clear that women should derive their virtues from keeping order at home and supporting their husbands under any circumstances (Ledgerwood, 1994; Jacobsen, 2008). These moral standards and expectations continue to play out in daily life – in politics (Ledgerwood, 1996), traditional and modern education (Ledgerwood, 1994; Jacobsen, 2008), work and mobility (Derks, 2008; Brickell, 2011b; Bylander, 2015; Peou, 2016) and entertainment (Peou, 2009). Society and families expected women to be "good wives", whether they had jobs or not. A full-time employed young woman in Bakeng village near Phnom Penh said:

> *After returning from work, I cook and do other housework. My husband does not know how to do these things. He sits in front of the TV, while I cook… As for domestic chores I cannot do during the week, like washing clothes and cleaning, I do them during the weekend.*

Having a job becomes a double burden for married Cambodian women as they try to balance household responsibilities with economic activities. Recent literature shows that although unprecedented numbers of Cambodian women have migrated to work away from home, marriage and parenthood have often required them to return home to become housewives or undertake the double burden of caring and running a small business at home (Derks, 2008; Peou and Zinn, 2015; Peou, 2016). Income-earning activities away from home are often a temporary situation for women. The majority of the non-working women interviewed in rural Siem Reap, aged 32-35, tended to agree that "a woman should not work in a job that requires her to travel far because of safety issues but also because she might be criticised as a 'bad' woman." A young woman from Kampot Province in FGD 6 made an eloquent statement about her situation as well as that of other women in the village:

> *Here my daily life is switching between home and my tiny farm. There is no other thing I can do to earn extra income (in addition to that from our annual yield). I thought of opening a grocery store, but you look around and you can see there are too many already for a small village like ours. Going to Phnom Penh to look for garment work is a great option but, you know, it is not easy for married women like us. Unmarried ones they have 'longer legs' ['longer legs' in Khmer language refers metaphorically to 'being able to travel far from home']; men, married or not, have even 'longer legs'. But I cannot, however much I want. I have two small children to attend to; if I go to Phnom Penh, no one will take care of them and the house.*

Traditional social norms are hard to change as both women and men believe that housework is the sole responsibility of women, and women consider themselves lucky if their husbands help. In addition, most non-working young women interviewed in the FGDs generally shared the view that men were naturally smarter than women. Driven by such a view, boys tended to be more favoured in families to receive more education. As a non-working woman in the centre of Siem Reap described:

> *I would let my son study. Educated men can get jobs easier than women. For my daughter, even if she studies little, she can run a small business… Women can learn skills [tailor] to earn money, so there's no need to study too much… Girls can study until grade 7 or 8, and they can start a small business or learn some skills such as tailor or wedding planner. But for men it's hard [to find jobs like girls].*

Communities and families in Cambodia are also anxious about women's physical and moral well-being resulting from mobility away from home. Single young women moving out of their home, for work or study, raise concern over not only their physical security but also the moral standard of remaining "virtuous", including being a virgin (Derks, 2008). The only way it is accepted that a woman migrate to work in urban centres is if relatives or trusted village members are already present in the town or job where she is going (Peou, 2016). Recent studies suggest that education and mobility to find work have increasingly challenged these social norms of women's place within the home (Derks, 2008; Brickell, 2011b; Bylander, 2015).

New occupational and educational opportunities have led a younger generation of women living in urban areas, aged 20-29, to contest gender-based expectations through their occupational activities and aspirations (Brickell, 2011a). In urban Siem Reap, where the services and tourism sectors are booming, the younger generation are defying traditions and migrating to seek wage work in the city. Job opportunities are however often low-skilled, such as waiting tables in restaurants and bars or working in massage shops, hotels or souvenir stores, reinforcing the stigma of women working away from home.

Efforts to change gender-based discriminatory social norms have sometimes backfired. Women who participated in training on gender-based social roles became aware of their rights; when trying to exercise their rights, their spouses would become angry and violent. Local authorities reported that some of these gender trainings actually increased domestic violence. Clearly, sensitising both women and men is critical to such exercises. A few non-working young women interviewed for this study shared their experience, as for instance:

> *Before we knew about our rights, we were always quiet and inferior to our spouses… Now many women in the village do advocacy for their rights and status with their spouses. Their husbands become so angry that they sometimes use violence against women… I think the training should also be given to the men, to make them aware of women's rights and statuses. If not, it seems more harmful than helpful.*

Women in urban areas are more likely to be financially independent and tend to marry later than women in rural areas. In rural areas such as Modulkiri, girls can be married as early as at 16 years old, interrupting school attendance and bringing about early pregnancies. Their family and the community do not want girls to marry late. In the capital city, women, especially employed women, stated that they wanted to be financially independent and make decisions for themselves. They preferred to marry as late as possible – in general in their late 20s – have a job and earn a stable salary before getting married.

Despite positive evidence of women becoming more financially independent, the strongly entrenched social-cultural views towards gender-related roles and practices in Cambodian society as reflected through the division of labour in the family, the perceived marriage age and parents' education choices for women, coupled with the lack of structural/institutional support to ensure that women are not inevitably tied to household responsibilities, remains a key constraint to women's employment choices and economic empowerment. This study found that the social-cultural norms that favoured men over women in investment in education and in employment expectations for women were not seriously challenged, particularly in rural communities, despite concerted efforts by different stakeholders and development partners over the years.

