



**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA**  
**Nation Religion King**



**Royal Government of Cambodia**  
**Ministry of Planning**

A large, light blue watermark of the Cambodian royal emblem is centered on the page, behind the main title. It features a crown, a sunburst, and a lotus flower.

**INTEGRATION OF DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES**  
**IN DEVELOPMENT, CAMBODIA**

**PHNOM PENH**  
**APRIL, 2013**




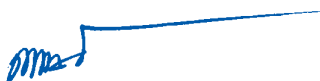
## FOREWORD

The Royal Government of Cambodia has made substantial progress on its social and economic front in the past decade. The fertility and mortality levels have come down substantially and there have been good progress on the social and economic fronts though more efforts to improve the nutritional status of children is to be done. Furthermore, the country has witnessed unprecedented youth migration for employment from rural to rural areas and urban to urban areas with majority of migrants reaching the Capital City of Phnom Penh, as the final place of destination. Though the migrants have ended up with jobs and unemployment rates have been kept in check, there is still more to be done.

The country at present is going through a phase of rapid demographic transition and this has opened up the demographic window of opportunity wherein a large number of youth are of the working ages and getting ready to enter the labour market or are already in. The situation is not forever and is therefore important for creating conducive environment wherein the potential of youth force is nurtured. In other words, newer and emerging demographic challenges that impact the development processes have also opened up opportunities that have to be tapped.

As demographic dynamics cut across development sectors and is multi-dimensional, integration of demographic consequences into development planning has been emphasized and strategic directions in terms of infrastructure expansion and development, managing urbanization, expansion of agriculture and allied activities and social investments and human capital formation have been proposed. I am sure that the policy and programmatic directions suggested in this paper will form an important ingredient while perspective planning for sectors are taken up and pave way for speeding the social and the economic development of the country.

On behalf of the Ministry of Planning (MOP), I would like to thank the technical contribution made by Dr. Sathyanarayana from UNFPA, India for having put together this paper and worked tirelessly and diligently with Mr. Tum May and Mr. Yi Soktha from UNFPA Cambodia, Dr. Sarthi Acharya, Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP, Cambodia and my senior colleagues H.E. Tuon Thavrak, H.E. Theng Pagnathun and H.E. Poch Sovanndy from the Ministry of Planning, Royal Government of Cambodia. I thank all of them and extend my special thanks to Dr. Marc Derveeuw, Representative UNFPA Cambodia for making this happen and am privileged to share this important paper. 



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Phnom Penh, April, 2013



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## ACRONYMS

ANC	Antenatal Care
ARI	Acute Respiratory Infection
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey
CIPS	Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey
CMDGs	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals
CRUMP	Cambodian Rural Urban Migration Project
CSES	Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
HDI	Human Development Index
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICPD-PoA	International Conference on Population and Development-Plan of Action
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
IUD	Intrauterine Device
LAMDP	Land Administration, Management and Distribution Programme
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
MMR	Maternal Mortality Rate
MoEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sports
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoP	Ministry of Planning
MoSAVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
NCPD	National Committee for Population and Development
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plans
OECD	Office of Economic Cooperation and Development
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RTI/STI	Reproductive Tract Infections/Sexually Transmitted Infections
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
SIGI	Social Institution and Gender Index
TFR	Total Fertility Rate
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Royal Government of Cambodia since 1996 has made substantial efforts to integrate right's-based approach in population and development planning. The Socio-Economic Development Plans followed by the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals and the subsequent Rectangular Strategy and Five-Year National Strategic Development Plans (NSDPs) are testimony to this fact. Interestingly, it is to be noted that the focus of planners, given the multi-faceted linkages between population and development, has been to encourage holistic and inclusive development planning by integrating demographic dynamics into the planning process.

Our understanding that emerging population issues, brings along with it newer challenges and opportunities that impact the development process, it is imperative and opportune moment to factor-in demographic dynamics within the context of the development process and planning. Besides, it is necessary to understand from current and future perspectives, the nature and consequences of demographic change arising out of past and current declines in fertility, mortality and migration on key developmental aspects. The purpose of this paper has been to:

1. Examine the contemporary and the futuristic changes in demographic parameters;
2. Review demographic consequences on key development sectors for facilitating development of strategic policy and programmatic directions; and
3. Provide insights for integration and amalgamation of demographic dynamics within the existing development framework.

Analysis of the plausible impact of demographic dynamics has revealed that there is a need to refocus on strategic social and economic sectors and create opportunities for the development of youth and women, as it is expected to yield substantial results and pave way for faster economic growth under the circumstances that the country is going through a demographic window of opportunity. The government therefore should plan to ensure necessary skill-sets of the youth and at the same time, invest on developing an educated human capital in line with the futuristic national and global economies. On the contrary, there is a need to start thinking of the elderly population and mainstream elderly related policies and programmes within the sectoral initiatives, as the proportion of elderly is going to increase in the coming years.

A good balance between social and economic investments is proposed but initially tilted more towards infrastructure expansion and development and enabling expansion of SMEs, managing urbanization and expanding agriculture and allied activities while on the other, development of the social sector i.e. education, especially higher secondary, tertiary and technical/professional education, science and technology, promoting health sector reforms and strengthening of social-welfare schemes for human capital development have been proposed.

While these suggestions are feasible and gels well within the ambit of NSDP implementation, there is a need to have appropriate implementation and monitoring systems at different administrative

levels so that the progress in implementation is monitored centrally, given the cross-cutting and multi-dimensional nature of relationship. Systems required to enable this should also form one of the policy interventions for strategy development. Nonetheless, with meticulous integrated planning, appropriate implementing structures, good governance and strong political will of the government, the country shall be able to capitalize on the demographic dividend and reap the benefits.

## **1. Background**

Cambodia after several decades of internal turmoil and conflict embarked on rebuilding its political, social and economic structures. It accorded top priority to population and development issues and its inter-linkages in line with various international charters and was guided by the International Conference on Population and Development-Plan of Action (ICPD-PoA), 1994 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), 2000. The intention was to ensure faster, inclusive and sustained economic development for improved quality of life taking into consideration individual, reproductive and human rights of the people.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) since 1996 has made substantial efforts to integrate right's-based approach in population and development planning. The Socio-Economic Development Plans followed by the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals and the subsequent Rectangular Strategy and Five-Year National Strategic Development Plans (NSDPs) are testimony to this fact. Interestingly, it is to be noted that the focus of planners, given the multi-faceted linkages between population and development, has been to encourage holistic and inclusive development planning by integrating the demographic dynamics into the planning process.

Nonetheless, the Government's commitment to the reform processes, coupled with international assistance, has helped in the country's development efforts. To accelerate further the development process and align to globalization and global economic growth, the RGC has started to take into cognizance, past experiences of implementing policies and programmes and current and future development needs of the population.

Our understanding that newer and emerging issues of demographic dynamics, brings along with it newer challenges and opportunities that impact the development process, it is imperative and opportune moment to factor-in demographic dynamics within the context of the development process and planning. More importantly, from a long-term perspective, it is necessary to understand from current and future perspectives, the nature and consequences of population change arising out of past and current declines in fertility, mortality and migration of population on key developmental aspects.

