

# SITUATION ANALYSIS OF YOUTH IN CAMBODIA

*"Youth are not the creators of problems within society; rather,  
it is society that brings about the problems being faced by youth"*



អង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិកម្ពុជា  
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*A youth at a focus group discussion in Phnom Penh*



# FOREWORD



**T**he Kingdom of Cambodia is an overwhelmingly youthful nation. Two out of every three people are aged below 25 and more than 30 per cent are aged between 10-24 years, giving Cambodia the biggest youth population in South East Asia. Such an abundance of young people brings with it both enormous possibilities as well as complex development challenges.

Cambodian young people are a dynamic and promising economic, social and cultural force. Young people offer new perspectives, new ideas and a willingness to build a brighter future

But their daily struggles to survive, to complete basic education, to maintain good health, to find a decent job, to support their families, to live free from physical and mental harm and to participate fully in society are real and urgent.

Today's young people are facing a unique array of hurdles. Cambodia is undergoing rapid economic growth and with it, tremendous social change. The country is also recovering from three decades of civil war and isolation which has left an indelible mark on the fabric of Cambodian society. The generational divide between young and old is vast and young people are often feared or misunderstood.

Yet the challenges which young people face are daunting. 300,000 job seekers leave school each year, but there are simply not enough jobs for them. Migration for economic and educational opportunities is transforming the composition of village life and sending more and more young people into urban centres, exposing them to new risks and vulnerabilities. High-risk behaviour, most especially among marginalized and vulnerable youth, is exposing young people to sexual reproductive health risks, HIV and AIDS, gender based violence and drug abuse.

Following traditional values, the voices of youth are rarely considered or incorporated into development planning, even though young people constitute a third of the workforce and will continue to be the drivers of growth now and into the future. Active steps should be taken now to encourage young people's participation in decision-making at all levels.

This Situation Analysis of Youth is the first time that all available data on youth has been compiled and evaluated. It is regarded as a first step to assist policy makers, non-government organizations and youth themselves to develop a wide-ranging and inclusive National Youth Policy which will address the specific needs of young people in the areas of health, education, participation, employment and well-being and can guide further investment and interventions.

Positive trends in primary enrolment and an overall improvement in health and education indicators demonstrate that with investment and a pro-youth approach, the situation for Cambodia's young people can be improved. Young people are Cambodia's greatest resource for the future. They require our assistance and our support to nourish and guide them successfully into adulthood.

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<sup>1</sup> UN defines children, adolescents, youth and young people as children 0-18 years, adolescents 10-19 years, youth 15-24 years and young people 10-24 years of age.



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**Disclaimer:** This report constitutes a compilation of existing data and new research and does not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the United Nations system.



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# ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS



<b>ACLEDA</b>	Association of Cambodian Local Economic Development Agency
<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>BPfA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CARE</b>	CARE Cambodia
<b>CBOs</b>	Community-based Organisations
<b>CCs</b>	Commune Councils
<b>CDC</b>	Council for the Development of Cambodia
<b>CDHS</b>	Cambodia Demographic Health Survey
<b>CDRI</b>	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CESSP</b>	Cambodia Education Sector Support Project
<b>CGA</b>	Cambodia Gender Assessment
<b>CLS</b>	Child Labour Survey
<b>CMDG</b>	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals
<b>CNCW</b>	Cambodian National Council for Women
<b>CoM</b>	Council of Ministers
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CSES</b>	Cambodia Social Economic Survey
<b>D&amp;D</b>	Decentralisation and Deconcentration
<b>DFID</b>	Department For International Development
<b>EBEP</b>	Expanded Basic Education Programme
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECE</b>	Early Childhood Education
<b>EED</b>	Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst/ Evangelical Development Agency
<b>EFA</b>	Education for All
<b>EIC</b>	Economic Institute of Cambodia
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>ESP</b>	Education Strategic Plan
<b>ESSP</b>	Education Sector Support Project
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion

<b>FRESH</b>	Focusing Resources on Effective School Health
<b>FSW</b>	Female Sex Workers
<b>GDPs</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GMAGs</b>	Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups
<b>GMAPs</b>	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans
<b>HCP</b>	Health Coverage Plan
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>HSS</b>	HIV Sentinel Surveillance Survey
<b>ICHA</b>	Ministry's Interdepartmental Committee on HIV/ AIDS
<b>ICT</b>	Information Communication Technology
<b>IDU</b>	Intravenous Drug Use
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>IOs</b>	International Organisations
<b>IPEC</b>	International Programme on the Elimination of Child labour
<b>JFPR</b>	Japanese Fund for Poverty Reduction
<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Cooperation Agency
<b>KHANA</b>	Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance
<b>KIIs</b>	Key Informant Interviews
<b>LMI</b>	Labour Market Information
<b>LNGOs</b>	Local Non-Government Organisations
<b>LPPs</b>	Local Planning Processes
<b>LSS</b>	Lower Secondary School
<b>MAFF</b>	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>MIME</b>	Ministry of Industry, Mine and Energy
<b>MoEYS</b>	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>Mol</b>	Ministry of Interior
<b>MoLVT</b>	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
<b>MOPS</b>	Moving Out of Poverty Study
<b>MoSVY</b>	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
<b>MoWA</b>	Ministry of Women's Affairs
<b>MoWRAM</b>	Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
<b>MSM</b>	Men who have Sex with Men
<b>MSME</b>	Medium and Small Micro-Enterprises
<b>NACD</b>	National Authority for Combating Drugs
<b>NCHADS</b>	National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations

<b>NIS</b>	National Institute of Statistics
<b>NOVCTF</b>	National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Multi-sectoral Task Force
<b>NPDC</b>	National Plan on Drugs Control
<b>NSDP</b>	National Strategic Development Plan
<b>NSSF</b>	National Social Security Fund
<b>NYP</b>	National Youth Policy
<b>ODA</b>	Overseas Development Assistance
<b>ODs</b>	Operational Districts
<b>OJT</b>	On-the-Job Training
<b>OVC</b>	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
<b>PAP</b>	Priority Action Programme
<b>RGC</b>	Royal Government of Cambodia
<b>RHAC</b>	Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia
<b>RHIYA</b>	Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia
<b>SEILA</b>	Seila Programme
<b>SESDP</b>	Secondary Education Sector Development Project
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Authority
<b>SMEs</b>	Small and Medium Enterprises
<b>STD</b>	Sexually Transmitted Disease
<b>STIs</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infections
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education Training
<b>TWG-G</b>	Technical Working Group on Gender
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNCT</b>	United Nations Country Team
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nation Development Programme
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNGASS</b>	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
<b>UNCDF</b>	United Nations Capital Development Plan
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nation Children's Fund
<b>UNV</b>	United Nations Volunteer
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>VDPs</b>	Village Development Plans
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Programme
<b>YRBS</b>	Youth Risk Behaviour Survey
<b>YSA</b>	Youth Situation Analysis



## GLOSSARY OF KHMER TERMS

Angkar	អង្គការ	Organisation
Cham	ចាម	One of minority groups in Cambodia
Mekong	មេគង្គ	Name of Cambodian river
Mith Samlanh	មិត្តសំណាញ់	Name of an organisation in Cambodia working with street children
Neary Rattanak	នារីរតនៈ	A comprehensive strategic policy focusing on gender and women
Riel	រៀល	Cambodian currency unit
Tonle Sap	ទន្លេសាប	Name of Cambodian river

### CAMBODIAN PLACE NAMES

Boeung Kok	បឹងកក់	A lake in Phnom Penh
Cheung Kor	ជើងគោ	Village in Sihanouk vills town
Laak	ល្អក់	Village in Ratanakiri province
Neak Loeung	ឆ្នុកល្បើង	Village in Prey Veng province
Poi Pet	ប៉ោយប៉ែត	International border gate located in Banteay Meanchey province
Sangker	សង្កែ	Village in Svay Rieng province
Svahoul	ស្វាហ្គីល	



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



With young people in the age group 10-24 comprising 36 per cent of the population, Cambodia has the youngest population in Southeast Asia. Although the number of young people leaving school and looking for work exceeds 300,000 annually, unlike many countries in the region, Cambodia has yet to reap a demographic dividend that often comes with a large young work force. Despite recent rapid economic growth, there simply are not enough jobs for youth, resulting in continued pressure on public services and resources in areas of education and health.

The health, education and employment issues confronting Cambodian youth today are highly inter-related. For example, youth employment is inextricably linked with access to education and skills training, and access to health services and information is directly correlated with income. The children of poor and very poor households are more vulnerable to problems associated with poverty and social exclusion. Without policies aimed at disrupting the intergenerational disadvantages of poverty, such patterns are self-perpetuating.

There is a need for a comprehensive multi-sectoral national youth policy to address these inequalities and to help guide public and private sector investment in the areas of education, vocational training, health services and information. The present analysis identifies the human, financial, and organizational barriers to the fulfilment of young people's rights nationally, with special attention given to the most vulnerable of young people.

The study profiles Cambodian youth nationally based on data from the Cambodia Socio-economic Survey (CSES) 2003/04. An inventory of previous and current youth surveys and studies helps identify main gaps in data and analysis, while a national mapping exercise identifies geographical and sectoral coverage and gaps in youth programmes. Researchers also conducted focus group discussions with youth and parents and interviewed key informants in a small sample of six specifically selected villages to add qualitative texture to the statistical analysis and desk exercises.

## A DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF YOUTH

Cambodia's youth (aged 15-24 years) comprised 26 per cent of the total population in 2004, while 51 per cent were male. Eight-in-10 (83 per cent) reside in rural areas, with the densest concentrations in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions, at 43 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively. Ethnically, 96.2 per cent of youth are Khmer, 2.2 per cent are Cham; and the remainder are indigenous groups, as well as Chinese, Vietnamese, and Lao. Most (74.2 per cent) belong to households with at least five members; and 35 per cent live below the poverty line (CSES 2004, MoP 2006). Interestingly, a higher proportion (82.1 per cent) of the 15-17 age group are in large households compared to the 18-24 cohort (70.3 per cent). More of the young women than men aged 15-17 and 18-24 are either married, living together with a partner, divorced or have been widowed.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics cited and tables presented in this section are derived from the youth profile in Appendix A.

With regarding to education, 15-17 year olds are more likely than their older counterparts to have received primary level schooling. By gender, more young women than young men have reached primary levels of schooling, but young men are more likely to have had a secondary education. More than 8-in-10 (83.4 per cent) of 15-24 year olds are literate. Literacy rates are 87.9 per cent and 78.9 per cent for males and females, respectively. Younger adolescents are more likely to be literate than their older counterparts.