### *The information gap and social networks*

Both working and non-working young women in the focus groups generally reported that they had no information about job vacancies in their communities. Information about job vacancies, even in the suburbs of Phnom Penh, was internally circulated within closed networks of peers and relatives. The commune head or local authority did little to promote job opportunities in the community, leaving local people, particularly young women, ill-informed about what jobs were available, what a better wage or working conditions resembled and what skills were required. The combination of the low presence of

private companies and organisations and lack of information on what might exist gives little prospects for women to seek gainful employment. The information gap was particularly evident for young women living in suburban Phnom Penh, only 10-15 kilometres from the capital, who appeared to have little knowledge about the kind of skilled jobs available nearby.

In the remote provinces around Mondulkiri, opportunities for women to engage in formal wage employment were almost non-existent. Endowed with fertile land, most people in Modulkiri are farmers or seasonal farm workers, or owners of small business like grocery stores. In Sen Monorom, a provincial city of Modulkiri, although some employment was available in banks and NGOs, women appeared unaware of these jobs and the skills required. Access to job information was mainly through a tight circle of friends or relatives.

Access to job information and employment depends largely on an individual's social network. In the FGDs carried out for this study, there was little evidence of information through the social media, radio, television and other formal social and professional networks. Job information came typically through an insider already in the working place. Women depended on working friends or relatives for information on job opportunities, not on any formal organisation or community leader. Both working and non-working women in this study commonly shared this experience. In particular, non-working young women in Siem Reap expressed their frustration over the lack of public support to find jobs. Women "walk in" to construction sites or potential work places to ask for job opportunities.

### *Vocational training and employment services*

Vocational skills training provided by the government or NGOs are often not relevant for young women. Women interviewed complained that the training offered focused on low-skilled jobs such as sewing or waitressing, leaving little prospect for better employment. They never received training on managerial and entrepreneurial skills. When local authorities or NGOs offer support in the form of for example, agriculture extension services, there is a low turnout, with about one out of five persons registered actually attending. This was echoed by women in both provincial towns and suburban Phnom Penh. Given the perceived low job prospects in the formal sector (such as NGOs, MFIs or private companies), non-working young women who are already busy with household chores and child-rearing found these trainings irrelevant for them.

There are no official career centres or employment services that can assist women to find decent paid work. As put by a non-working young woman in suburban Phnom Penh:

> *Training courses are offered in this village but for jobs in garment or drinking-water factories, gas stations or restaurants. Only a few highly educated women can get better jobs in the city. Here, you can't get better jobs. The factory will train you for a short period of time and you can do the job.*

Given this lack of formally organised training and career paths and due to the large proportion of people working in the informal economy, it is common practice to pursue an apprenticeship through private connections in a small business, such as at a tailor's shop. Career perspectives are formed after one enters a job and the apprentice subsequently develops interest, skills and networks (Peou, 2016). Ad hoc training or training centres that are not linked to a clear career path are not effective and are overlooked by young people.

Limited transport to existing training centres is an additional constraint to access training. Training centres are usually located in provincial towns and are for women from rural areas. Non-working women in Siem Reap and Kampot reported that training required full-day attendance, which was not possible for women with children and domestic work. Vocational trainings were mostly adapted for unmarried women who could engage time and energy for further career advancement. Access to, and relevance of

such training thus remained critical constraints for women seeking to upgrade or gain new skills and better employment.

### *School dropout*

The attendance rate in primary and lower secondary school, which are compulsory, is higher for girls than for boys. This trend is reversed from upper secondary school onwards, however. In 2014, the percentage of girls attending primary and lower secondary school was 89% compared to 87% for boys (NIS, 2015). This is an improvement from 2004, when it was 81% for girls and 83% for boys. From ages 15-24 (ages for upper secondary and higher education), however, the attendance rate drops to 26% for women and 29% for men (NIS, 2015). Early dropout from school leaves few employment options for young women, who end up in unpaid domestic work or low paid, low-skill jobs due to their education. Time-use data show that the burden of domestic work can constrain both women's education and later their participation in finding paid work.

The lower education attainment of girls perpetuates gender inequality in the labour market. Influenced by traditional beliefs and values about gender roles, parents are more inclined to support the education of their boys and keep their daughters for housework. The most frequently stated reason for both boys and girls aged 6-17's not attending school was that they "must contribute to household income", followed by "not wanting to attend school" (NIS, 2015). Having to contribute to household income was the reason for 34% of girls not attending school compared to 25% of boys. This shows the low value parents give to education and the weight of the opportunity cost of sending children to school as a decision factor. The unpaid work gap for women constitutes 3.5 hours per day (ADB, 2013), usually of unpaid domestic work.

Most of the women in all the four research sites reported that more women started to drop out of school earlier than men, particularly those in rural areas. Some Cambodian parents saw better employment opportunities for their sons than for their daughters. This was because men generally held formal and decision-making jobs whereas women were in informal and seasonal and domestic jobs. Views varied across respondents, however. Working young women's groups at the centre of Phnom Penh and in most provincial towns, even in Mondulkiri, the most remote province in this study, claimed that education was important for both men and women, and they saw a fair employment opportunity, or women were even at more advantage of obtaining better employment. Women in rural and remote areas, particularly the non-working women's groups who were mostly housewives, however, tended to hold a somewhat different view towards the education of men. Some women (as in the cases of Siem Reap and Kampot) reportedly dropped out of school because they wanted to keep their brothers in school, and their families wanted the women to help with domestic tasks and generate income for the education of the boys.

In remote areas like Mondulkiri Province, education for women was not considered important and was difficult to receive, as early marriages for girls was the social norm. Schools are located quite far from people's homes, especially secondary schools, which made most parents wary about sending their daughters to schools. People also saw little relevance of education to their daily lives since there were very few employment opportunities for those with higher education in the province. The girls or women themselves did not have role models; as a result, they saw no value in pursuing high education. For example, besides employment in the public sector in which people have little interest due to low salaries and status, there were not many private companies or institutions in the remote provinces. The only institutions that existed were usually banks and micro-finance institutions. The jobs in those institutions were mainly for men as they needed to travel from house to house to meet clients; women feel insecure about holding such positions.