## **2. Purpose**

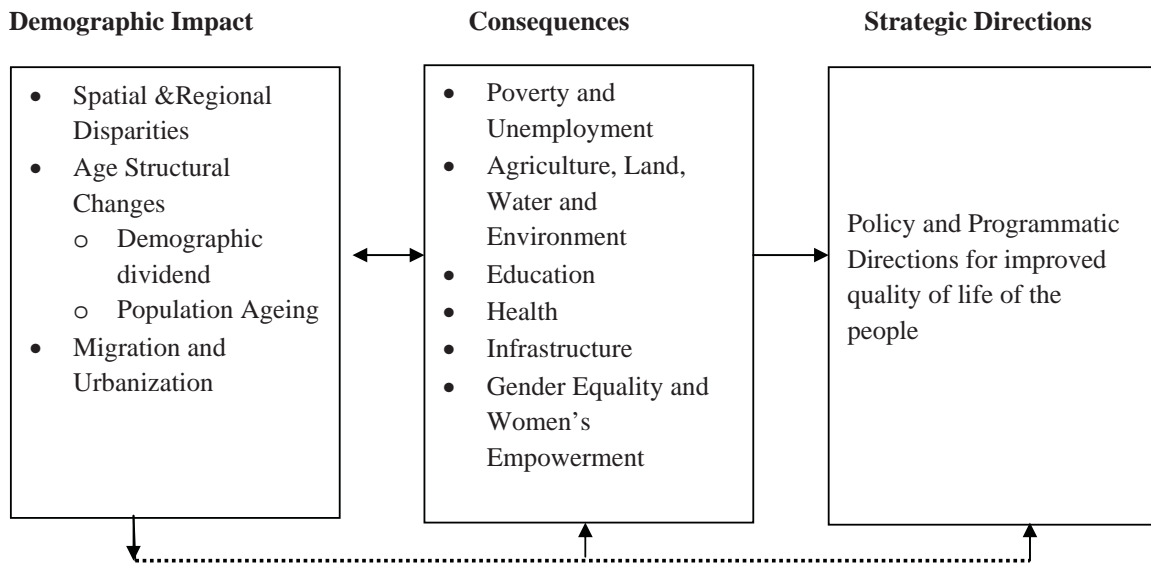
The purpose of this exercise is to:

- 1 Examine the contemporary and the futuristic changes in demographic parameters;
- 2 Review demographic consequences on key development sectors for facilitating development of strategic policy and programmatic directions; and

- 3 Provide insights for integration and amalgamation of demographic dynamics within the existing development framework.

In order to proceed with the stated purpose, it is important to have a conceptual framework of the demographic impact expected due to the past, current and future trajectories of population dynamics and the direct and indirect consequences it would have on key development sectors. The theoretical framework evolved for the purpose is the following:

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Addressing Demographic Perspectives in Development**



However, before delving into the details, a current overview of social and demographic setting of Cambodia has been discussed in the following section.

### 3. Social and Demographic Setting of Cambodia

The population of Cambodia that was 11.5 million in 1998 increased to 13.4 million in 2008. The annual rate of growth of the population registered a decline of 0.58 percentage points from 2.12 percent to 1.54 percent during the decade. The sex ratio of the population is 940 males per 1000 females and the population density is 75 persons per km<sup>2</sup>. The dependency ratio of the population has witnessed a remarkable change during the inter-censal period 1998-2008. The overall dependency ratio that was 86 persons per 100 workers in 1998 has declined to 61 persons per 100 workers in 2008. Major decline has been witnessed in the young age dependency ratio from 80 persons to 54 persons due to rapid decline in total fertility rate from around 4.0 to 3.1 children per woman.

Even though, the percentage of urban population has increased over the past census, nearly four-fifth of the population continues to reside in rural areas (as per reclassification post-census 2008, it is 27%). The Census 2008 enumerated one in three persons outside their place of birth implying increased mobility or turnover of the population and this has been reinforced by the Cambodian Rural Urban Migration Project (CRUMP) as well. The increase in urban population is mainly due to natural increase and in-migration of rural population to urban areas, more specifically that of the youth (Census 2008 & CRUMP, 2012). Among the various streams of internal migration, rural to rural migration is the predominant stream (accounts for over half) followed by rural to urban (28%) and urban to urban (15%) whereas urban to rural is negligible. While males dominated rural to rural migration, females dominated the rural to urban stream of migration and was mainly towards the capital city of Cambodia; Phnom Penh. Employment, movement of family and marriage are major reasons for migration but employment as a main reason was overwhelmingly higher. As a result, there has been an increase in nuclear families/households in both the rural and urban areas country and the average size of household members has dropped from 5.2 to 4.6 members during the decade 1998-2008. About a quarter of households continued to be headed by females and the percentage remained more or less at the same level as the previous census (Census, 2008).

Literacy and particularly educational attainment is one of the key markers of social and economic development. The adult literacy rate has witnessed substantial improvements over the past decade and the gender differentials that were prominent have narrowed in the current census. Over three-fourths of population 15 years or older (77%) is literate in the country with about 85 percent male literates as against 70 percent female literates. While the literacy rate has been reasonably high, education attainment of the population in terms of secondary or higher education has remained low and net attendance rate peaks at ages 7-13 years and slowly starts tapering thereafter. This is true for rural and urban areas and more pronounced for females than males but of late, has started improving. Investments in education made in the recent past have started reaping dividends (CSES, 2010).

Another important social and demographic marker of development is the mean age at which males and females marry. Comparing the results of 1998 and 2008 censuses, an increase in singulate mean age at marriage for both males and females has been observed. While females in 1998, married around 22.5 years, their male counterparts married at age 24.2 years. The mean age at marriage has increased to 23.3 years and 25.6 years for males and females respectively in 2008. As expected, urban males and females married later than their rural counterparts but the differences are negligible. However, on the other-hand, a comparison with other countries in the south-east Asia region barring Vietnam reveals that the mean age at marriage seems to be lower in Cambodia. The trend of increase in age at marriage matches with the findings from successive CDHS results where the median age of marriage for men and women for the cohort 25-29 had gone up as well.

Concerning the economic participation of the population, the 2008 census reveals that four-fifth of the population aged 15-64 years considered themselves to be in work force-82 percent in case of males as opposed to 79 percent females. The CSES on the other hand in the 2010 round has reported higher participation of both men and women in the labour force. A clear 10 percentage points increase over the census results has been witnessed due to which the unemployment rates have come down to decimal percentage from five percent in 1998 census to less than two percent in 2008. The country has done remarkably well in engaging youth in the work-force and this alone has contributed to reducing unemployment rates.

Age-specific analysis of economic activity rate depicts that female participation at younger ages of 15-24 years seems to be higher than their male counterparts and this observation stands true for both urban and rural areas while this has changed in the CSES, 2010 with more male participation across the age categories. One key observation from the CSES, 2010 is that there has been a substantial increase in women who are self-employed (56%) and has been increasing over the successive rounds. It is worthwhile to observe that a substantial percentage of elderly men and women and a small percentage of children have been reported to be economically active. When analysis of education attainment of population and entry into work-force are considered together, the quality of people entering the work-force is a matter of concern, as the available skills are related to the lower-end market because majority (about 75%) have not studied beyond primary school.