Cambodia's 15-24 year-olds comprise about 32.4 per cent of the country's labour force, equally divided between the younger (15-19) and older (20-24) age groups, reflecting the high birth rates of the 1980s and 90s. In 2004, more than two-thirds (69.8 per cent) of youth were in agriculture; a decline from 83.5 per cent in 1999. For male and female youth (15-19 years old) labour force participation rates are comparable, but this changes with apparently fewer females economically active as they reach the ages of 20-24 years.

Due in part to their low level of educational attainment, unemployment is high among Cambodia's youth. Unemployment is highest in the capital, Phnom Penh, at 20.1 per cent for those aged 15-24, This could be due to youth migration because of a lack of employment opportunities in rural areas and poor returns from agricultural production.

## ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

The challenges and opportunities that young men and women currently face in Cambodia must be understood in terms of rapid economic growth characterised by modest reductions in poverty and increasing inequality.

Economic growth was rapid between 1997 and 2007, averaging 8.2 per cent annually. This growth has been largely fuelled by garment manufacturing and tourism, both of which employ large numbers of youths. Garment manufacturing grew at an average annual rate of 44 per cent, while tourism grew at 34 per cent yearly during the 1994 and 2004.

The majority of Cambodians (60 per cent) continue to work in agriculture, where growth has averaged 3.3 per cent per year – far below tourism and manufacturing; and today it represents less than 33 per cent (a decline from 46 per cent in 1994) as a share of the economy. Additionally, investment in agriculture has been low considering its importance to rural livelihoods, with public investment equalling only 0.55 per cent of GDP. Land tenure is generally insecure and landlessness is increasing.

With economic gains has come a decline in poverty from 45 per cent 1993/4 to 35 per cent a decade later. Rural poverty has remained high; falling from 43 to 34 percent while in Phnom Penh poverty fell from 11 to 5 percent. As poverty rates have fallen, inequality has increased over this time period; the Gini co-efficient for national consumption increased from .034 to 0.40. Inequality rose sharply in rural areas but remained constant, albeit higher, in urban areas. Inequality rose from 0.26 to 0.36 in rural areas while remaining at 0.43 in urban areas.

Rural-to-urban migration is having a profound impact on the social fabric of Cambodian society and its youth. While migration represents new job opportunities, it also removes young people from the safe haven of family and community, and exposes them to possible high-risk behaviour associated with dislocation in urban areas. For those who remain in rural communities, opportunities are limited. Some worry about the paucity of female marriage partners; others experience dwindling land resources, insecure land tenure and idiosyncratic economic shocks which result in the sale of assets including land.

## EMPLOYMENT


The single most important issue confronting youth in Cambodia today is employment. The labour force is increasing by as many as 300,000 per year, and will increase to as many as 400,000 per year in the near future. The garment, tourism, and construction industries are not growing sufficiently quickly to absorb so many new labour market entrants. As a result, the Government's Rectangular Strategy, as outlined in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006 – 2010, details steps to develop the agricultural sector as a "third engine" of growth. On-farm employment is, however, constrained by insecure land tenure, lack of affordable credit, fragmented inputs and services, a lack of infrastructure, and poorly functioning markets. Off-farm employment seems to have great potential but more effort is needed to stimulate Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) development and agri-business investments. There is a need to attract foreign investment in agri-business and to strengthen the business-enabling environment.

Moreover, as the economic structures of the region change, there is need for Cambodia to not only absorb the growing labour force, but to prepare young people for the next generation of jobs. For example, as Cambodia's agricultural sector intensifies and diversifies, there will be a greater reliance on machinery and transport that will require skilled mechanics for maintenance and repair. There is also a need to match these opportunities with affordable credit to support SME start-ups. Even in the face of immediate needs, such medium and long range planning is critical.

## EDUCATION

Education promotes economic growth through increased productivity, the acquisition of new skills and attitudes, and through the accumulation of knowledge itself. The role of education in reducing poverty and income inequality is also well established. In this sense, illiteracy is one of the strongest predictors of poverty, while unequal access to educational opportunity is one correlate of income inequality (World Bank, 2006a). Complementing the findings from a previous Cambodian Development Research Institute (CDRI) poverty study, this research found that investments in girls' education could yield some of the highest returns of any development investment, such as fostering more young female participation in the development process and welfare, and reducing some of the most pernicious effects of poverty. In focus group discussions (FGDs) with young women aged 20-24, a majority consistently said that, with even a few years of formal education, they could better plan their families and have fewer children, have better knowledge of how to provide children with better nutrition, ensure they are immunized, and procure appropriate medical care for their children. Education therefore can also be an important vehicle for improving health and promoting preventive health practices.

The Education Strategic Plan (2006-2010) outlines the Government's efforts for promoting the National Plan for Education for All 2003-2015, to achieve the Cambodia Millennium Development Goal (CMDG) of ensuring access to nine years of basic education for all young people. In support of this goal, significant progress has been made in increasing the number of primary and lower secondary schools, and improving enrolment levels in lower secondary education, and adult literacy (among those aged 15-24). A key indicator of progress in this regard is that national expenditure on education has steadily increased since 2000. Budgets have been primarily allocated for primary and lower secondary education for schools and materials, and teacher training. Policies have also been adopted to encourage greater participation by girls and disadvantaged youth (e.g., those with disabilities, ethnic minorities) in education.



The ratio of primary-to-secondary schools climbed to 7.6 in 2005. By 2004, only 14 districts were still without a lower secondary school, while 45 districts lacked an upper secondary school. This is important, as one of the key indicators concerning access to education is distance to school, which varies considerably according to sector and income quintile (e.g., 7.66 km for the lowest quintile and 3.09 km. for the top quintile). This implies costs in terms of time and transportation for the poorest families. Infrastructure has also improved in many schools. For example, parental perceptions about school have improved recently, due to factors including improvements in access to school, free registration and a pro-poor education policy.

Despite these achievements, there is wide variability in terms of educational quality, efficiency and coverage. Access to education at all levels continues to be unevenly distributed in rural and remote areas, where many of Cambodia's poor and very poor reside. Costs, including informal fees, are still a barrier and vulnerable groups tend to be over-aged or late school entrants. High rates of illiteracy are still evident in the 15-24 age group, especially among girls. Young men and women from the poorest two quintiles face considerable challenges with regard to secondary education. Although increases in secondary enrolment are evident across gender, location and socio-economic groups, gaps have increased between urban and rural areas and between the poorest and richest quintiles. High dropout rates and poor retention remain serious concerns. As a result, overall educational attainment remains low and it will be difficult to achieve universal basic education by 2015.

Not only is there a need for more classrooms, but there is also a need for more relevant curricula – teaching that is tied to the employment opportunities of the future. This suggests a need to improve the quality of education by focusing on the quality of the teacher in the classroom, curricula, instructional materials, school and system accountability and education administration. The curriculum needs a review and re-formulation to include more science and mathematics, which promote problem solving skills that can help workers to make decisions and to work together in teams, as well as more practical courses that build and strengthen agricultural and vocational skills (e.g., carpentry and basic machinery).

Measures to address these challenges to increasing the participation of the poor and girls include focusing resources on school facilities in poor rural communities; targeting subsidies for school attendance for very poor and girls; community participation in school decisions; subsidies and incentives for secondary and tertiary education; adapting curricula to local needs; media/public information campaigns on the inclusion of girls, the disabled and other vulnerable young people.

## HEALTH

The broad and sweeping social and cultural transformations accompanying Cambodia's rapid economic development have shaped young people's exposure to and capacity to deal with risk situations. The rural-to-urban migration of young people for employment and education contributes to their exposure to sexual reproductive health risks, including increased risk-taking behaviour associated with HIV infection, and other health development risks, including drug abuse and gender-based violence. Additionally, access to information and communication technology is influencing changes in attitudes and introducing new lifestyle possibilities throughout the country.

Behaviour of concern includes tobacco use (by 13.6 per cent of 15-24 year-old males and 0.8 per cent of females) and alcohol consumption (20.9 per cent of males and 7.4 per cent of females). Many youth say they first consumed alcohol as early as 12 years of age. Young people report that they start to drink early due



in part to peer pressure and/or emerging new lifestyle behaviours modelled by adults.

The production, sale and use of drugs are becoming increasingly complex and appear to be spreading throughout the country. While data are difficult to come by, more than 80 per cent of known drug users are below 26. Most drug users are unemployed, sex workers and workers in labour-intensive industries, including construction, garment manufacturing, and truck/taxi driving, as well as street children.

Cambodia has achieved important success in HIV prevention in recent years. Estimates in 2006 suggested that HIV prevalence among female sex workers attending antenatal centres was at 12.6 per cent, down from 21.4 per cent in 2003. Among young pregnant women aged 15-24, the figure was 0.41 per cent in 2006. Nearly half of new infections are now occurring in married women, most of whom are infected by their husbands.

Knowledge of at least one modern contraception method is almost universal; about 99 per cent of people between the ages of 15 and 49 (compared to knowledge of a traditional method which is 47.5 per cent). However, modern contraceptive method use among young females is very low (about 2.5 per cent). Attitudes about exposing young women to discussions of sexuality are changing and appears to be increasingly accepted by parents and others in the communities.

Health knowledge and key health indicators show strong improvement. These promising trends, however, do not appear to apply to marginalized groups, street youth or other disadvantaged youth. The Government and NGOs need to continue to develop advocacy and awareness for health education programmes at the individual, household and community levels. Local authorities, Community Based Organisation (CBOs), pagodas, schools and social service providers plus medical practitioners all have important roles to play in this regard. Meanwhile, knowledge and awareness of prohibited drugs is quite high.

## VULNERABILITY

A broad definition of vulnerability can be derived from the Government's policy statement on Alternative Care for Children (MoSVY 2006): Children exposed to one or more vulnerability situations have been categorised into children in need of special protection and children at risk. Children in special need of protection and at risk include orphans, abandoned children, children infected with or affected by HIV or AIDS, abused children (sexually, physically, emotionally), street children, children in conflict with the law, child victims of exploitation (whether sexual or any form of harmful labour), children with disabilities, children addicted to drugs, and children whose basic physical needs are not being met.

Vulnerability can be a function of poverty and social exclusion, physical and mental ill health, and violence and abuse. Vulnerability can also be assessed as a function of migration, where children of poor households are increasingly exposed to problems associated with homelessness, violence and abuse.