A working woman (own-account worker) observed that:

> *The financial situation of my family was not really the main constraint for my study. The main problem is that there were no upper secondary school campuses available in my*

> *village at that time, and also I myself did not really want to study any longer due to the perception that there is not much difference between finishing primary school and lower secondary school in terms of income-generating capacities, that's why I dropped my studies at grade 5. Now I just regret a bit that I could not finish a higher level of education. If I had higher knowledge, I may have been able to manage my own business better than today, and now even I want to study, I just can't because I have family to take care of.*

Not only did gaps exist between genders, but they also existed within the same gender in different locations. Human capital gaps existed from urban to rural and remote provinces, and interestingly, different groups of women reported different gaps based on socialisation amongst their groups. Urban working women groups reported that the girls that they knew usually held upper-secondary completion certificates or bachelor's degrees, while non-working groups stated that most women that they knew were in the lower- or upper-secondary school levels. In rural and remote areas, women's education varied from the first year of education to completion of upper-secondary school. The result showed that women who were over 30 tended to have much lower education attainment than those who were younger. School availability was quite scarce two or three decades ago and farming was the main occupation, which reduced the need for formal education. The younger groups had more schooling opportunities, as schools were built closer to people's residences and education began to increase in value.

Observing the general trends in education development in Cambodia shows a gradual change in the value of education for boys and girls. More and more girls are enrolled in school and the dropout rate of girls in primary school has become relatively lower than that of boys. This indicates a gradual change in the investment in girls' access to education. This was revealed through interviews even with the remote elderly people in Mondulkiri. As an old woman in the village said:

> *The future is uncertain. Sometimes we want to run a business, but can't even read. How can we do it? If we have studied, it puts us in a better condition. I decided to let my children go to school, even daughters. It's hard to predict the future. We can't lean on our husband forever. If the husband knows how to earn money but we don't, it's difficult. We need to be able to do it too, even as small as selling grocery at home... I know it is very difficult to not be able to read or write Khmer. That's why I want my daughter to learn… If not, it would be difficult for our family.*

Enrolling girls in school has increased in both urban and rural communities since 2005. Improved education opportunities for girls might be a result of the hardship that most parents, especially mothers, experienced in life as they were illiterate or were not able to do simple arithmetic. They thus started to send their daughters to schools. Some working young women even reported that recently job opportunities had begun to favour women since many job announcements tended to give greater priority to women and encouraged them to apply. The working young women group in the Phnom Penh centre proudly claimed:

> *Women don't have any problem finding jobs, compared to men, as long as they are knowledgeable and well-educated or when women and men are equal in terms of intelligence and ability.*

Most Cambodian parents tended to balance the trade-off between early employment and their children's learning. As girls were high achievers in school, parents invested more in their education. Most respondents in rural Kampot, for instance, said:

> *I would support my children, regardless of their gender, to receive education as much as they can so that their children would have a brighter future than me. If they aren't performing well in class, I would consider sending them to learn some vocational skills or sending them to income-generating jobs.*

However, in poorer families gender remains an obstacle for girls to pursuing their education. Non-working and working young women in Siem Reap town expressed their regret of not having been able to continue their education due to war and poverty:

> *If I could turn back the time and there were no wars or any obstacles, I would like to continue my studies. If I had the chance, after I graduated from high school [they don't aim for universities], I would like to become a teacher or an NGO staff or start a small business. [They also believed that higher educational background is beneficial for getting better paid jobs]… I regret. I envy other people who had the chance to study. I want to learn now, but I can't… If my family wasn't poor, I would study hard… if I could turn back the time. When I was in school, I had to sell desserts after school… my parents stopped me from going to school. Our family is poor. I had to help in selling stuff. So I didn't really have time to go to school. I couldn't ride a bicycle, so I needed to walk.*

Taken together, these accounts give a good insight into the struggles Cambodian women face when entering and trying to remain in the formal labour market. The prevalence of informal work for young women, information gaps and the lack of social networks to promote job searching, inadequate vocational training, and traditional social and gender norms that encourage young women to drop out of school earlier than their male counterparts, all combine to limit female economic empowerment. A female village chief from Mondulkiri succinctly summarised the multiple, interrelated challenges facing Cambodian women:

> *I find it hard to explain the conditions of young women in our community in a simple way. Each element links to one another like a spider web. First, perhaps, usually women do not have high level of education, which explains why we cannot seek salary work. Nonetheless, that does not mean we do not want to be highly educated. Rather, we do not see the possibility of getting any paid work. If you look around, most of us are farmers; a few are running small village shops. Where are those paid jobs? And in between (schooling and salary work), we, women, are expected to serve housework and care-taking duties at home, which interrupt our schooling to some extent. Also, suppose we had a paid job, we would be caught up between the job and domestic and care-taking work. Especially when we have children, it will be rather impossible to get paid job. In short, life of Cambodian women is complicated.*

## Policies and strategies for employment and inclusive growth

Cognisant of the challenges and constraints facing women, the government has been committed to promoting the roles and social status of women in participating in the social, political and economic development of the country. The commitment is reflected in the national constitution, Article 31, recognising that:

> *…Every Khmer citizen shall be equal before the law, enjoying the same rights, freedom and fulfilling the same obligations regardless of race, colour, gender, language, religious belief, political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth or other status…*

This is also clearly expressed in the Rectangular Strategy Phase III (2014-2018) of the government (RGC, 2013). The four rectangles stress key strategic areas with a view to having the country progress to an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a developed country by 2050: i) the promotion of agriculture; ii) development of physical infrastructure; iii) private sector development and employment, particularly for youth; and iv) capacity building and human resource development. As part of the strategy, the government recognises the importance of inclusive participation of both men and women in mainstreaming each rectangle and the economy, ensuring that every single citizen of the country, both men and women, has the capacity to rise in their professions, so that the country is able to achieve an annual economic growth of at least 7% (as stated in the rectangular strategy objectives). Engaging women in decent wage work is deemed particularly necessary for sustained and equitable growth.