As regards, the sectoral engagement of the population (15 years and above) in 2008, nearly seven out of 10 persons are engaged in primary sector, less than 10 percent in secondary sector and the remaining 19 percent in tertiary sector. However, this has slightly changed in 2011 and there has been shifts from the primary sector to the service sector with the service sector increasing to 28 percent while the secondary sector remaining at the same level. Analysis by gender indicate that more females than males are engaged in primary sector while it is the other way round for tertiary sector with the secondary sector having more or less similar percentages. As far as the contribution of these sectors to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country is concerned, it is estimated that the service sector in 2012 contributed 38 percent; another 35 percent comes from primary sector and the remaining from the secondary sector.

In terms of growth of GDP (Y/Y) basis, it has been consistently around 6-6.5 percent barring the economic melt-down year of 2009, when it had reduced to 0.1. The GDP increased five-fold from US\$ 1.27 billion in 1989 to US\$ 10.3 billion in 2008 with the per capita value being \$739. The per capita value has increased to \$931 in 2012. In terms of contribution of international remittances from Cambodian migrants leaving abroad; the World Bank estimates it to be around 325 million, which works out to less than four percent of GDP of the country (NCPD, 2009).

The high performing sectors are rice and cash crop (average annual growth of 9.7%), mining (18.2%), textiles (16.1%), utilities (16.7%), construction (15.5%), tourism (17.4%), telecom and transportation (8.3%), finance (21.6%) and real estate (12.4%) (Cambodian Economy, Naron,

2009). However, it is to be said that the economy is narrowly based and driven by four main sectors of garments, tourism, building and agriculture. The garment and tourism sectors are vulnerable to external risks and agriculture that engages majority of the work-force contributes to about 35 percent of GDP. With only seven percent of the crop area being irrigated, it makes this important sector extremely vulnerable to changes in rainfall patterns. Economic diversification and availability of skilled labour could be important areas of future strategizing. As a matter of fact, the country will have to synergistically plan urbanization and its economic strategies. Economic diversification and job creation along-side with urbanization and provision of basic amenities and social services are the need of the hour. Cities that are already getting crowded should not be following the adverse trends set by mega cities world-wide (increased slum population and problems in provision of basic services of shelter, water, power, transport etc).

Poverty is another important marker of both economic and health status. The poverty levels have dropped over the years from around half in 2007 to around one-fifth in 2009 (CSES Estimates, 2012). Furthermore, poverty is characterized by rural-urban and regional differentials and is higher in rural areas (Phnom Penh: 12.8%, other urban areas: 19.3% and rural areas: 24.9%) but Gini coefficient on consumption inequalities calculated has shown decline in Gini values and there has been marginal improvement in the consumption of lowest quintile people implying that inequalities in the population are reducing.

One of the major consequences of poverty is related to health and nutritional status of the population. The status of health and reproductive health indicators of the people in the country depicts improvement in fertility, mortality, life-expectancy, contraceptive prevalence, child immunization but nutritional status of children seems to be worrisome as it has not changed in the past five years (CDHS, 2010). Furthermore, there are glaring differentials between rural and urban areas, regions and quintiles as well. Awareness of HIV and AIDS seems to be universal though condom use with multiple-sex partners is very low.

The country, as mentioned earlier has done well on the fertility front and has dropped by a child from four children in 2000 to three children in 2010 though rural women tend to have one additional child than their urban counterparts. The contraceptive prevalence has increased and is because of increase in use of daily oral pills, IUD, Injections and traditional methods use. The unmet need for family planning has reduced but limiting need is higher than spacing need. High unmet need for limiting is indicative of poor health service provisions. However, when analyzed by age, younger couples aged between 15 and 24 years of age have high unmet need for spacing while older couples have need for limiting methods. Since, the age-structure has transitioned and has a larger youth base who are soon to get into wedlock in the near future, increasing access to family planning and other reproductive health services and having trained human resources in-place either through its own system or through public-private partnership mechanism will have to be explored. The affect of population momentum is likely to continue despite declining fertility. In addition, going by the sexual behaviour of the youth of having multiple-partners,



condom promotion for safe-sex should be promoted and there is perhaps a need to integrate RTI/STI protocols within the health service delivery mechanism.

Regarding other reproductive health indicators, the coverage in complete ANC and skilled birth attendance seems to be good yet a significant proportion of deliveries are being attended to by traditional birth attendants. The maternal mortality ratio that was around 460 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2008, as derived from Census has dropped substantially to 206 in CDHS, 2010. Examining the last two rounds of the CDHS, one can see that deliveries in institutions have increased and deliveries by mid-wives and traditional birth attendants have also registered an increase yet the substantial decline in MMR by over half in such a short time raises queries. In an article on systemic analysis of maternal mortality estimation for 181 countries by Hogan and others in Lancet, 2012, it has been found that MMR in Cambodia for 2008 to be 266 with the confidence limit in the range of 171-398. Another publication by United Nations quotes MMR to be 250 in 2010 with the limit in the range of 160-390 (United Nations, 2012). On the basis of the two reviews, one can infer that maternal mortality in Cambodia has definitely reduced and is probably more towards the upper bound range published in CDHS, 2010. Hence, it would be rather safe to assume the estimates published by the United Nations for programmatic purposes.

Nonetheless, there is an urgent need to intervene if the national and millennium goals are to be achieved. Likewise, the infant mortality rate no doubt, has come down but has a long way to go. To trigger further decline, access to safe water, which is limited to less than half of the country's population and access to sanitation and toilet facilities that is presently limited to only one-third of the population all have to improve. In terms of quality of health, the levels of anemia among women and children are still high and infants and children are still dying due to ARI and diarrhea. The state therefore, has to cover a long distance to reach universalization of immunization programme. On the other hand, accidents, dengue, tuberculosis and malaria incidence rates, though have declined over the years are still high and there is a likelihood of increase in life-style diseases. Adolescent and youth fertility and their access to family planning and other reproductive health services will remain a major thrust area to be addressed. Additionally, with increasing population of elderly, geriatric problems are on the anvil.

With reference to status of women, school enrollment has started improving, age at marriage is reasonably high, participation in economic activities is substantial yet the societal norms and cultural practices have hindered their upward mobility. The CDHS, 2010 revealed that only few women have sole ownership of land, home or other valuables and most of them share ownership with someone else in the family or household. It was also observed that only a small percentage could sell assets on their own without consulting with other household members. Nonetheless, nearly half of women still view that important decisions should be made by men. Besides, a significant proportion of ever-married women ever experienced violence since age 15 and husband has been the sole perpetrator of the violence. Physical or sexual and emotional violence have resulted in injuries and very few women have sought help.



Because of the country doing reasonably well on the demographic, social and economic front in the recent past, the global ranking in Human Development Index UNDP Human Development Report, 2012, has categorized Cambodia in Medium Human Development category. Among 169 countries, Cambodia is ranked 138<sup>th</sup> both on the HDI and GII with scores of 0.543 and 0.473. Women in Cambodia, though, have traditionally enjoyed better social status than women in other Asian settings; access to basic social services (education and health) will have to improve for women and the poor. Not affording girls and women the opportunity to realize the full potential, constraints development and the likelihood of demographic dividend getting halved will turn out to be a reality.