***Vulnerability as a function of poverty and social exclusion:*** Young people living in poor households constitute 26 per cent of the country's population, of which about 35 per cent live below the poverty line. Because their livelihoods are mostly dependent on rain-fed agriculture, these youth often experience food insecurity. They tend to receive less education and have little or no access to vocational training. They live in households that are routinely in debt and have high dependency ratios. These households have dwindling land resources and poor employment prospects. Issues associated with social exclusion, including disability,

ethnicity, and the remoteness of communities exacerbate tendencies toward vulnerability and poverty.

***Vulnerability as a function of physical and mental ill health:*** The number of street children (estimated at 10,000 to 20,000) is increasing at a rate of 20 per cent per year. They are among the most vulnerable groups in Cambodia, due to their exposure to a wide range of physical and mental health problems, lack of access to basic needs (clothing, food), and a multitude of dangers (sexual exploitation, violence and substance abuse).

Children of chronically ill parents, including parents with HIV or AIDS, are especially vulnerable to becoming single or double orphans which has consequent impacts on household income and access to education. According to 2005 Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey (CDHS) data, 9 per cent of children under 18 (or about 55,000 young people) have lost one or both parents. It has been estimated that in 2005, 20.7 per cent of orphans in Cambodia had lost parents due to AIDS-related illnesses.

***Vulnerability as a function of violence and abuse:*** Young people may be experiencing more violence and abuse than any other group in Cambodia. Poverty, mental illness, alcoholism and gambling are all associated with domestic violence, which has either a direct or indirect effect on young people. Domestic violence is a contributing factor to downward household mobility due to property damage and the costs associated with injury and productivity losses.

***Vulnerability as a function of migration:*** Young men and women leaving rural communities for urban employment are exposed to a wide range of issues and problems, including alcohol and drug abuse, gang violence, crime, rape and gang membership. Some tend to adopt risk behaviours that expose them to problems associated with HIV and other STIs. Young people who migrate across borders are even more vulnerable to being cheated and losing their rights, becoming subject to arrest, or working in jobs that entail health risks with no consequent health care (i.e., spraying insecticide in Thailand). Some are exposed to drug use to induce long working hours, while some women are subject to sexual exploitation and forced prostitution.

## PARTICIPATION AND RIGHTS

The voice of youth is not incorporated into planning processes and young people are rarely called upon to participate in village meetings, they can therefore often feel ignored. Youths are however, called upon to participate as labourers once decisions have been made. There is consequently a need to mainstream youth participation in the development planning process at the local level. This should be incorporated as a key feature of a National Youth Policy (NYP).

Youth opportunities for volunteerism are key components in the formation of social capital and the strengthening of reciprocity. However, many youths tend to equate volunteerism with work without salary. There are indications that volunteerism can work when there is appropriate support from organizations such as NGOs and community institutions (pagodas and schools). When opportunities to volunteer are coupled with vocational or skills development, youth will have better prospects for decent employment and increased civic engagement.

There is also a widespread lack of community services for youth. Parents and village leaders often view opportunities for team sports and other activities as a waste of time and scarce resources. Youth could benefit from such activities if there is strong support from the community. The attitudes and beliefs of elders and community leaders need to change to incorporate an understanding of the value of greater youth participation in social and civic affairs.

Youth voices in rural Cambodia are not yet well incorporated into local development planning.

# I INTRODUCTION



## 1.1 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

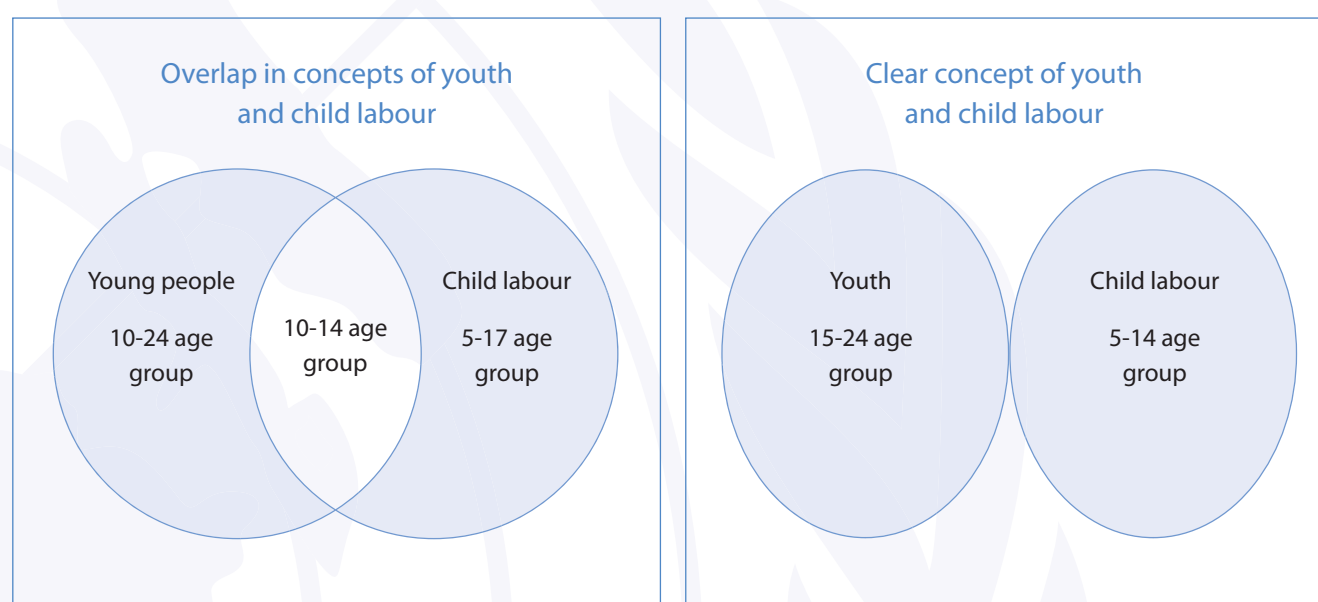
Cambodia is undergoing rapid demographic change. As of 2004, 60 per cent of the population was below 25 years of age. This situation has had major implications for Cambodia's socio-economic and political development, including labour market opportunities, access to public and family resources for youth, and the political future of a country in which the majority of the population have no experience (or even knowledge) of the Khmer Rouge regime or the country's recent conflicts. At the current pace of job creation, Cambodia will not have the capacity to compensate for the increasing numbers of young people entering the workforce annually (currently 300,000 per year, projected to increase to 400,000 per year by 2040). With the real risk of significant unemployment and underemployment, Cambodia faces the challenge of preventing increasing numbers of young people from entering both the informal and illegal economies. Additionally, as neighbouring economies grow, so too will transnational migration. A recent study by CDRI (2007) showed that cross-border demand for unskilled labour has increased, particularly in Thailand, and more recently in Malaysia. The recent trend of migrating to Malaysia has been spearheaded by the Khmer-Muslim community, and is likely to increase significantly in the future; however, migration to Malaysia is primarily conducted illicitly through Thailand.

With only half of young people completing primary school, and only a quarter proceeding to lower secondary school, there are few options for non school-going youth. Medium and Small Micro-Enterprises (MSMEs) are widely considered as the engine of growth for Cambodia's future. However, there remain real questions as to whether the current education system and business environment are structured to support these initiatives. Further complicating the picture, Cambodia's young population is also challenged by such risks as HIV, sexual exploitation, violence and abuse.

## 1.2 DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF YOUTH

The UN General Assembly defines 'youth' as individuals aged between 15 and 24 years, and young people between 10 and 24 years (UN General Assembly, 1995). Cambodia's Youth Department at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) defines youth somewhat more expansively as those between the ages of 14 and 30, although the concept is said to be a relatively new cultural import to the country (Bearup 2003). This study, however, adopts the UN General Assembly definition.

FIGURE 1-1. STATISTICAL CONCEPT OF YOUTH AND CHILD LABOUR



### 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Youth Situation Analysis broadly aims to identify the human, financial and organisational barriers to the fulfilment of young people's rights, with special focus on those most vulnerable and excluded from society. The findings are expected to guide the priorities of the development community, while empowering young people to advocate for their rights. In effect, the study shall offer a basis for developing a multi-sectoral Coordinated Response Strategy for youth.

The study specifically seeks to:

- Establish a Cambodian youth profile, including key indicators such as: number, gender, geographic distribution (including rural/ urban), ethnic background, religious affiliation, employment, educational attainment and vocational training, language(s) spoken, details of family structure, number of children and/or pregnancies, marital and HIV status.
- Analyse the current situation of young people and identify critical needs, major challenges and barriers to the fulfilment of their rights.
- Map current youth programmes (both donor-supported and governmental), including support and funding, in order to identify the main gaps and overlaps
- Analyse links between key elements, such as population growth, employment patterns and economic and social development, between gender, sexuality and ethnicity.
- Compile an inventory of past, existing and ongoing studies, surveys, data and research on young people in Cambodia, and identify main gaps in data and analysis.
- Analyse the main areas requiring concerted efforts and greater investment for young people, and propose priority actions.



## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The present youth situation analysis is based on both primary and secondary data sources including: a literature review; a mapping of current programs; existing studies; a 2003 national youth profile; and meetings with key informants and youth focus groups. Table 1-1 identifies the distribution of youth across Cambodia.