The government's commitment to empower women in the labour market is manifested in two other overarching national policies aiming to promote the employability and productivity of the people. The National Industrial Development Policy (IDP) 2015-2025 (RGC, 2015) and the National Employment Policy (NEP) 2015-2025 work hand in hand to promote growth and development by providing high productivity and income-generating careers to people of both genders (Cambodian Government, 2015). The IDP, as the name suggests, aims to promote industrial development in Cambodia, thereby setting a new platform for youth to engage more broadly in the labour market in Cambodia, particularly by diversifying their career choices beyond the predominant agriculture-, garment- or food-processing-based sectors. In a similar vein, the NEP aims at: i) increasing decent and productive employment opportunities; ii) promoting skills and human resources development; and iii) enhancing labour market governance. The NEP also highlights the importance of understanding the employment needed by both genders and promotes women to engage in high-skilled and managerial positions.

The Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) sets another inclusive strategy, aiming to create income-generating opportunities for women by promoting decent wage employment and the development of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSME). In line with the five-year strategic plans for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Cambodia, Neary Rattanaks III (2009-13) and IV (2014-18), the WEE covers at least four policy areas related to wage employment, MSME development, migration and rural livelihoods, enabling a broad spectrum of economic opportunities and a fairer share for women. The WEE lays out a supportive platform to create sustainable economic opportunities for women as a way to reduce women's employment vulnerabilities and risks in the market. It requires not only women's participation in business activities or wage employment, but also the benefits and agency women are entitled to withhold in important decision-making exercises.

To support this women's empowerment initiative, MOWA launched a Millennium Development Goal (MDG) Acceleration Framework Cambodia Action Plan 2013-2015 (ADB, 2015), which prioritises three areas: i) providing training for jobs for women that are consistent with market demands; ii) enhancing micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises led by women to ensure that women have the capacity to lead and grow their enterprises and move from the formal to the informal sector; and iii) improving livelihoods in rural communities, especially for poor women.

The MOWA also established Women's Development Centres (WDC) in 13 provinces to provide vocational training to women. The WDC training programmes fall short in their scope and relevance, however, as they concentrate largely on handicraft production, hairdressing, tailoring and food processing. Content and skills relevant to the labour market are lacking, such as enterprise development skills, business development services, literacy skills, information on legal protection and current market information. WDCs have not reached the intended potential that would significantly reduce gender inequality and enhance women's role and status in the economy. Given the nature of the training combined with the trainers' lack of cutting-edge capacity, women's participation in decent employment literally remains constrained. MOWA identifies the following limitations of WDCs:

- WDCs only provide traditional vocational skills, not entrepreneurial skills training, business development services, current market information or access to credit;
- the skills provided do not match the local market demands and there is a lack of trainers with the relevant cutting-edge knowledge to match market needs and address the unique needs and challenges of women;
- there is an inadequate monitoring and follow-up system for WDCs to assess the impact of the skills trainings; and
- there is limited co-ordination between WDCs and other vocational training centres (such as those run by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training, the private sector and NGOs).

## Conclusion and recommendations

This qualitative study examined the opportunities and challenges facing young Cambodian women contained in their entering and thriving in the labour market. Traditional social norms regarding women's role in the family and society have remained largely unchallenged, especially in rural and remote areas. Women are still expected to shoulder the majority of household responsibilities and childcare, regardless of their employment status. The domestic division of labour has not been equitably distributed between men and women, leaving the latter at a great disadvantage. Social norms concerning women's "good wife" role, coupled with social stigma against their mobility, represents a daunting challenge for women to get vocational training or further education and to work outside their community. This belief was particularly apparent amongst non-working young and elder women, notably in rural communities.

Early marriage is a significant obstacle to women's participation in decent wage employment. The study found that the belief that young women should get married early remains strong in rural areas. Such beliefs shape rural people's views towards young women's educational and employment aspirations. Early marriage frequently results in girls dropping out of school and reduces their likelihood in getting decent jobs in the future. In the city and urban regions, poverty and lack of role models appear to be greater obstacles to decent wage employment for women. Socio-cultural norms appeared to play a less significant role in the urban context.

As for employment patterns, the majority of women outside the city or provincial centres tended to have limited access to formal employment. Despite being characterised as "employed", young women in the rural areas mainly worked as either own-account workers or contributing family members. The most commonly available paid work in their communities was at garment factories or some small businesses. This was also the case in suburban Phnom Penh. Again, poverty and lack of education were the major barriers to better employment opportunities for young women. Limited local labour markets and lack of information about job opportunities were also contributing factors towards women engaging in informal employment. This study showed that there were not enough institutional structures to provide local employment for women, even in suburban Phnom Penh. While banks/financial institutions and NGOs were available in their locality, young women did not know how to get a job in those institutions. Women found out about jobs largely through friends and informal social networks, which could be limited, particularly for young women.

Some vocational training was available to women in fields such as sewing, cooking and mechanics, etc. Training had little impact on female empowerment, however. Such training focused mainly on manual-skill jobs and was not aimed at preparing women for managerial or entrepreneurial roles. Also, the training did not ensure that relevant jobs would be available in their locality. In addition, it appeared that the training schedule was not highly convenient for all women, especially married women who had domestic work and care. By and large, there was little flexibility or support for them to be able to attend fully, particularly when the training was conducted all day and far from their home.