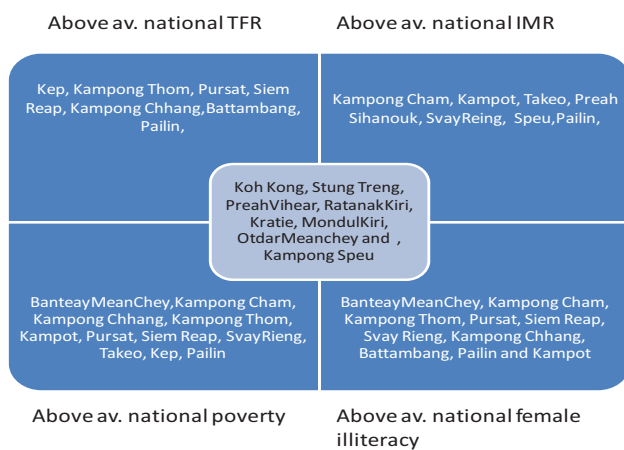
In sum, the country has done remarkably well on majority of development indicators yet there is scope for further improvement to attain the goals the country has set for itself. Furthermore, given our examination that fertility and mortality have been declining rapidly over the past decade and the population has been more mobile than ever, major changes anticipated in the population parameters have been examined in the following section.

#### 4.0. Demographic Implications

##### 4.1. Spatial and Regional Disparities

The country is divided in four regions namely: the Plain region, the Tonle Sap region, the Coastal region and the Plateau and Mountain region. Nearly four-fifth of the country's population reside in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions. Though, the Plain and the Tonle Sap regions have performed better on most demographic and development indicators than the Coastal and Plateau and Mountain region, the important point highlighted by Census 2008 is that there are nearly 145 districts/Khans/Cities out of total of 193 with less than 100,000 population. Over

one-fifth of districts have population between 40,000 and 59,999 depicting unevenness in the population distribution across the country. Reaching out to these areas could be difficult and innovative approaches will have to be devised.



Furthermore, an illustration of regional disparities on few selected development indicators by provinces is shown in Figure 2 and Table 1. It can be observed that nearly eight provinces can be classified as backward on the basis

of them having fertility, mortality, female illiteracy and predictive poverty levels higher than the national averages. It is to be noted here that the new methodology of estimating poverty head count ratio doesn't provide estimates at the provincial level and therefore for the purpose of demonstration, the indirect estimates available from CMDG, 2010 has been used. Similarly, if we were to consider more development indicators, perhaps it would be better to evolve composite index or indices to measure the level of development and classify as per their performance. From the perspective of prioritization of programme inputs and monitoring of development programmes, the government can initiate simple yet powerful composite indices for need-based development planning. In other words, regional focus and need-based concerns will have to be dove-tailed to ensure egalitarian development of the country.

**Table: 1: Regional Disparities in Social and Economic Indicators, Cambodia**

<b>Above National Average TFR of 3.1 (2008)</b>	<b>Above National Average IMR of 60 (2008)</b>	<b>Above National Average Female Illiteracy of 30.1% (2008)</b>	<b>Above National Average Predictive Poverty Ratio of 25.8% (2010)</b>
Kep, Stung Treng, PreahVihear, RatanakKiri, Kratie, MondulKiri, OtdarMeanchey, Kampong Thom, Pursat, Siem Reap, Kampong Chhang, Kampong Speu, Battambang, Pailin, Koh Kong (15)	Kampong Cham, Kampot, Takeo, Preah Sihanouk, SvayReing, Stung Treng, PreahVihear, RatanakKiri, Kratie, MondulKiri, OtdarMeanchey, Kampong Speu, Pailin, Koh Kong (15)	BanteayMeanChey, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhang, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Koh Kong, Kratie, MondulKiri, PreahVihear, Pursat, RatanakKiri, Siem Reap, Stung Treng, SvayRieng, Takeo, OtdarMeanchey, Kep, Pailin (18)	BanteayMeanChey, Stung Treng, PreahVihear, RatanakKiri, Kratie, MondulKiri, OtdarMeanchey, Kampong Thom, Pursat, Siem Reap, Kampong Chhang, Kampong Speu, Battambang, Pailin, Koh Kong (15)
<b>Common Provinces across the four indicators for prioritization of interventions: Koh Kong, Stung Treng, PreahVihear, RatanakKiri, Kratie, MondulKiri, OtdarMeanchey and Kampong Speu (8)</b>			

Source: Compiled from Census, 2008 and CMDG Report Update, 2010

## 4.2. Age-Structure Transition and the Emerging Demographic Paradox

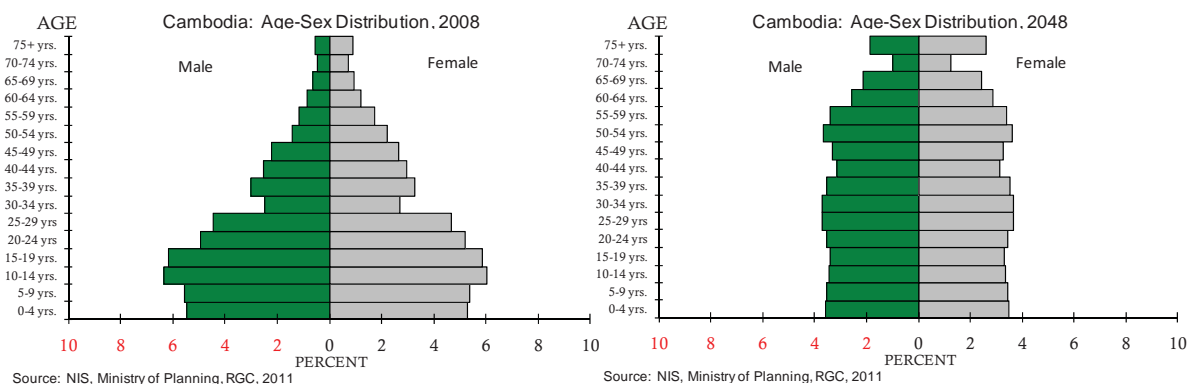
The age-structure transition in the country has been remarkable in the last ten years. In 1998, the country had an age-structure comparable to any other developing economy in the world. However, with rapid decline in fertility, the percentage of young population (0-14 years) that was 43 percent in 1998 has declined to 34 percent in 2008 resulting in increase in the working age-population (15-64 years) from 54 percent to 62 percent in the corresponding period. In case of elderly population (65+ years), there has been a marginal increase and this increase is likely to gain momentum from 2018 onwards because the life expectancy of the population has started increasing (Table 2 and Figure 3).