TABLE 1-1. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF YOUTH POPULATION

Geographic location	AGE GROUP						Ref
	10-14		15-17		18-24		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Region							2
Phnom Penh	67,989	67,267	47,473	53,904	115,426	119,309	
Plain	400,933	384,143	236,929	215,609	441,189	447,564	
Tonle Sap Lake	287,427	278,506	164,349	148,001	299,092	294,386	
Coastal	68,918	66,714	36,025	35,523	75,444	73,010	
Plateau and Mountainous	99,619	96,348	58,572	51,601	118,576	116,592	
Residence							2
Urban	134,346	132,017	85,382	90,184	187,157	174,670	
Rural	790,539	760,962	457,966	414,454	862,569	876,191	

FIGURE 1-2. DATA COLLECTION FRAMEWORK

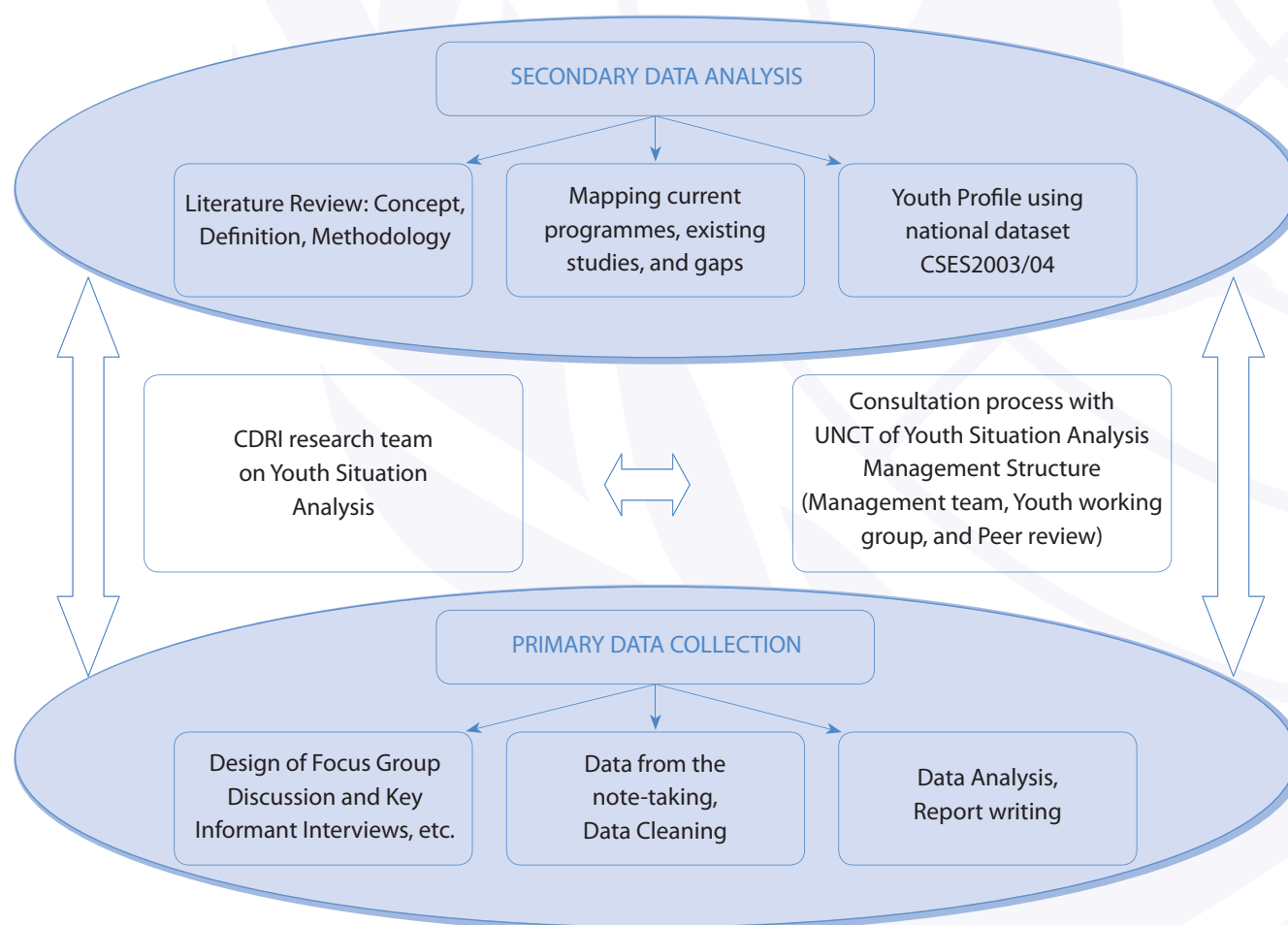
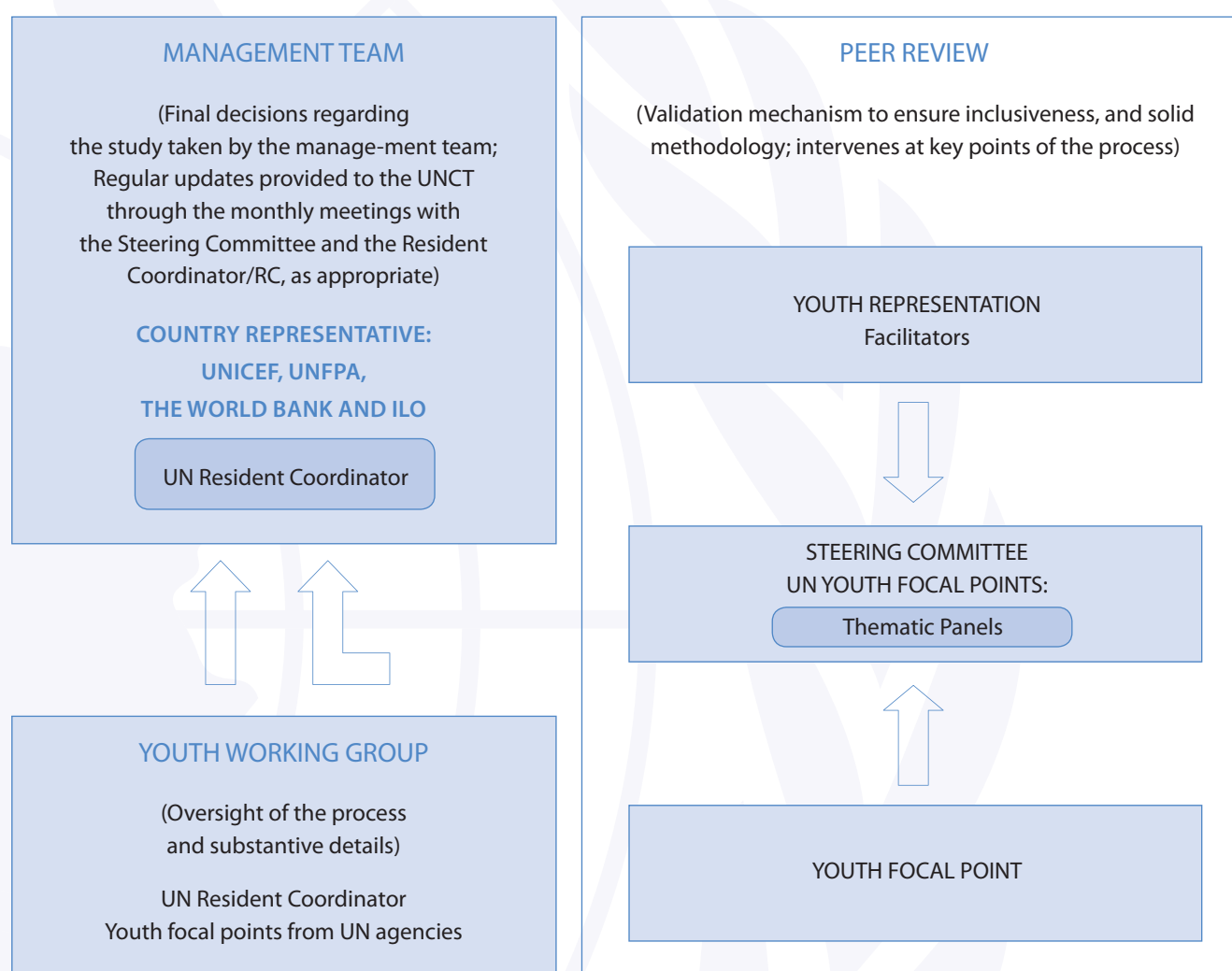


FIGURE 1-3. YOUTH SITUATION ANALYSIS MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



**Secondary data:** Included all available survey and administrative data. This analysis reviewed the current UNV study on youth and their role in society and national development, as well as surveys conducted by employers' associations and trade unions on gaps in skills, qualifications and future demand. The study drew upon the latest national dataset of the Cambodia Socioeconomic Survey 2003/04 to obtain a national profile of youth.

For the purpose of mapping current donor-supported and Government youth initiatives, the CDRI study team reviewed programme and project materials describing initiatives by the Royal Government (RG), International Organizations (IOs), International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and Local Non-Governmental Organizations (LNGOs).

**Primary data collection:** The overall objective of the primary data collection was to understand how the situation of Cambodian youth – and especially the most vulnerable – is changing in today's society. It also sought to tap youth perceptions of social change and their current and anticipated living situations, and it strives to give voice to youth observations and concerns about employment, health, education, participation in community development, and the challenges they face, as well as their potential involvement in development.

**Focus Group Discussions:** The key themes that guided the focus group discussions (FGDs) included employment, education, health, human security, rights and participation, changing values and attitudes, and expectations for the future. Gender was an overarching, crosscutting theme, as the FGDs explored differences in gender perspectives, especially around social change (see Appendix A/Annex 1-2 for themes and questions).

The FGDs were held in five zones (Phnom Penh, Mountain/Plateau, Tonle Sap, Plain, and Coastal) using trained facilitators. The sessions averaged three hours. Demographic information was collected from all FDG participants. Classrooms and school grounds were the most frequent settings for the FGDs.

**Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** These were held with village chiefs, parents, NGOs and other civil society organizations including:

- Action Aid International Cambodia
- Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
- Aide et Action- Asie du Sud-Est (AEA ASE)
- Asia Regional Cooperation to Prevent People Trafficking (ARCPPT)
- Association Angkor-Belgique (AAB)
- Association of School Aid in Cambodia (ASAC)
- Australia Cambodia Foundation
- CARE International Cambodia
- Caritas Cambodia
- Centro Italiano Aiuti all Infanzia (CIAI)
- Christian and Missionary Alliance (CAMA Service)
- Concern Worldwide
- Diakonia
- Don Bosco Foundation of Cambodia
- East West Management Institute (EWMI)
- Enfants & Development (E&D)
- Enfants d'Ángkor (EDA)
- Enfants du Mekong (EdM)
- Enfants Refugies du Monde (ERM)
- EveryChild Cambodia
- Family Health International (FHI)
- Food For the Hungry International Cambodia (FHI)
- Foundation for International Development/ Relief (FIDR)
- Friends International
- German AgroAction (DWHH/ GAA)

- International Organisation for Migration (IOM).
- Intervida World Alliance (INWA)
- Japan International Volunteer Center (JVC)
- Japan Team of Young Human Power (JHP)
- Jesuit Service Cambodia (JS/JRS)
- Kokyo naki kodomotachi Children Without Borders (KnK)
- Maryknoll Cambodia
- Mennonite Central Committee (MCC)
- New Humanity (NH)
- NGO Forum of Cambodia
- Oxfam Quebec
- PACT Cambodia
- Partners for Development (PFD)
- Plan International Cambodia
- Population Services International/ Cambodia (PSI Cambodia)
- Pour un Sourire d'Enfant (PSE)
- Save the Children Australia (SCA)
- Save the Children Norway, Cambodia Office (SCN-CO)
- SHARE Village Focus International
- Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)
- World Education
- World Vision Cambodia (WVC)
- Youth with a Mission (YWAM)

**Site selection and sampling:** YSA fieldwork took place in six provinces/municipalities. In each province, one village/community was selected. CDRI coordinated with an NGO (or NGOs) working with youth in a particular province to help coordinate site selection and organize the logistics associated with fieldwork. The three provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Ratanakiri, and Svay Rieng were covered during the first phase of fieldwork.