This chapter analysed the situation of young women (15-30 years old) in (and out of) the labour market in Cambodia. It specifically aimed to understand the constraints and opportunities in the labour market faced by Cambodian women in urban and rural areas as well as the effects of social norms on their decision to engage in economic activities. The chapter used qualitative focus group discussions to explore a variety of interconnected factors such as unsupportive labour market conditions, lack of access to social networks and vocational training, stigma about risks and other vulnerabilities facing women in the labour market and limited opportunities to receive higher education. Based on this analysis, five key recommendations are proposed to help address the employment challenge facing young Cambodian women:

Limited access to upper secondary and tertiary education for women represents a major barrier to better employment options later in life. Given long distances between schools and homes, combined with the concern about the security of young women, women tend to be excluded from getting the same level of

education as men. In Mondulkiri, some women, for example, could financially afford to go to school, but the school was not within their vicinity. Thus, ensuring that schools are located within reach is a key strategy that the MoEYS needs to implement. Meanwhile, additional scholarship schemes to support girls' education is necessary, as many face financial constraints within the household. Without a better education, it is hard to envisage women's getting better employment opportunities and becoming role models for other young women in the community.

While providing vocational training to women close to their locality is important and can address the issue regarding the lack of access to training for women, the relevance of the training also matters. As this study points out, existing training might not link to decent employment other than the low-skilled, informal employment. In this case, the depth and breadth of the training courses should enable the trainees to improve certain occupational skills, such as entrepreneurship, business management or more diverse agricultural skills to improve productivity, in addition to sewing, cooking, waitressing and mechanical skills, which generally do not increase their range of options in the labour market.

The lack of support mechanisms such as child/day care and incentives for (married) women to attend training also emerged during these focus group discussions. Without basic social protection and the necessary support systems in place, women have fewer opportunities to improve their education and skills and ability to compete for decent jobs. Thus, there is a prime need for the government to provide basic social protection and invest in the creation of community child/day care centres to ensure that women benefit from the training and education provided.

Providing skills and training to women might not be highly attractive given that the current Cambodian local labour markets remain limited in size and in absorptive capacity. In this case, there is a strong need for the government to set up local industries/institutions leveraging local resources to create more decent jobs in the local economy. This would give more opportunities for young women to envision the link between education/vocational training and their future career.

This chapter finds that gender-related roles and practices remain relatively unchanged, especially amongst the elder men and women in rural and remote Cambodia, despite more women's having access to education and getting leadership roles in both public and private sectors. Social-cultural norms connecting women to early marriage, household responsibilities and sometimes lower intelligence than men still largely determine families' choices not to send girls to school and/or to support them to compete for decent jobs. This normative constraint calls for key actions from the educational institutions, NGOs and relevant stakeholders to put more effort in changing the mind-sets of local women and men away from the traditionally prescribed female roles. Large-scale sensitisation workshops on gender-related roles and practices, women and work etc. involving both genders might be useful, including a strategy to change the public's conviction that puts women at disadvantage.

## Notes

1 Long distance is cited as the reason limiting mobility amongst young women from a village in search of paid employment elsewhere, like a provincial town or the capital. Interestingly, the village is only a little more than 30 kilometres away from Siem Reap town. Experience from one-on-one interviews with young women in Takeo, Kandal, and Battambang suggests otherwise – here the actual distance matters less; it is the perception of the young women and their family that determines a mobility decision. The emphasis here is that their perception is shaped by their exposure to the outside world (away from their locality). This is further complicated by Cambodian cultural norms according to which women should not travel too far a distance from their family and by security concerns (KIIs 3, 5 & 6, field observations).

2 The rural outliers found in each study site are a minority of young Cambodian women with educational opportunities and to whom resources are adequately made available. They are generally in formal employment. For example, in rural Cambodia, some young women are school teachers, nurses, fairly large business owners, etc.

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# Annex 4.A1. Focus group discussion methodology

### *Interview selection criteria*

The main method used in this study was focus group discussions (FGDs) with working and non-working young women aged 15-30, older women and key informants who could provide insights into socio-cultural factors affecting young women's lives and economic activities. To provide a reasonable representation of the geographical, socio-economic and demographic variations, the study selected the capital of Phnom Penh and three provinces: Siem Reap, Kampot and Mondulkiri.

A total of 16 FGDs were conducted with working and non-working young women, 2 FGDs with older women, and 8 key informant interviews (KIIs) with community leaders (the chief of each village). The selection of FGD participants took into account the balance between working and non-working young women. The community leaders who were able to locate young women in the community assisted the logistical arrangements of all the FGDs/meetings.

The interview protocols were developed to tap into gender-related information about economic activities, particularly the effects of socio-cultural norms on women's career choices and life course. These protocols were used for FGDs with young and older women and for the interviews with the community leaders, aiming to capture a broad spectrum of barriers and opportunities in the labour market.

The FGD and KII interview questions were developed based on previous reports in Cambodia about women and inequality in the labour market and other literature about normative restrictions on women's employment and with significant inputs from the OECD team. The questions were continually constructed and validated through field discussion and observations. Combining both theoretical and practical insights reflecting women's employment, the questions in the FGDs and KIIs looked to a large degree at interconnected factors, including institutional structure/support to young women, local labour market conditions, social-cultural norms, risks and vulnerabilities constraining women's engagement in decent employment, gender role in the family and society, gender gap in employment, human capital gap, and access to social networks and training.