**Table 2: Trends in Dependency Ratio, Cambodia**

Age Group	1998	2008	2018	2028	2038	2048
0-14	42.8	33.7	28.5	25.9	22.1	20.8
15-64	53.7	62.0	66.5	67.3	68.8	67.9
65+	3.5	4.3	5.0	6.9	9.1	11.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>
Dependency Ratio-Overall	86.1	61.2	50.3	48.7	45.4	47.2
Dependency Ratio-Young	79.7	54.3	42.8	38.5	32.1	30.6
Dependency Ratio-Old	6.4	6.9	7.5	10.2	13.3	16.6

Source: Calculated from Census Projection Report, 2010

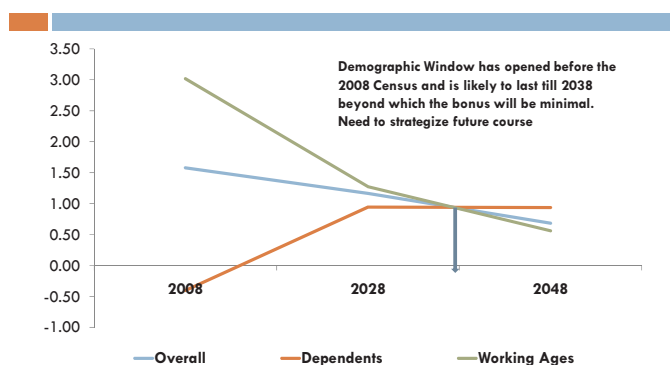
**Figure 3: Comparison of Age-Sex Pyramids, 2008 & 2048**



The expert group on population projection has estimated further changes in the age structure of the population. Even though the fertility levels are coming down rapidly, there will be an increase in absolute numbers due to the population momentum. The population will therefore, increase to 18 million by 2028 and around 21 million by 2048. The annual population growth rate in 2048 is expected to be around 0.68 percent. The young population of around one-third in 2008 is expected to reach one-fifth by 2048. While there is a decline in young population, the working age population is expected to gain six percentage points and the elderly about eight percentage points in the coming 40 years. The resultant effect of this change is going to be felt in the dependency ratios or the potential support ratios. The overall and young dependency is expected to come down from the present levels while the old age dependency is likely to increase and the increase will be more pronounced from 2018 onwards and the momentum will accelerate thereafter. The country therefore in the near future would have to overcome a paradoxical situation where they would have to cater to the youth and start planning for the elderly from a development perspective.

#### 4.2.1. Demographic Dividend

The changing age-structure of youth transiting into the working age group and the growth rate of



working age group remaining higher than overall and dependent age-groups, opens up the demographic window of opportunity for the country. During this period, the country will have surplus work-force, whose potential is to be harnessed for the speedier growth of the economy. Deductions from the graph reveal that Cambodia has already entered the phase of demographic dividend perhaps and is likely that it could have started more than a decade ago.

Given the future population trends and age-transition, demographic dividend is likely to taper off after 2038 subsequent to which the contribution of dividend is likely to decrease and median age of population that is young now is expected to increase. The decade of 2028-38 will witness negative growth of young population 0-14 years of age for the first time ever and this is due to the effects of rapid fertility decline between 1998 and 2008.

#### 4.2.2. Population Ageing

As a result of age-transition and increasing life expectancy of the population, the proportion of elderly population (65+ years) has started to increase and is expected to be around 10 percent by 2038 (from Table 2) subsequent to which the pace is expected to increase further, which is in

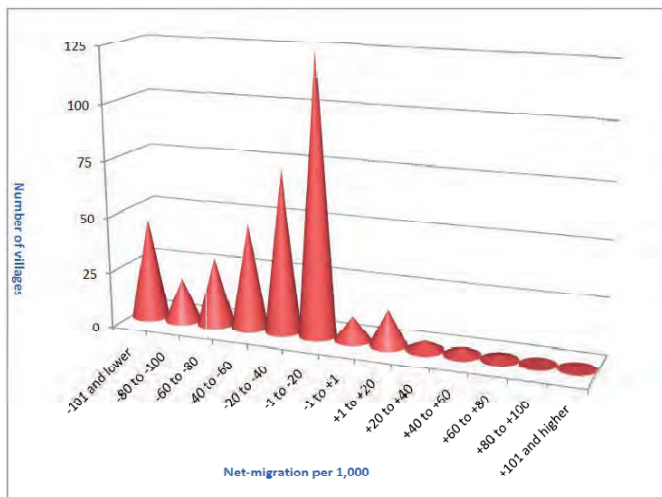
conformity with the index of ageing (NIS, Ministry of Planning, 2012). With youth bulge and migration taking place presently, the social fabric of the society is likely to change and one of the evident observations from census 2008 is the increasing nuclearization of families and feminization of population ageing. Furthermore, with high levels of illiteracy among the elderly population, economic insecurity along with disability, their vulnerabilities are going to increase. Added to this, with increasing life-expectancy of population and with women living longer than men, there is a likelihood of the problem shifting to old-old from young-old categories and with more older women cohorts, newer issues and challenges in regard to welfare of elderly are going to emerge.

Additionally, in the absence of appropriate social and health security measures or schemes, the vulnerability magnifies exponentially and is also likely to impinge and impact on the savings of working age population, mainly in the form of out-of-pocket health care expenditure. The trade-off before the government in catering to the elderly would then mean whether it should follow a welfare state approach or a welfare society approach or blend the two and have a quasi-approach.

### 4.3. Migration and Urbanization

The accrual of the demographic bonus or dividend has already started showing its effect on mobility of population in the country. The Census 2008 enumerated nearly 3.6 million across

**Figure 5: Distribution of Net Migration Rates for Villages, 2012**



the country, as migrants but after reclassification it has increased further. Though the predominant stream of migration is rural to rural, rural to urban migration and urban to urban migration together are other important constituents while urban to rural migration is negligible. The two streams of migration (rural to urban and urban to urban) contribute to two-fifths of all migration in the country and moreover, a higher proportion of women than men migrate to urban areas. Employment is the main reason for migration followed by education and marriage.

As far as the Cambodian Rural Urban Migration Project (CRUMP, 2012) survey findings are concerned, an overwhelming majority of surveyed villages (n=349 out of 375) are losing population clearing pointing to the fact the mobility or turnover of the rural population for economic reasons, as the predominant factor.

Concerning the quality of migrants, CRUMP survey reveals that the educational attainment of these all-time migrants is low and less than six percent of migrants have had secondary and above education with women being less educated than men. On the other hand, CRUMP observed that migrants had higher educational attainment than their non-migrant counterparts and nearly two-thirds of them were unmarried and had moved out for employment reasons. Migrants to Phnom Penh had higher educational attainment than migrants in other streams; including international migrants and non-migrants. A large percentage of migrants men were engaged in construction while their female counterparts worked in garment factory. The second most preferred economic activity that migrant men were engaged in was garments while it was the other way round in case of migrant women.

As majority of urban migration is to Phnom Penh, the study found that the economic and living conditions of migrants to Phnom Penh were found to be better than migrants to other places as they were better educated, on an average earned more than other migrants to other places, had more consumer possessions than the national average but slightly less than the non-migrants at Phnom Penh and were also remitting frequently more money than their counterparts. It was seen that though migrant women earned less than migrant men, they were regularly sending a higher percentage of their earnings back home. Moreover, migrants to Phnom Penh had better communication with their folks at their place of origin and visited more often than others. In sum, migrants to Phnom Penh differed from other migrants both in terms of their background characteristics, living conditions and demonstrated more responsive behaviour towards their families at their place of origin. Juxtaposing education attainment of rural population with migration and urbanization, it is obvious that migrants to places other than Phnom Penh are either unskilled or semi-skilled.