Additionally, targeted FGDs were conducted in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, and Sihanoukville in order to address special issues pertaining to vulnerable and marginalized children. For example, in Phnom Penh an FGD was convened with young Cham males, female garment workers, street youth and/or youth involved with substance abuse. In Siem Reap, FGDs were convened in a fishing village with young Vietnamese men and women. In Sihanoukville, an FGD was convened with young people involved with informal labour markets. These three areas were covered in the second phase of the fieldwork.

There were three types of interaction at the community level during this study: FGDs; key informant interviews; and semi-structured individual interviews. Table 1.2 summarizes the interactions held for this study.



Table 1-2 Activity/sample summary

Interaction	Number per village	Villages in Sample	Total per Village	Specifically Targeted a/	Total Sample
FGD	6	6	36	6	42
KII	4	6	24	3-5	27-29
Individual Interviews	2-3	6	12-18	4-5	16-23

*Phnom Penh = 3; Siem Reap = 2; Siهانoukvile = 1, depending on available resources*

Six FGDs took place at the village level, to give a total of 36 village FGDs. As gender was a critical crosscutting theme, FGDs were arranged according to the sex of the participants for two age groups, for young people and their parents. The specific groupings were as follows:

- Young males, aged 15-18 (open to any male member of the community of this age).
- Young females, aged 15-18 (open to any female member of the community of this age).
- Males, 19-24 (open to any male member of the community in this age group).
- Females, aged 19-24 (open to any female member of the community in this age group).
- Fathers with children 15-24 years of age.
- Mothers with children 15-24 years of age.

Data Entry and Analysis: Quantitative data were analyzed using STATA software computer package. Qualitative information on perceptions and opportunities of the youths were encoded in Microsoft Word and grouped thematically according to the FGDs by region.

Human Subject Considerations: Guiding principles for data collection with youth included: informed consent; the right of youth to withdraw or refuse to answer any question at any time; confidentiality and anonymity in reporting of all data (nothing would ever be attributed to an individual); and parental consent for youth under 17 years of age.

## 1.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Several limitations characterize this study:

- As noted earlier, the focus of this study was on youth aged 15-24. While conforming to UN definitions, it excludes those aged 25-30 who, within the Cambodian context, are also considered 'youth'.
- Data from the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2007 were not yet available at the time of this study, so we relied upon 2003-4 data. Additionally, it proved difficult to obtain data on sensitive issues such as drug use and abortion.
- The lack of youth-specific data proved to be a challenge, so the study used population data, extracting youth-specific information where possible (e.g. CSES 2004, the Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey 2004, the 2005 CDHS, and the 2001 Child Labour Survey). The lack of such national data often precluded analysis by gender, age or geography. Additionally, data limitations did not allow for exploration of youth-specific issues such as early marriage, drug use, abortion and violence.

- The FGD methodology proved difficult for younger participants – aged 15-19 – due to their hesitancy to respond to questions and relatively greater difficulty articulating issues of concern.
- There are very limited data on young people aged 10-14.
- Time and resource constraints limited the mapping exercise, as it was able only to assess the number of interventions at the provincial level.
- Secondary sources were limited, in that it was often difficult to determine which initiatives were still operative. Moreover, the assessment refers only to the number of interventions, rather than to their scope, scale or impact.



## II YOUTH DATA AND TRENDS AT A GLANCE



### 2.1 A PROFILE OF CAMBODIA'S YOUTH

Cambodia has the youngest population in Southeast Asia, with young people aged 10-24 making up 36 per cent of the total population. Cambodia's youth – defined in this study to be those in the 15-24 age group – comprised 26 per cent of the total population in 2004 (Ministry of Planning 2006). There were slightly more males (51 per cent) than females (49 per cent). More than 8-in-10 (83 per cent) live in rural areas with the largest concentration being in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions at 43 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively. Ethnically, 96.2 per cent of them are Khmer, about 2.2 per cent are Chams and the remainder make up the indigenous groups, Chinese, Vietnamese and Lao. The majority (74.2 per cent) belong to households with at least five members, which may partly account for the fact that some 35 per cent of the youth population lives below the poverty line (CSES 2004, MoP 2006).

Table 2-1 Cambodia youth population in 2005 and trends over 1998 and 2015

Age Group	Females 1,000s			Males 1,000s			Ref.
	2005	Change over 1998	Projected change over 2015	2005	Change over 1998	Projected change over 2015	
		(%)	(%)		(%)	(%)	
10-14	921	11	-12	953	9	-12	1
15-19	839	20	-4	879	29	-6	
20-24	755	88	19	755	108	22	
25-29	484	2	69	443	1	90	
Total	7,108	13	22	6,699	14	24	

Table 2-2. Total youth population by age group

Sex	Age group				Ref.
	10-14	15-17	18-24	Total Youth age 15-24	
Male	924,885	543,348	1,049,726	2,517,959	2
Female	892,978	504,638	1,050,861	2,448,477	2

Nearly 10 per cent of 15-19 year old females and over half (54.3 per cent) of those aged 20-24 are married, compared with 1.6 per cent and 36.2 per cent, respectively, of males in the comparable age groups. This reflects the relatively early age of female marriage, especially in the rural areas where marriages are still often



arranged. Youth interviewees for this study, particularly in Phnom Penh, Poipet and Sihanoukville, indicated that they generally do not favour early marriage. Cohabitation is also an extremely rare behaviour, occurring in less than 1 per cent of either age group or gender.

Older youth are more likely than their younger counterparts to be employed. In terms of income status, older youth seem somewhat better off than their younger peers. Moreover, females appear to be doing marginally better than males, although the differences are not significant. Thirty-two per cent of youth live below the poverty line.

Income and education are closely correlated, and we also see an increase in access to primary education among younger youth compared with those aged 20-24. Moreover, younger youth are more likely to be literate (84 per cent) than older youth (76.3 per cent). By gender, more young women have reached primary levels of schooling, but young men are more likely to have had a secondary education. One factor contributing to this gender disparity is the lack of secondary schools in rural areas and the reluctance of many families to send their daughters to urban centres for education.