**Table 4.A1.1. Selected provinces and their selected characteristics**

| Selected province | Geographical region | Poverty rate (2012) | Demographic characteristics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Population share | Population density |
| **Phnom Penh** | Central Plains | 0.1% | 9.9% | 4 516 per km$^2$ |
| **Kampot** | Coastal | 20.4% | 4.4% | 120 per km$^2$ |
| **Siem Reap** | Tonle Sap | 28.8% | 6.7% | 87 per km$^2$ |
| **Mondulkiri** | Mountains | 32.9% | 0.4% | 4 per km$^2$ |

*Source*: ADB (2014), *Cambodia: Country Poverty Analysis 2014*; NIS (2009), *General Population Census 2008*.

Each selected area represented the four geographical regions of Cambodia: the Central Plains (Phnom Penh), Coastal Region (Kampot), Tonle Sap (Siem Reap) and the Mountains Region (Mondulkiri). The selected sites varied significantly in household poverty rates (Table 4.A1.1) and economic characteristics. Phnom Penh is highly urbanised and dominated by services and industrial activities. Siem Reap is mainly rural and dependent on traditional agriculture, but its provincial city is the country's biggest tourist destination for international and local travellers, hence concentrated in the services economy. Kampot and

Mondulkiri are also mainly agricultural but characterised by different agricultural activities due to their geographical features, for example, spices in addition to rice in Kampot and rubber and cashew nuts in Mondulkiri. Demographically, Phnom Penh is the most densely populated, in addition to being the country's second most populated place after Kampong Cham. In contrast, Mondulkiri is the lowest in population density, while Kampot and Siem Reap are between Phnom Penh and Mondulkiri. In addition, up to 80% of Mondulkiri's population is estimated to be constituted by ethnic minority groups, while Phnom Penh and the other two selected provinces are predominantly Khmer.

In each province, four FGDs with young women were conducted, two in a rural setting and two in urban towns. For each rural or urban area selected, one FGD was with working young women and the other FGD was with young women not working. For both groups, the team tried to keep the age between 15 and 30 years old, but this was not always feasible due to women's unavailability. In the groups of working women, an attempt was made to include different employment statuses, including wage employees, own-account workers and unpaid family workers. In the non-working women's groups, participants included unemployed women but looking for a job, inactive women not looking for a paid job and women only working at home. Their education level was also considered in each FGD in order to capture whether the gaps in education levels constrained opportunities for young women to find good jobs or engage in productive economic activities.

Perspectives from older women and men in the community were included to better understand social-cultural norms. These were captured through two FGDs with elder women and community leaders.

**Table 4.A1.2. Number of FGDs by province**

| Phnom Penh | | Kampot | | Mondulkiri | | Siem Reap | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Centre | Urban periphery | Provincial city or district centre | Rural | Provincial city or district centre | Rural | Provincial city or district centre | Rural |
| (Reusey village, 2 km) | (Bak Khaeng village, 15 km) | (Ou Touch village, 4 km) | (Trapeang Reusey village, 60 km) | (Mondul 3 village, 2 km) | (Bat Dangkao village, 33 km) | (Chamkar Tae village, 2 km) | (Pu Chri village, 37 km) |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| 5 | | 4 | | 4 | | 5 | |

### *Data collection and analysis*

The data collection took about one month between July and August 2016 across Phnom Penh city and three other provinces (Kampot, Siem Reap and Mondulkiri). FGDs with working young women could only be conducted during weekends and keeping a strict definition of "working" or "not working" (as determined by the ILO's universal employment and non-employment definitions) was difficult, since in the rural context, as most women were in one way or another engaged in farming or some economic activity, making the categories of working and non-working women highly fluid.

Data were audio-recorded with permission from the respondents and summarised immediately after the interview with reference to the thematic structure described earlier. Relevant and common themes, quotes and contexts were identified in data reading, analysis and interpretations to enable the additional conceptualisation of gender-related roles and practices beyond the predetermined themes drawn from the document analysis.

### *Research ethics*

This research was conducted with working and non-working young women, both single and married, who mostly had little time to commit to the discussion/interview due to their income-generating work and housework/domestic care responsibilities. A consent form, in Khmer, was developed and read out to the participants to enable them to get a clear picture of the discussion/interview, spelling out the research purposes, the nature of participation in the discussion/interview, the risks and benefits and other freedom they would have during the interview. The chief of each village played a role in liaising with them as to whether the interview was possible and in ensuring that the nature of our questions did not affect their mental state or rights. Their rights to participate or withdraw was fully respected by the research team and protected by the local authorities. Interviews were conducted in Khmer.