Since the population is migrating to urban areas and more specifically to the capital city Phnom Penh (nearly half of the country's urban population is located here and migrants comprises of more than a third of its population if a cut-off of five years is used), which is astronomically high and unsustainable in the longer run in terms of provision of water, sanitation, shelter and basic amenities. Further with youth dominated migration there is likelihood of migration increasing vulnerability of youth to substance use, women to human trafficking and these factors acting as a bridge for the spread of the HIV between urban and rural areas and entails re-visiting the urban strategy given the availability of surplus human resources in the labour market.

## **5. Demographic Consequences on Development**

With our understanding of demographic dynamics from current and futuristic perspectives, the plausible impact that it would have on development per say social and economic sectors can be visualized. It is worthwhile to state here that the consequences of changing demographic dynamics will impact all the walks of life of the people in the country. However, in the present context, only few key social and economic sectors that have direct bearing on the livelihood and quality of life of the people have been discussed and included in the paper. They are: poverty

and unemployment, agriculture, land, water and environment, education, health, infrastructure and more importantly, gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **5.1. Poverty and Unemployment**

An increase in income and employment opportunities is crucial for poverty alleviation and reducing unemployment rates in the country. As such, the national poverty levels have been lowered and the disparities reduced yet disparities in household consumption exist between regions, rural and urban areas, as measured through Gini's coefficient household consumption data (CSES, 2012). It is to be noted here that the pace of increase of working ages will be around three percent and therefore the new job creation rate will have to exceed this level and sustain for the next two decades or so else there is a likelihood of increased unemployment in general and both unemployment and underemployment in rural areas .

### **5.2. Agriculture, Land, Water and Environment**

The dependency of rural population on agriculture for livelihood is enormous and employs the largest proportion of the labour force. Majority of farming in the country is rain-fed and only about one-fifth of agriculture land area is under irrigation. Given the emerging scenario of youth bulge, it is to be noted from Census 2008 and the 2011 Social and Economic Survey that rural youth enter the labour market much earlier than their urban counterparts. Under this scenario, the dependency of rural population for livelihood is going to increase and if agriculture is not viable, as majority of land holdings are either small or marginal, it would result in exodus of migration from rural to urban areas or the informal sector will be flooded with migrants seeking jobs. This will have direct bearing on the capital city Phnom Penh, as it is the most sought out destination of the rural and other urban migrants.

As regards land reforms, the government in its first five-year plan had recognized the importance of land reforms and had embarked in streamlining it by identifying parcels or plots needing to be issued land titles. The Land Administration, Management and Distribution Programme (LAMDP) is in place but strategic plans prepared in future shall have to be viewed from the emerging population dynamics of how youth bulge is going to impact rural and urban areas and how judiciously land reforms can be executed for rural and urban development.

In concern to water resources, the per capita water requirement and consumption due to increasing population is going to increase and will strain the existing resources. As water is necessary for all walks of life and agriculture being one of the major means of livelihood and also an important contributor to the GDP of the country, water conservation thus becomes important and access to safe-drinking water in rural areas, which is now limited to only two-fifths of the population will have to be increased.

Population, environment and climate change are closely inter-related. It has been observed that wood for fuel has been widely used in rural areas. Due to felling of trees, erosion of fertile soil



had occurred and the forest cap had come down to below 60 percent of land area. Deforestation coupled with irregular rain-fall also triggers migration in search of livelihood and will be more pronounced with the youth bulge. Likewise, solid-waste management is another important and emerging issue. The country has made substantial progress in the recent past and has been observed that solid-waste and garbage has increased from around 352 tons in 2005 to 563 tons in 2009. Though specific measures are in place, given the population trends and migration to urban areas, more specifically to the capital city of the country, the problem is likely to exacerbate.

### **5.3. Education**

The adult literacy rate has witnessed substantial improvements over the past decade and rural-urban and gender differentials that have been prominent have narrowed in the current census. While literacy rate has been high, education attainment of the population in terms of secondary or secondary plus education, technical and professional education have remained low and this pattern is true for rural and urban areas and for males and females. In other words, rural-urban and male-female differentials in literacy are imminent and educational attainment beyond secondary level seems to be an area of concern. However, on the positive side, there is an indication of improving school enrollment rates both at primary and secondary/higher secondary levels as measured through children attending school between 6-14 and 15-19 years, which may indirectly postpone entry of youth into labour force.

### **5.4. Health**

On the health front, youth sexual behaviour and their fertility will be impacted more and hence should form important priorities but at the same time, existing issues of reproductive child health morbidities, malnutrition, mortality and morbidities cannot be ignored. Though, the country has made major strides in improving the overall health status of the population by way of reducing its fertility levels, increasing life-expectancy and improvements in reproductive and child health indicators, it still has a long way to go in achieving the goals, it has set for itself.

The total fertility rate has declined from past level yet the level of unmet need for family planning is high, as there are a substantial number of couples and younger couples who intend to use family planning in future. If this potential demand is tapped and the unmet need addressed, the pace of fertility decline is likely to accelerate further and with urbanization and migration, the behaviour aspects of fertility decline is expected to take over. As regards, the maternal mortality ratio, efforts to ensure further decline will have to be made.

The infant mortality rate is also reducing. Nonetheless, in order to reduce it further, there is a need to address infant and childhood diseases of ARI and diarrhea and more importantly improve the nutritional status of children. The CDHS, 2010 has pointed out stagnation in this important aspect. Likewise, high anemia levels of women and mothers needs to be tackled to have a healthy population and a healthy next generation. From the perspective of youth, youth fertility, family planning and responsible sexual behaviour will be areas of intervention. As has been seen



from successive Cambodia Demographic Health Surveys (CDHS), the levels of awareness of HIV and modes of transmission are high among both males and females but multiple-sex partners and unprotected sex seems to be a matter of concern and there is a chance of increase in sexual diseases.

Concerning communicable and non-communicable diseases, fever, malaria, dengue, tuberculosis, accidents and life-style diseases accessibility to quality health services, specialized services and referral care are important areas. In addition, the proportion of elderly is increasing and health care needs of the elderly in both urban and rural areas are bound to increase and access to geriatric care seems to be missing. In the absence of proper geriatric care facilities in the public health system, the burden of expenses of health care would fall on other family members and the out-of-pocket expenses is bound to increase despite the health insurance scheme of the government to cover the poor.

### **5.5. Infrastructure**

Under the present circumstances of the country experiencing demographic dividend, migration and rapid urbanization, it is important for the economic sectors to do well by engaging youth in the labour force. Hence, development of infrastructure and creating basic amenities such as transport, water, sanitation, power, housing and telecommunication are all important for further development of the country, as Phnom Penh is already congested. Already large parts of the Cambodian population do not have access to basic amenities and this has resulted in lop-sided regional development, as judged by their varying levels of development on social and economic indicators. Further, if the pace at which the country's economy is growing is to be maintained or stepped up, then investments in infrastructure (road, transport, communication, railways and air connectivity) and civic amenities are inevitable in both rural and urban areas.