Figure 2-1. Youth education by age group and gender

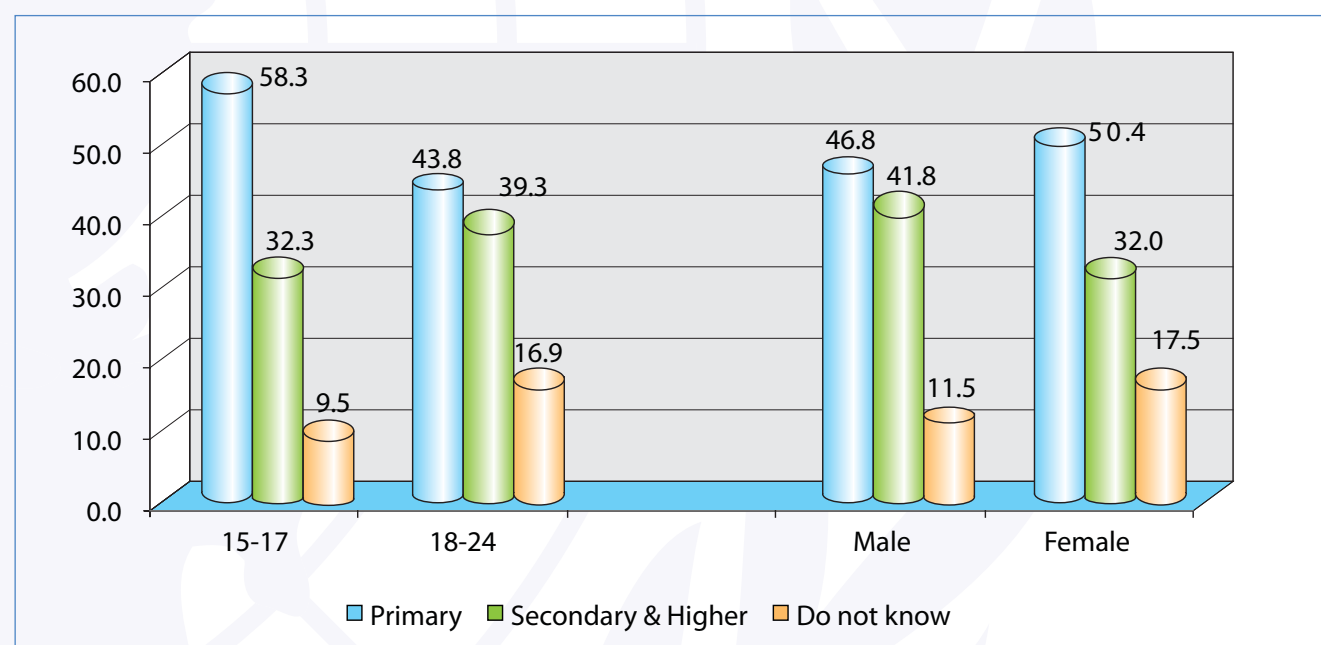


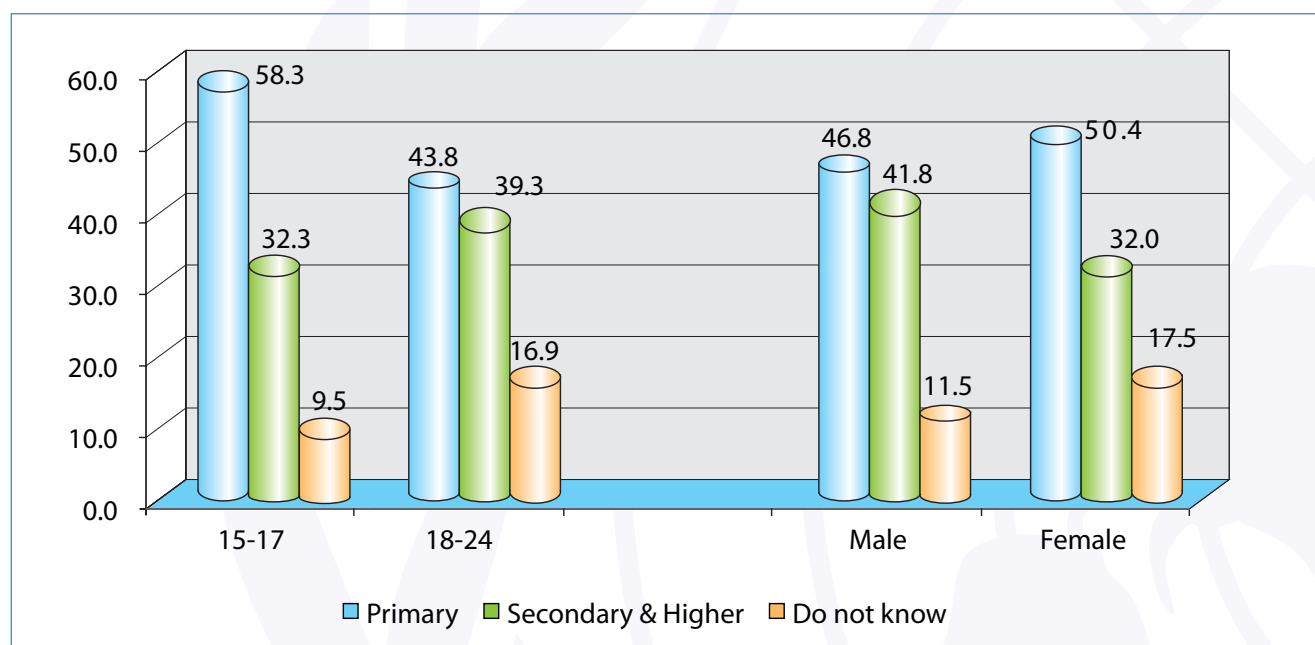
Table 2-3. Literacy by age group, sex and sector (%)

	Male			Female			Both Sexes		
	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total	Urban	Rural	Total
15-19	92.1	84.5	85.8	90.1	80.4	82.1	91.1	82.6	84.0
20-24	91.4	80.1	82.1	86.0	67.6	70.6	88.8	73.7	76.3
15-24	92.8	87.0	87.9	88.0	76.8	78.9	90.8	81.9	83.4
15 & over	91.7	83.3	84.7	76.9	61.6	64.1	83.8	71.6	73.6
7 & over	88.9	80.8	82.1	78.6	65.3	67.4	83.5	72.7	74.4



Cambodia's male and female 15-24 year-olds comprise a third of the country's labour force, with the 15-19 age group making up 16.4 per cent. In 2004, more than two-thirds (69.8 per cent) of both age groups were employed in agriculture (a decline of nearly 15 per cent compared to 1999), and there were comparable increases in employment in manufacturing and trade (Figure 2-2).

Figure 2-2. Total number of employed youth population, by sector and age group



Male and female youth labour participation rates are comparable for those aged 15-19. However, for older female youths are less likely to be employed, perhaps due to marriage and child raising practices. Not surprisingly, those who enter the labour force at youngest ages are also the most educationally disadvantaged. Moreover, the relatively low educational attainment of youth predisposes them to unemployment (Table 2-4).

Unemployment is highest in Phnom Penh, at 20.1 per cent for all those aged 15-24 years, and could be due to their migration in this capital city because of lack of employment opportunities in rural areas and poor returns from agricultural production.

Table 2-4. Youth labour force by level of education (%)

Age group	None	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Total
15-19	13.4	42.2	34.5	10.0	100.0
20-24	18.9	36.2	25.4	19.3	100.0
25-29	23.7	37.0	22.4	17.0	100.0
15 & over	91.7	83.3	84.7	76.9	61.6
7 & over	88.9	80.8	82.1	78.6	65.3

able 2-5. Youth unemployment by sex and region (%)

Criteria	Total	Male	Female	Phnom Penh	Other Urban	Rural
Unemployment using "strict" definition						
15 - 19	1.4	1.3	1.4	6.2	2.7	0.9
20 - 24	1.6	1.9	1.2	7.8	1.4	0.8
15 - 24	1.5	1.6	1.3	7.2	2.1	0.9
Unemployment using "relaxed" definition						
15 - 19	7.9	7.3	8.5	24.8	10.1	6.2
20 - 24	6.5	5.4	7.6	16.6	7.1	5.1
15 - 24	7.2	6.4	8	20.1	8.6	5.7

Note: "Strict" definition counts only those actively seeking employment; "Relaxed" definition measures those not working but available for work

## 2.2 TRENDS IN KEY AREAS AFFECTING YOUTH

### a. Education

*Poor and marginal youth still face extremely limited access to secondary education.* Newly constructed schools for young people and poor children have made access to primary schooling relatively equal, but considerable differences remain for lower and upper secondary schools (less than 5 per cent of villages have an upper secondary school). Most families are now able to send their children to primary school, given that the mean distance to the nearest primary school is 2.25 kilometres for those in the poorest quintile, which is not significantly different from other quintiles. However, the average distance to the nearest lower secondary school for the poorest household is 7.66 kilometres, which is more than twice that for the wealthiest children (World Bank, 2006). CSES 2004 also reveals that the mean distance to the nearest upper secondary school is 16.9 kilometres for the poorest quintile villages, compared to 7.34 kilometres for the richest.

*Those who are poor, rural and (especially) female are more likely to be illiterate:* CSES 2004 indicates that Cambodia has high illiteracy rates among young people aged 15-24 compared to the rest of the region. Additionally, vulnerable youth are much more likely to be over-aged or late school entrants. Late school entry may be related to structural factors such as child labour or malnutrition (e.g. in Ratanakiri and Poipet). While there have been substantial strides in reducing the gender and urban-rural gaps in education, the country's poorest have not benefited as much. In FGDs with female youth aged 20-24, the majority consistently said that, with even a few years of formal education, they could better plan their families and have fewer children, have better knowledge of how to provide children with better nutrition, ensure they are immunized and procure appropriate medical care, thereby reducing child mortality. Barriers appear to be both financial and social. For example, parents in Svay Rieng, Siem Reap, Poipet and Sihanoukville reported that, while they would like to send both their male and female children to school, they were more inclined to support their male children's education since their daughters were more likely to be needed for housework.

*Few youth go on to university education.* According to Education Management Information System (EMIS) 2006, only 1.4 per cent of youth aged 19-22 are enrolled in tertiary education.

#### b. Employment

*Cambodia's labour force youth participation rates are among the highest in the region.* In general, those aged 15-19 and 20-24 are more likely to be working in rural than urban areas, reflecting lower secondary school matriculation and higher farm labour rates.

*Cambodia's young labour force generally suffers from low and poor levels of education* when viewed against the requirements of an increasingly developed economy and external competitiveness (Lundström and Ronnås 2006).

*Wage employment is less likely for women* than for men, suggesting that females are more likely to be employed in the informal economy, even taking the growing garment industry into consideration.

The unemployment rate in Phnom Penh for those aged 15-19 was 6.2 per cent, with little gender difference (CSES 2004). At 0.8 per cent, unemployment rates in rural areas are much lower:

There is a mismatch between education and labour needs, even among those who have benefitted from education and training, (ILO 2007).

#### c. Health

*The incidence of unplanned pregnancy in the 15-19 age group has become a concern.* Approximately 8 per cent of Cambodian women aged 15-19 have become mothers or are currently pregnant with their first child (CDHS 2005). About 23 per cent of young married women had given birth by age 19, with early childbearing more common in rural (8.3 per cent) than urban (6 per cent) areas. Early child bearing is most pronounced in Monduliri/Ratanakiri (21.8 per cent) and Otdar Meanchey (15.4 per cent), while the provinces of Preah Vihear/Stueng Treng (13.4 per cent) and Kratie (12.9 per cent) have the lowest incidence (CDHS, 2005).

*Abortions among women aged 15-49 years appear to be increasing.* The percentage of abortions among women aged 15-49 increased from 5 per cent in 2000 to 8 per cent in 2005 (CDHS 2000, 2005). Among women aged 15-34, the most common place to get an abortion was at private clinics (35.3 per cent), followed by other homes (33.7 per cent), private homes (11.5 per cent) and public health facilities (10.8 per cent). The proportion of women who received help for abortion from a trained professional was 87.3 per cent among urban women and 76.1 per cent among rural women (CDHS 2005).

*Basic contraceptive awareness is widespread.* About 97.3 per cent of those aged 15-19 indicated knowing at least one modern method of contraception (CDHS 2005). Among older youth the rate approaches 100 per cent. However, in practice, contraception use is low among currently married females. For example, among those aged 15-19, 20.8 per cent reported currently using any method and 13.7 per cent reported currently using any modern method; among those aged 20-24 the rates were 34.6 per cent and 23.3 per cent, respectively.

Both young males and young females have a good understanding of sexual and reproductive health and related infections. Youth interviewees learned about these issues from sex education and awareness campaigns in schools, and from NGOs in their villages. They also received training not only about sexual and reproductive health but also on HIV. The youths' other sources of information on sexual and reproductive health are television, village information boards, village peer educators (where there are such programmes) and community libraries.

*Tobacco use.* Overall, 7.3 per cent of Cambodian youths aged 15-24 were current smokers (13.6 per cent males and 0.8 per cent females). Moreover, rural youths smoke more than those who live in cities. The proportion of youths consuming tobacco was found to be highest in Ratanakiri, at 34 per cent.

*Smoking increases with age.* The prevalence of smoking among the 20-24 year olds was 12.5 per cent (males 24.0 per cent; females 1.1 per cent).

*In the area of alcohol use,* out-of school youth were more likely to drink than in-school peers (15.9 per cent and 12.1 per cent, respectively) (MoEYS 2004). Young people who consume alcohol started on average at age 12. The 2004 Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) also found that 45 per cent of young people in Ratanakiri and 40.9 per cent in Mondulakiri use alcohol. Young people indicate that the factors that influence alcohol use include: new lifestyles and exposure to new environments within society; peer pressure or the influence of their seniors; lack of family encouragement or poor environment within the home (e.g., domestic violence, family members seen as alcohol or drug users); and access to money among those who are economically better-off (Mith Samlanh-Friends 2002).

*The prevalence of drug use* among Cambodian adolescents aged 11-18 was 0.9 per cent (1.6 per cent and 0.3 per cent for males and females) (MoEYS 2004). Likewise, 2.2 per cent of urban youth and 0.5 per cent of the rural youth report using drugs. As with tobacco, drug use starts on average at age 12; and 95 per cent of those reporting ever having used drugs, say that they did so in the previous 12 months.