**Table 4.A1.3. List of respondents interviewed**

| FGDs | Age | Marital status | Grade of completion or attending | Employment | Average monthly income (in USD unless indicated) | Family size |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FGD 1** | 25 | Single | 10 | Factory worker | 160 | 6 |
| **Rural Phnom Penh** | 28 | Single | 10 | Factory worker | 160 | 6 |
| **Working Group** | 21 | Single | 7 | Factory worker | 160 | 7 |
| | 31 | Married | 9 | Factory worker | 160 | 6 |
| | 21 | Single | 12 | Factory worker | 160 | 4 |
| | 24 | Married | 9 | Factory worker | 160 | 4 |
| **FGD 2** | 30 | Married | 2 | Not seeking a job | 0 | 6 |
| **Rural Phnom Penh** | 32 | Married | 6 | Not seeking a job | 0 | 5 |
| **Non-working Group** | 37 | Married | 5 | Not seeking a job | 0 | 5 |
| | 27 | Married | 6 | Not seeking a job | 0 | 3 |
| | 29 | Married | 6 | Not seeking a job | 0 | 3 |
| **FGD 3** | 23 | Single | BA | Teacher | N/A | |
| **Centre Phnom Penh** | 25 | Single | | Waitress | N/A | N/A |
| **Working Group** | 25 | Single | BA | 3 Staff online shop | N/A | N/A |
| | 23 | Single | BA | Teacher | N/A | N/A |
| | 26 | Single | G. 5(at VN) | Waitress | N/A | N/A |
| | 24 | Single | BA | HR manager | N/A | N/A |
| | 27 | Single | BA | Govt. official | N/A | N/A |
| | 27 | Married | BA | Construction material | N/A | N/A |
| | 24 | Single | BA | Research assistant | N/A | N/A |
| **FGD 4** | 21 | Single | BA | About to be employed | 0 | 4 |
| **Centre Phnom Penh** | 21 | Married | BA | Not seeking a job | 0 | 9 |
| **Non-working Group** | 20 | Single | BA | Seeking a job | 0 | 4 |
| | 21 | Single | BA | Seeking a job | 0 | 8 |
| | 22 | Single | High School | Inactive | 0 | 6 |
| | 23 | Single | High School | Inactive | 0 | 6 |
| | 19 | Single | High School | Inactive | 0 | 5 |
| **FGD 5** | 36 | Married | 12 | Own-account worker + Housewife | 150 | 4 |
| **Centre PP** | | | | | | |
| **Elder Group** | 49 | Divorced | 10 | Nanny | 150 (own salary) | 3 |
| | 40 | Married | 12 | Housewife | 1 000 (from husband) | 4 |
| | 55 | Separated | 6 | Housewife | 500 (from older sister) | 4 |
| | 65 | Separated | 6 | Housewife | 250 (from children) | 4 |
| | 71 | Separated | 7 | Housewife | Not regular (income from children + own business) | 5 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FGD 6** | 27 | Married | Grade 6 | Own-account worker + farmer | N/A | 4 |
| **Rural Kampot** | 30 | Married | Grade 6 | Farmer | N/A | 4 |
| **Working Group** | 29 | Married | Grade 9 | Farmer | N/A | 5 |
| | 31 | Married | Grade 7 | Farmer | N/A | 4 |
| | 28 | Married | Grade 5 | Farmer | N/A | 2 |
| | 18 | Single | Grade 6 | Farmer | N/A | 3 |
| | 30 | Married | Grade 11 | Farmer | N/A | 3 |
| **FGD 7** | 23 | Separated | Grade 9 | Housewife | N/A | 5 |
| **Rural Kampot** | 24 | Married | Grade 8 | Housewife | N/A | 3 |
| **Non-working Group** | 20 | Married | Grade 8 | Housewife | N/A | 2 |
| | 26 | Married | Grade 5 | Housewife | N/A | 6 |
| | 17 | Single | In Grade 8 | Student | N/A | 5 |
| | 14 | Single | In Grade 10 | Student | N/A | 4 |
| | 24 | Married | Grade 7 | Housewife | N/A | 8 |
| | 25 | Married | Grade 9 | Housewife | N/A | 3 |
| | 14 | Single | In Grade 8 | Student | N/A | 5 |
| | 21 | Married | Grade 8 | Housewife | N/A | 5 |
| | 26 | Married | Grade 9 | Housewife | N/A | 4 |
| **FGD 8** | 20 | Single | Grade 11 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | 6 |
| **Centre Kampot** | 21 | Single | Grade 8 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | |
| **Working Group** | 27 | Single | Grade 6 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | 7 |
| | 32 | Married | Grade 4 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | 5 |
| | 23 | Married | Grade 8 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | 7 |
| | 23 | Married | Grade 7 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | 6 |
| | 21 | Single | Grade 7 | Farmer | 200 | 8 |
| | 30 | Married | Grade 9 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | 7 |
| | 30 | Married | Grade 6 | Factory worker | Appx. 200 | 6 |
| | 20 | Married | Grade 9 | Farmer | KHR 2 000 000 | 5 |
| **FGD 9** | 16 | Single | In Grade 9 | Student | N/A | 7 |
| **Centre Kampot** | 17 | Single | In Grade 10 | Student | N/A | 7 |
| **Non-working Group** | 17 | Single | In Grade 10 | Student | N/A | 5 |
| | 14 | Single | In Grade 7 | Student | N/A | 4 |
| | 15 | Single | In Grade 7 | Student | N/A | 6 |
| | 14 | Single | In Grade 6 | Student | N/A | 7 |
| **FGD 10** | 50 | Married | 5 | Farmer (rice and vegetables) | 70 | 4 (2 dependent) |
| **Rural Siem Reap** | | | | | | |
| **Working Group** | 45 | Married (widow) | 5 | Vendor (vegetables) | 150 | 4 (3 dependent) |
| | 45 | Married | 0 | Farmer/Construction worker | 60 | 6 (4 dependent) |
| | 48 | Married (widow) | 0 | Porridge seller | 150 | 2 (0 dependent) |
| | 33 | Married | 0 | Vendor | 300 | 8 (3 dependent) |
| | 20 | Married | 11 | Farmer | N/A | 4 (0 dependent) |
| | 40 | Single | 8 | Grocery store owner | 150 (net profit) | 5 (3 dependent) |