### **5.6. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

Gender characteristics of households and population at large have profound influence on many development frontiers. The tradition and cultural values that are discriminatory inherently inhibit social and economic mobility of women. The gender stereotyped roles have made them vulnerable and mainly revolve around household chores, child-bearing and supporting household in agriculture and other activities that are non-paid activities. Moreover, these women are lower-secondary school drop-outs with lack of skills and career prospects. Further, they are exposed to domestic, physical and sexual violence and have limited decision-making powers in family matters with little or no control of property and inheritance.

Women in Cambodia have traditionally enjoyed a higher social status than women in other Asian countries yet as observed from the CDHS rounds, gender-inequality exists across the board and with the youth bulge; younger women will tend to be more vulnerable. With increasing costs of living and urbanization, their vulnerability in regard to substance abuse and

sexual behaviour is going to be impacted. Nonetheless, not affording girls and women the opportunity to realize their full potential, constraints development and given that the nation has more women than men, it cannot afford to sacrifice more than half of its human capital. If the demographic dividend is to be capitalized and has to be a reality, then gender disparities have to be reduced and special focus and provisions for women in development planning across the social and economic sectors will have to be made. Given to understand the complex phenomenon, the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment is cross-cutting and multi-sectoral in nature and the line ministries have an important role to play.

## **6. Strategic Directions and Way Forward**

Understanding the consequences of changing demographic dynamics on development that cuts across sectors and requires multi-sectoral engagement in planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes, it is important that demographic parameters are integrated and amalgamated right from the conceptualization stage of strategy development to its implementation even though it may run through many programme planning cycles. In other words, it is imperative to have a long-term vision despite the fact that the programme cycles are co-terminus with a five-year planning period. Few key strategic directions that would perhaps improve the quality of life of the people and needs consideration in planning if the country has to capitalize on the demographic dividend have been highlighted. They include the following:

- 6.1. Infrastructure Expansion and Development
- 6.2. Managing Urbanization
- 6.3. Expansion of Agriculture and Allied Activities; and
- 6.4. Social Sector Investments and Human Capital Formation

### **6.1. Infrastructure Expansion and Development**

Although the country has witnessed substantial economic growth and development in recent years, it may surpass the capacity of the government to expand the infrastructure due to mobility of population. Ensuring water for cultivation and drinking should take into account (irrigation and potable water). The economic road-map laid out by the country for expansion of sectors, thus becomes the core around which other development sectors will have to plan. The need for developing coordinated plans could culminate in overall improvements in the infrastructure and civic amenities. Dams for irrigation and power-supply, rain-water harvesting and recharging ground water resources could be some of the options. This way, the migration flow of population from rural to urban areas can be reduced. Efforts to reduce migration by creating opportunities for the youth by developing secondary sector in smaller towns and providing necessary infrastructure will have to be planned in a phased manner so that the existing burden on Phnom Penh is reduced.

### **Policy Directions**

- Review the existing strategies of infrastructure development from the perspective of changing population dynamics and develop a road-map for creating semi-urban towns with all basic amenities in conjunction with economic plans and explore public-private partnership

### **Programmatic Directions**

- Develop semi-urban towns as *nucleus* and *satellite* towns supporting rural economy (agro-industries, agro-equipment and instruments) and for decongesting Phnom Penh and establish regulated markets for ensuring market prices for commodities;
- Improve and strengthen urban infrastructure and amenities, road and rail connectivity between different regions;
- Develop regional infrastructure plans (eg. coastal or plateau) on the basis of social and economic development and promote establishment of industries in Special Economic Zones (SEZs);
- Develop an expanded plan of action for establishing SMEs and explore public-private partnership;
- Promote development of services sector such as banking and financial sectors, tourism and hospitality by making provisions in infrastructure development; and
- Explore options of developing de-mined regions.

## **6.2. Managing Urbanization**

Urbanization is a bi-product of economic development of the country. The pace of urbanization has been enormous and with Phnom Penh alone hosting majority of urban population and migrants in the country, it is important that the city is managed well and at the same time other towns and cities are developed to international standards. While the Census 2008 enumerated one-fifth of population in the country, the subsequent urban reclassification exercise brought it up to 27 percent. Nonetheless, there were only two towns of Siam Reap and Battambang with over a lakh population. With youth bulge, this trend is bound to increase in future because of economic activities being concentrated in urban areas, specifically Phnom Penh. Balance between rural and urban development is necessary to ease the pressure on urban areas. Few key directions proposed are the following:

### **Policy Directions**

- Urban Growth Prospects of about 30-40 years has be prepared and factored into development planning by taking into consideration the future population growth and youth bulge and more importantly it has to be in sync with the social, economic and environmental road-map of the country

## **Programmatic Directions**

- Develop age-friendly and eco-friendly new cities and towns linked to the economy with special focus on diversifying agriculture by conserving the flora and fauna of the country;
- Management of cities and city development plans will have to be prepared along with an environmental plan;
- Establish municipal corporations and wards including slum development corporations and decentralized management should be considered;
- Stringent norms on construction and preservation of environment, violation of natural resources, solid and other waste disposal should be enforced;
- Develop satellite townships by improving connectivity between villages, townships and cities so that people commute for work and businesses rather than settling in cities thereby reducing the pressure on urban areas.
- In line with recommendations of infrastructure development, nucleus cities should be formed with all basic amenities and commercial zones as SEZs and other should be earmarked

### **6.3. Expansion of Agriculture and Allied Activities**

Alleviation of poverty is central to the development of the country and this would entail coherent engagement of different ministries in implementation of different schemes and programmes. As over seven out of 10 persons live in rural areas, strategies for economic diversification will have to be worked out and accordingly specific programmes; including those for adolescent/youth will have to be evolved in sectors that have potential to generate employment. In addition, matching of available skill-set with that required currently and that for the future will have to be factored-in and accordingly, vocational and induction training programmes will have to be devised, because the country cannot afford to miss out on the demographic window of opportunity. Few critical directions proposed are the following:

#### **Policy Directions**

- Explore options of expanding the rural economies (livelihood options) from the perspective of youth bulge by creating a conducive environment for setting up of agro-based industries of international standards to promote exports (silk and rubber etc.)
- Establish research and development units in the agriculture sector for enhancing agriculture productivity, ensuring quality compliance in food processing, packaging etc and also for promoting rational use of pesticides and other chemicals in farming;
- Develop and enforce laws and regulations for protection of the environment and use of harmful chemicals in agriculture activities

## **Programmatic Directions**

- Undertake skill-set matching and skill requirement on the basis of country's current and perspective economic plan and plan vocational training programmes for both men and women;
- Impart specific vocational training programmes on agriculture and allied activities for youth with a special focus on women/girls and provide support mechanism for starting related enterprises;
- Promote live-stock production as a subsidiary occupation and diversify into agriculture allied activities-agro-processing industries to add value to agricultural produce, especially the one-village one-product scheme (food-processing, floriculture, pisciculture, dairying, sericulture, poultry, piggery etc). These agro-based industries do not pollute the environment but to ensure environment protection, stringent norms can be formulated by the government and applied;
- Promote use of bio-gas and solar energy from population growth perspective, as there would be increased dependency on fire-wood for cooking purposes;
- Social awareness on the importance of conserving natural resources and use of eco-friendly degradable materials have to be promulgated;
- Ensure minimum working days and equal wages for men and women below poverty line in rural and urban areas with special focus on youth, elderly and disabled.