*Injury as a serious health issue* is underscored by the fact that among 15-to-17 year-olds it has surpassed communicable and other non-communicable cause of death, to become the major killer of young people (NIS/ NIPH 2008). Specifically, among 15-17 year-olds, suicide appears to be the leading cause of death, while vehicle-related injury and death predominate among older youth.

#### d. Vulnerability

*Large family size contributes to poverty* (an issue more pronounced in rural than urban areas). Cambodia has a high dependency ratio (89.6 per cent in rural areas, compared with 69.1 per cent in urban areas), which has a depressing effect on per capita income. The number of elderly or disabled people who are unable to work also raise the dependency ratio, which limits financial capital for activities like education.

*The mental health needs of youth* often go undetected. As noted previously, the NIS/NIPH survey (2008) observed suicide to be a leading cause of death among 15-17 year-olds. FGD findings suggest that mental health issues stem from violence in the home, a perceived lack of caring from the family,



feelings of isolation that result from migration for work, and the increased vulnerability of migrants who may enter into abusive relationships in exchange for friendship or food and shelter.

*Parents living with HIV and AIDS* also contribute to young people's vulnerability. The death of parents can place the onus of responsibility on adolescents and/or young adults. Approximately 55,000 children, or 10.9 per cent of all orphans, were orphaned by AIDS-related illnesses in 2001, increasing to an estimated 20.7 per cent by 2005 (World Bank 2006). Risk perception of HIV is low among youth in Cambodia, increasing their risk of infection.

*Sexual abuse appears to be increasing.* The proportion of homicides associated with rape has increased from 2003 to 2004 (ADHOC 2005). The victims include sex workers, garment workers and working in beer halls and karaoke establishments, the latter two occupations mainly employing young women (MoWA 2008). Perpetrators have included young urban men, male university students, some members of the police and gang members, who engage in *bauk* or gang rape. Failure to report such events is common due to the shame and stigma associated with it, distrust of the judicial system, costs of prosecution, unofficial 'compensation' settlements between perpetrators and victims, and fear of retaliation from the perpetrator (LICADHO 2006).

*Arrest increases vulnerability.* Children and youths who have been arrested are often detained with adults, despite legal provision on separation of untried and convicted youth offenders from adults (CDC 2003). The Youth Rehabilitation Centre is the only alternative for incarcerating juveniles. Those who land in prison are often abused and, without any form of legal or social protection, may languish in jail, and receive beatings or worse at the hands of the police or adult inmates (Egger 2005).

*Rural-to-urban migration is common among youth.* Those aged 15-25 made up a disproportionately large number of migrants in the five years before the 2004 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (Maltoni 2007). Rural-to-urban mobility in this age group is shaped by push and pull of factors such as loss of land or loss of access to other livelihood resources, a desire to seek a better life, and the presence of family members in places where work may be found. Females in the 15-19 age group are more likely to migrate than their male counterparts, though gender differences decline after age 20.

*Young migrant workers fall prey to serious difficulties when working near cross-country borders.* Fitzgerald and So (2007) found that many young migrants reported being cheated out of wages, or entering another country illegally and running into difficulties when they returned to Cambodia. FGD participants also validated these issues.

#### e. Participation and rights

The needs and perspectives of youth are yet to be reflected in government policies and programmes. Such a lack of recognition appears to stem from an age or knowledge hierarchy (Brown 2008) in which community leaders feel that young people have little to contribute (Yong 2005). Additionally, Cambodian parents are wary and discouraging of civic engagement by their children, since this implies political involvement, which historically has been associated with risks (KYA 2008)

<sup>6</sup> In a 2006 study, ILO found the average age of beer promotion girls to be 22.7 years.

as well as the failure of the education system to impart the values necessary for the development of skills among young people to help build and participate in modern democratic societies and ensuring good governance.

The lack of youth voices is accentuated at the village level because young people are only called upon to carry out the decisions of their elders. Youth feel confident about their ability to contribute to development, but their social environment and the conservative beliefs of the local authorities and community elders prevent them from doing so.

Youth perceptions of volunteering vary depending on locale, with those in rural areas tending to have a more positive view. In Svay Rieng province, many school-going youth report having acquired support from a local NGO, Open Forum of Cambodia, to volunteer as journalists for a community newsletter, and as assistants in community development work such as road construction and rehabilitation. Other youths reported volunteering to assist with village traditional ceremonies, weddings, merit making and other religious events. In Ratanakiri, youth who belong to ethnic groups are also positive about volunteering. This is because they believe that their participation enhances their awareness and helps their community. In Siem Reap and Phnom Penh, on the other hand, youth tend to speak disparagingly of volunteering.

Youth-focused NGOs teach skills to young people as they contribute as volunteers to their communities. EveryChild-Cambodia (2006), for instance, identified 84 children and youth-led clubs and organizations across the 24 provinces and municipalities of the country (although some are local offices or divisions of NGOs that facilitate programmes for children and youths). The activities of these associations include leadership training, home-based care (for people living with HIV and AIDS), primary health care and child rights promotion, monitoring child abuse, capacity building for club members and holding literacy classes.

There is evidence that youth are not totally excluded from the political process. Yong (2005) found young people's political expressions evident in media campaigns, lobbying political leaders, organizing and taking part in the demonstrations and public forums organized by youth-focused NGOs.

Additionally, there are opportunities for youth to participate in sports, which they enjoy. However, many parents regard this activity as a waste of time, since they believe that it does not contribute to family income and it takes away time from assisting with household chores. The low value adults accord to sports is reflected in the paucity of sports and recreational facilities at the village level.

From the current situation analysis it appears that youth voices are often excluded, their interest in contributing to their communities is frequently discounted, their opportunities for educational advancement beyond the primary school are limited, and their participation in recreational activities is viewed by their elders as a waste of time. In the following chapters we will look more closely into these issues and their consequences for Cambodia.



## MAPPING DONOR-SUPPORTED AND GOVERNMENTAL YOUTH PROGRAMMES



### 3.1 INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS AND CONVENTIONS ON YOUTH AND YOUNG CHILDREN

The United Nations formally recognized the vital role of young people in the development of society through the *Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between People* in General Assembly resolution A/RES/2037 (XX) of 7 December 1965 (United Nations 2007). Three decades later, the General Assembly, in resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995, in paragraph 8(a) of the World Programme of Action for Youth, said: “every State shall provide its young people with opportunities for obtaining education, for acquiring skills, and for participating fully in all aspects of society.”

*The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly in 1989, is another covenant that supports young people. The Convention requires states to adopt all appropriate measures – legislative, administrative, social, economic, budgetary, educational or other – and to allocate the resources necessary to ensure its effective implementation. The Convention recognises the obligations of other parties (i.e., parents and families, civil society and the international community) for the provision of care, food and warmth, or for loving stimulus, basic education and health care (ILO 2002).

In its commitment to standardize labour, and to also protect young workers, the Cambodian Government ratified a number of fundamental ILO conventions: Forced Labour Convention (No. 29); Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No. 105); Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87); Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (No. 98); Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100); Discrimination Convention (No. 111); and Minimum Age Convention (No. 138). In November 2007, the country ratified the Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (Convention No. 182) (ILO 2007). Cambodia is also a signatory to the 1990 UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, although it has yet to ratify it (Lee, n.d.).

Bilateral treaties and memorandums of agreement also underpin particular issues that affect youth. To promote safe migration for work, Cambodia has mutual labour cooperation agreements with Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on *Cooperation in the Employment of Workers* signed in May 2003, the Thai Government has accepted and legalized the status of Cambodians who are working in Thailand illegally (Lee, n.d.). Both countries also set up an Inter-Ministries Working Group for Cooperation to issue identification cards to Khmer migrant workers in Thailand, which allows them to apply for a work permit. Cambodia’s official mutual agreement with Malaysia, *Recruitment Procedures for Cambodian Nationals for Employment in Malaysia* (1997/1999), has allowed the country, since 1998, to officially send its workers to Malaysia, the majority of whom are women, who work as domestic workers, factory workers and shop assistants. Another related agreement is the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), an MoU, signed in 2004 by Cambodia and five countries

in the Mekong region (China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam), which recognises the special vulnerability of women and children to trafficking and enables the six countries to actively work together to stop the rising trend of human trafficking in the region (MoT 2006).

As part of its efforts to address the illicit drug use problems in the country and in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, Cambodia is a signatory to an MoU on Drug Control, together with China, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. The programme accompanying this MoU aims to: expand the work to develop the capacity to reduce demand among groups practicing high-risk behaviour; take action against amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) abuse in the East Asia and Pacific Region; reduce HIV vulnerability from drug abuse; and improve regional responses to the combined problems of drug abuse and HIV vulnerability (Burrows 2003). The RGC also participates in the bilateral and trilateral annual sub-regional MoU ministerial meetings with Viet Nam and Laos PDR on drug control and cooperation, and in provincial level meetings among border provinces of Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam and Laos PDR (National Authority for Combating Drugs 2005).

International agreements also provide a strong basis for integrating gender into relevant national policies and programmes for the above covenants. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Across all these conventions, there are provisions that ensure young women's rights to education, reproductive health, participation in decision-making and governance, ownership of property, and protection against violence, sexual exploitation and other forms of abuse. These international frameworks also lend support to male and female children and youths within their own country, to develop relevant contextualised policies and strategies .

### 3.2 NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS IN SUPPORT OF CAMBODIAN YOUTH

The National Strategic Development Plan (2006–2010) (NSDP) sets out measures to implement the Rectangular Strategy and to meet the Cambodian Millennium Development Goal (CMDG) targets for 2010.

Cambodia has yet to have a youth policy, although MoEYS has created a Youth Department to be responsible for a youth policy and strategy. Because the Prime Minister's cabinet has assigned the Youth Department to formulate a youth-focused national guideline, efforts have been made towards the creation of a national youth council or a national authority on youth (Wallquist 2002). A national youth policy is expected to be formulated by the end of 2009, with the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) as one of the driving forces supporting the Department of Youth. This report and other available youth-focused reports are expected to contribute to the development of such a national policy.