| | 50 | Married | 2 | Farmer | N/A | 6 (3 dependent) |
| **FGD 11** | 35 | Married | Grade 5 | Housewife | N/A | 4 |
| **Rural Siem Reap** | 35 | Married | Grade 2 | Housewife | N/A | 6 |
| **Non-working Group** | 28 | Married | Grade 3 | Housewife | N/A | 4 |
| | 35 | Married | 0 | Housewife | N/A | 3 |
| | 32 | Married | Grade 6 | Housewife | N/A | 4 |
| | 33 | Married | Grade 3 | Housewife | N/A | 7 |
| | 35 | Married | Grade 8 | Housewife | N/A | 5 |
| **FGD 12** | 28 | Single | 12 | NGO Officer | 200 | Alone |
| **Centre Siem Reap** | 30 | Single mother | N/A | Waitress | 70 | 7 |
| **Working Group** | 34 | Married | N/A | Construction | 5/day | 5 |
| | 37 | Single mother | N/A | Cleaner | 90 | 3 |
| | 31 | Married | N/A | Housekeeper | 70 | 3 |
| | 39 | Married (widow) | 12 | Vendor | 40-50/day | 5 |
| | 31 | Single mother | N/A | Cook | 25 | 4 |
| | 44 | Married (widow) | N/A | Cook | 100 | 0 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FGD 13** | 33 | Married | None | Housewife | N/A | 4 |
| **Centre Siem Reap** | 33 | Married | Grade 3 | Housewife, farming | N/A | 4 |
| **Non-working Group** | 27 | Married | Grade 5 | Housewife | N/A | 8 |
| | 33 | Married | Grade 2 | Housewife | N/A | 7 |
| | 14 | Single | In Grade 6 | Student | N/A | 6 |
| | 14 | Single | In Grade 5 | Student | N/A | 4 |
| | 14 | Single | In Grade 6 | Student | N/A | 8 |
| **FGD 14** | 35 | Separated | 0 | Vendor | N/A | 5 |
| **Rural Mondulkiri** | 35 | Married | 0 | Vendor/Farmer | N/A | 5 |
| **Elder Group** | 55 | Married | 0 | Housewife | N/A | 5 |
| | 43 | Married | 0 | Farmer | N/A | 5 |
| | 46 | Married | 0 | Farmer | N/A | |
| | 38 | Married | 0 | Farmer | N/A | 4 |
| **FGD 15** | 28 | Married | 5 | Vendor (grocery store) | 700 USD (gross profit) | 4 (2 depend) |
| **Rural Mondulkiri** | | | | | | |
| **Working Group** | 23 | Married | 4 | Farmer | N/A | 4 (2 depend) |
| | 23 | Married | 6 | Vendor (grocery store) | N/A | 4 (2 depend) |
| | 25 | Married | 5 | Vendor (grocery store) | N/A | 5 (3 depend) |
| **FGD 16** | 20 | Married | 6 | Housewife | N/A | 5 (1 depend) |
| **Rural Mondulkiri** | 28 | Married | 5 | Housewife | N/A | 5 (3 depend) |
| **Non-working Group** | 18 | Married | 5 | Housewife | N/A | 2 (0 depend) |
| | 20 | Married | 6 | Housewife | N/A | 2 (0 depend) |
| | 28 | Married | 0 | Housewife | N/A | 4 (depend) |
| | 15 | Married | 4 | Housewife | N/A | 5 (3 depend) |
| **FGD 17** | 29 | Married | Grade 8 | Vendor (grocery store) | N/A | 4 |
| **Centre Mondulkiri** | 37 | Married | Grade 11 | Deputy village chief | N/A | 3 |
| **Working Group** | 28 | Married | Grade 5 | Freelancer (farming) | N/A | 4 |
| | 24 | Single | Grade 4 | Hairdresser | N/A | 2 |
| | 38 | Married | 0 | Farmer | N/A | 9 |
| | 48 | Married | 0 | Farmer | N/A | 5 |
| **FGD 18** | 27 | Married | Grade 4 | Housewife | N/A | 6 |
| **Centre Mondulkiri** | 26 | Married | Grade 7 | Housewife | N/A | 4 |
| **Non-working Group** | 28 | Married | Grade 8 | Housewife | N/A | 3 |
| | 17 | Single | In Grade 9 | Student (help family grocery store) | N/A | 6 |
| | 29 | Married | Grade 7 | Housewife | N/A | 3 |
| | 35 | Married | Grade 9 | Housewife | N/A | 7 |
| **Community Leader Profile (KIIs)** | | | | | | |
| **CL Phnom Penh 1** | 60 | Married (widow) | Grade 9 | Village assistant | KHR 140 000 | N/A |
| **CL Phnom Penh 2** | 65 | Married | High School | Vice village chief | KHR 200 000 | N/A |
| **CL Kampot 1** | 50 | Married | Grade 9 | Village chief/Farmer | KHR 200 000 | N/A |
| **CL Kampot 2** | 62 | Married | | Village chief/Farmer | KHR 200 000 | N/A |
| **CL Siem Reap 1** | 30 | Married | Grade 12 | Village assistant and NGO staff | KHR 140 000 + USD 200 | N/A |
| **CL Siem Reap 2** | 68 | Married | Grade 5 | Village chief | KHR 200 000 | N/A |
| **CL Mondulkiri 1** | 47 | Married | Grade 7 | Village chief/Farmer/Grocery store owner | N/A | N/A |
| **CL Mondulkiri 2** | 45 | Married | Grade 7 | Village chief/Farmer | N/A | N/A |

# Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia

In Cambodia, youth make up about one-third of the total population. This is a potential demographic dividend that can lead to economic growth and social transformation if the right policies are put in place. Cambodia's economy is growing, and opportunities for youth empowerment are real. Youth face several challenges, however. According to the Youth Multi-dimensional Deprivation Indicator (Y-MDI), one young person out of five is deprived in at least two well-being dimensions including health, employment, education and civic participation, while 40% fare poorly in at least one of these dimensions. The *Youth Well-being Policy Review of Cambodia* looks in depth at the situation of youth in these four areas with the aim to provide policy recommendations that will improve youth livelihoods.

Consult the full report on line at:
**www.oecd.org/dev/inclusivesocietiesanddevelopment/youth-country-studies.htm**

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