## **6.4. Social Sector Investments and Human Capital Formation**

The consequences of youth bulge into social sector planning have to be factored-in and creation of human capital is an important ingredient for the progress of the nation. In the process of doing so, the Royal Government of Cambodia will have to make enough provisions by expanding and strengthening the social infrastructure in the country and only then the human capital can be developed. As discussed in the previous sections, there is dearth of human capital in the country and the available skill-sets can support lower-end job market of the economy. Hence, it is important to work on human capital formation, as this would enable in expansion of the economy and at the same time help the country to compete globally. Hence, investments in education, health and welfare programmes with a special focus on women would be necessary. Few key policy and programmatic actions specific to demographic dynamics are contemplated below:

### **6.4.1. Education**

#### **Policy Directions**

- Population-based norms and future age-structural changes needs to be considered in planning for the future and accordingly infrastructure and trained human resources requirements will have to be assessed

- Regional disparities will have to be accounted for and can propose separate norms for hard to reach and difficult areas;
- Expand the base of professional and technical college education by promoting science and technology and tailoring courses to future requirements.

#### **Programmatic Directions**

- Educational cross-linkages with technical and vocational training programmes will have to be developed and integrated within the curricula of secondary and college education;
- Incentives to children for completing higher secondary education should be considered and education of girls to be encouraged by providing additional facilities like hostel, books, library facilities, scholarships etc. will have to be thought off and students from poor families should be given priority to ensure higher retention and completion rates;
- Accelerate life-skills education training in schools so that students are prepared for their adolescent and youth ages either as a curricular or extra-curricular activities;
- Given the poor nutritional status of children, there is a need to consider nutritional supplementation in schools/colleges and more specifically for children and adolescent girls;

#### **6.4.2. Health**

##### **Policy Directions**

- Revisit population-based criterion for determining access to health services in rural and urban areas and factor in future growth and migration prospects as well;
- Regional disparities in availability of health facilities should be reviewed and expanded. Special plans to address health needs in difficult, remote and inaccessible areas should form part of the larger health plan service delivery;
- Promote adolescent-friendly and geriatric health care services within the health system;
- Strengthen human resource base for health care by expanding medical and nursing institutions (colleges, public health and super-specialty hospitals) in the country from the current and future perspective of population increase and growth

##### **Programmatic Directions**

- Promote spacing methods of family planning among youth and women to reduce unmet need for family planning;
- Promote condom programming among youth, bridge population and commercial sex/entertainment workers to reduce the risk of HIV/AIDS
- Integrate Reproductive Tract Infection/Sexually Transmitted Infection (RTI/STI) counselling within the larger gambit of health and HIV care services and encourage youth to avail services through community mobilization drives and publicity;

- Accelerate life-skills education for out-of-school adolescents and youth through community networks (teen and youth clubs) and emphasize on substance abuse and its negative effects
- Enhance nutritional status of out-of-school children by introducing mid-day meals and other schemes with a special focus on adolescent girls through commune councils;
- Initiate behavioural change communication for creating more awareness on health, water and sanitation aspects and for promoting maternal and child survival, reducing harmful traditional practices and dual protection for safe-sex; and
- Fast-track health insurance schemes for the population and more so in households with elderly population.

### **6.4.3. Ensuring Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment**

#### **Policy Directions**

- Ensure gender-budgeting of programmes by line-ministries;
- Increase representation of women in the political and public administration system at all levels;
- Create gender-friendly human resource policies and create opportunities for employing more women in formal sectors;
- Inter-sectoral committee should be responsible for ensuring implementation of cross-cutting issues of social equity and gender equality

#### **Programmatic Directions**

- Enforce legislations and awareness for prevention of domestic violence, delinquency, drugs and commercial sex targeted towards youth;
- Undertake routine monitoring of gender indicators/statistics and develop an index on the lines of Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI) developed by Office of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Initiate corrective and remedial actions on the basis of monitoring of gender statistics.

### **6.4.4. Population Ageing**

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation is in the process of addressing issues related to health, economic conditions, participation in society and their general welfare. In this context, the government recognizes issues and concerns of elderly and has put together guidelines yet there is a need to collectively strategize this specific cross-cutting area and come out with a plan of action, as this turns out to be an important future challenge.

#### **Policy Directions**

- Align the National Policy Guidelines for older persons in line with Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), 2002



- Evolve programmes in line with MIPAA and integrate within the existing development programmes;
- Strengthen the role of National Committee for Older People headed by a senior minister to facilitate implementation of programmes that are cross-cutting in nature

### **Programmatic Directions**

- Increase awareness about the various acts of the government and strengthen its implementation;
- Review the need for establishing old-age homes in the country against the social cultural setting of the country;
- Strengthen and expand home-based care and social security for elderly, especially those from poorer families (old-age pension scheme indexed to inflation);
- Evolve an effective system to make appropriate use of the skills and wisdom of retirees in development planning and introduce vocational programmes for elderly people to make them self-reliant;
- Ensure public facilities for older persons are compliant and provide tax-incentives, higher bank interests and concessions in travel;
- Undertake policy research from census and other data sources to understand social, economic, health, psychological and emotional status of older persons and also study the impact of youth migration on older persons

### **Way Forward**

In a nutshell, the changing dynamics of population and the consequences it would have on development have been elucidated. With a bulging youth population, the demographic window of opportunity is available and is likely to last for another two-three decades. The country therefore will have to encash on it subsequent to which the elderly proportion of the population will increase. This is an appropriate moment when the country is prospectively planning for its future development. The best part of development planning in the country is that it has accorded priority to integrate demographic dynamics into planning and follow a holistic and inclusive path for development of the people, which is more inclusive in nature.

A thorough analysis of the impact of demographic dynamics has revealed that there is a need to refocus on strategic social and economic sectors and create opportunities for the development of youth and women, as it is expected to yield substantial results and would pave way for faster economic growth. The government should therefore, plan to ensure necessary skills of the youth and at the same time, think prospectively for developing an educated human capital in line with the futuristic national and global economies. On the contrary, there is a need to start thinking of the elderly population and mainstream elderly related policies and programmes within the sectoral initiatives.



A good balance between social and economic investments is proposed but initially tilted more towards infrastructure expansion and development and enabling expansion of SMEs, managing urbanization and expanding agriculture and allied activities while on the other, development of the social sector i.e. education, especially higher secondary, tertiary and technical/professional education, science and technology, promoting health sector reforms and strengthening of social-welfare schemes for human capital development have been proposed.

While these suggestions are feasible and gels well within the ambit of NSDP implementation, there is a need to have appropriate implementation and monitoring systems at different administrative levels so that the progress in implementation is monitored centrally, given the cross-cutting and multi-dimensional nature of relationship. Systems required to enable this should also form one of the policy interventions for strategy development. Nonetheless, with meticulous integrated planning, appropriate implementing structures, good governance and strong political will of the government, the country shall be able to capitalize on the demographic dividend and reap the benefits.

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