Several legislative frameworks lend guidance to the formulation of a national policy and reinforce the need for youth participation in all social, economic and political activities. Article 34 of Cambodia's Constitution, for example, provides that Khmer citizens of either sex who are at least 18 years old shall enjoy the right to vote and to stand as candidates for election if they are at least 25 years old. Article 31 also states that the Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognise and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women's, and children's rights. Section 8 on Women and Child Labour of the Labour law of Cambodia further provides a legal framework for the protection of young workers and youth. However, ministerial orders are needed to tighten provisions, specifically on the different types of work that are hazardous and prohibited for children, the special conditions for apprenticeship, special dispensations for work by children, and allowable light work.



Cambodia also has a national policy on migration. Contained in the *Sub-decree 57 on Sending Khmer Migrants to Work Abroad*, this policy document provides guidelines to recruitment agencies on how to recruit and send Cambodians for overseas work. Only 5 out of 22 articles, however, explicitly or implicitly refer to the worker, reflecting broad provisions that are open to interpretation and amount to little protection for employees (Lee, n.d.).

### 3.2.1 GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES' YOUTH-RELATED POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

#### A. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport

MoEYS takes the lead in fulfilling the Government's Education for All (EFA) National Plan 2003-2015 "to ensure that all Cambodia's children, youth and adults have equitable access to formal and non-formal basic education" (MoEYS 2002). EFA has six core goals, representing strategies that seek to address gender and poverty-linked disparities, (MoEYS 2003a):

- Ensure that, by 2015, all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
- Ensure that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes.
- Achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic continuing education for all adults.
- Eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality.
- Expand and improve comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
- Improve all aspects of the quality of education and ensure the excellence of all, so that recognised and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

MoEYS' Education Strategic Plan (ESP) and Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) support the implementation of the EFA. Policy objectives of the medium term ESP/ ESSP focus on assuring equitable access to basic and post basic education; enabling quality and efficiency improvement; and capacity building for decentralisation. The ESP aims at developing an inclusive, easily accessible, and high quality service that is available to all, as a means of enabling economic growth, improved employment prospects and income-generating opportunities. It also views education as necessary to realising improved family health and nutrition, and family planning. The ESSP, on the other hand prioritises programme strategies and activities focused on the long-term goal of achieving Education for All by 2015 (MoEYS, 2003b), particularly in reaching equitable access to nine years of quality basic education by 2010 and in responding to critical capacity building needs. A basic principle it adopts is that programmes are planned and implemented through governmental and ministry systems to strengthen appropriate MoEYS directorates and departments at central and provincial levels.

<sup>7</sup> The Labour Law passed in October 1998, mainly provides for a standard legal working week of 48 hours, not to exceed eight hours per day. It also stipulates time-and-a-half for overtime, and double time if overtime occurs at night, on Sunday, or on a holiday. The minimum allowable age for a salaried position is set at 15 years or at 18 years for anyone engaged in work that may be hazardous, unhealthy, or unsafe.

The Government devotes sizable resources to education, especially for primary and lower secondary education. As a result, MoEYS investment in school facilities and instruction materials over the past several years has contributed to notable improvements, in both literacy and primary school matriculation. However, the quality of schools varies widely across regions (CSES, 2004). Moreover, as primary school becomes the norm throughout Cambodia, demand for more advanced education will increase, creating twin pressures for improved quality at the primary school level and expanded opportunities at secondary school and beyond.

#### B. Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training

The government agency mainly responsible for labour issues and youth employment is the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT). Its strategic framework is centred on institutional and capability building, development of national policy and legislation, and the enforcement of sectoral programmes on labour. In operationalizing the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP), MoLVT training strategically focuses on four main areas: (1) job creation; (2) improved working conditions; (3) implementation of social safety nets for labour law; and (4) human resource development (MoLVT 2008).

Through MoLVT, the Government has paid a considerable amount of attention over the years to the enforcement of labour legislation that applies to the formal economy. For instance, the number of inspections and registrations of employer and employee organizations has increased. The RGC also established a Labour Advisory Committee and an Arbitration Council in accordance with the labour law. MoLVT also ensures the enforcement of the fundamental ILO conventions that the Cambodian Government has ratified. In partnership with the ILO, it has paid special attention to the child labour problem in Cambodia and is the lead Ministry in the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Worst Forms of Labour in Cambodia.

The Law on Social Security Schemes for Persons Defined by the provisions of the Labour Law, passed in September 2002, entitles workers and employees in the private sector to be given compensation for old age, disability and survivors' benefits, as well as workmen's compensation. The law has been promulgated but is yet to be implemented since it requires a sub-decree on the National Social Security Fund (NSSF), which now appears to have been passed on to the Council of Ministers (CoM) for consideration (Tola 2006).

#### C. Ministry of Health

In the fourth legislature of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Ministry of Health (MoH) – together with line ministries and their development partners – is charged with improving the country's health by enhancing health services, especially reproductive, maternal and infant and child health services. The core strategies as reflected in its 2008-2015 Health Strategic Plan are: (i) further improve coverage and access to health services; (ii) strengthen the delivery of quality basic health services; (iii) strengthen the delivery of quality care; (iv) improve the attitudes of health providers sector-wide to become more responsive; (v) develop a culture of quality in public health and service delivery and their management; (vi) increase the number of midwives; (vii)

<sup>a</sup> Descriptions of specific programmes relating to youth are found in Chapter 4, Youth and Education.

ensure regular and adequate flow of funds to the health sector; and (viii) organizational and management reform of structures, systems and procedures in the oH are to respond effectively to change.

The RGC, through the MoH, also developed and adopted a number of laws and health policies designed to benefit youth. These include the abortion law, the law against drug abuse, the national policy on safe motherhood, the national policy on birth spacing, the national policy on STI and HIV and AIDS, the national policy on primary health care, a national strategic plan for a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS, and a national reproductive health programme. While these laws and broad programmes contain general provisions that do not necessarily mention youth, they are also expected to benefit this population. One that clearly targets youth is the National Strategic Plan for Reproductive and Sexual Health 2008-2012, which aims to attain a better quality of life for all women and men and adolescents by providing effective and appropriate sexual and reproductive health programmes. More recently, in the MoH's 2008-2015 Health Strategic Plan, a cited programme priority area relates to adolescent/youth health under the Plan's Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health focus area.

The MoH works in close collaboration with line ministries and development partners to realise its Health Strategic Plan:

- *For planning and financing* with the Ministries of Planning (MoP) and Economy and Finance (MEF)
- *For maternal and child health* with MoEYS; MLVT and the ministries of Women's Affairs; Social and Veterans' Affairs; Information; and Rural Development
- *For environmental health and the control of important infectious diseases such as malaria and HIV* with MoEYS; and the ministries of Information; Interior; Defence; Environment; Industry, Mines and Energy; Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Culture and Religious Affairs; Tourism; and Rural Development, including the National AIDS Authority.
- *For advocacy and other work on issues* (e.g., controlling the marketing of breast milk substitutes, and tobacco-related and other legislation, taxation and revenue implications) with the Ministry of Interior, particularly local authorities, and the ministries of Information and Commerce.

#### **D. Ministry of Interior**

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) enforces laws through its police power at the provincial, district and commune levels in each of the country's 24 provinces and municipalities. Within the MoI are several programmes and activities that directly and indirectly respond to youth-related concerns. Its Anti-Drug Department, for instance, has responsibility for gathering all information that can facilitate the detection and prevention of the illicit trafficking of drugs, and for coordinating all domestic and international operations to suppressing the illicit trafficking of drugs. Operating directly under the Commissariat General of the National Police, the Department has nine offices and 24 provincial units. Lending support to this unit in the MoI is the Secretariat of the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD), which also resides the Ministry. In September 2005, NACD published its Five-Year National Plan on Drugs Control (NPDC) 2005-2010, which aims to minimize drug-related harm to individuals, families and society. A structure for implementation, monitoring

and reviewing this plan is in place and includes opportunities for agencies, including NGOs, to work with the Committees overseeing the strategy. The NPDC 2005-2010 has identified youth as a 'high risk' group.

The Mol is also tasked with the prevention, investigation, and suppression of trafficking in the country and works with local authorities, the military police, the border police and international authorities in raising awareness of relevant trafficking laws and in providing training to specialized police officers. Consequently, within Mol is found the Department of Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection (DAHTJP), which has the mandate to prevent and enforce measures against sexual exploitation, human trafficking, rape and immoral acts. Its structure comprises a central level office and five operational bureaus, one of which works on Juvenile Protection. It presently has an awareness-raising programme on trafficking that is being carried out in schools in Phnom Penh.

Another critical programme over which the Mol has the key implementing role, and which impacts upon youth, is the country's Decentralisation and Deconcentration programme. Led by the Department of Local Administration (DOLA), this programme derives its mandate from the Strategic Framework for Decentralisation and Deconcentration Reforms of the RGC and the April 2008 Organic Law. The Organic Law is "to provide a coherent legal foundation for democratic sub-national governance based on the principles of democratic representation, participation, public sector accountability and effectiveness, and poverty reduction" and shall detail the roles, functions and responsibilities of national, provincial/ municipal, district and commune levels of the government. It is through this important programme that the participation of youth can be made visible, if they are mobilized and encouraged to express their voices through the governance structures that have been and are being set in place.

#### **E. Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation**

MoSVY implements, manages and leads programmes that relate to the protection and rehabilitation of vulnerable groups of Cambodian society, including victims of trafficking, particularly children and women, street children, orphaned children, persons with a disability, drug abusing children and adults, those who violate the law, and children and women affected by HIV or AIDS. Within the Ministry, a Directorate of Technical Affairs provides oversight for policy, planning and programming on Child Welfare, Alternative Care and Child Protection. It chairs the National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Multi-sectoral Task Force (NOVCTF) and coordinates the response to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) through its Directorate of Technical Affairs. The Directorate consists of: the (i) Department of Child Welfare; (ii) the Department of Youth Rehabilitation; (iii) the Department of Social Welfare; and the (iv) Department of Rehabilitation.

The Department of Child Welfare is responsible for 20 State orphanages in 17 provinces and cities and regulates all NGO-run residential alternative care services. In 2006, the Ministry adopted the Policy on Alternative Care for Children and the Minimum Standards of Care for Children in Residential Care. It is in the process of developing Minimum Standards of community/family-based care to promote quality care in pagodas and group homes, kinship care and foster care. It also

<sup>9</sup> NGO Statement to the 2006 Consultative Group Meeting on Cambodia, Phnom Penh: NGO Forum on Cambodia, March 2006, p.8

<sup>10</sup> Parts of this description on MoSVY have been taken from NOVCTF's Orphans, Children Affected by HIV and Other Vulnerable Children in Cambodia: A Situation and Response Assessment (June 2008) and MoT's 2006 Training Manual on Child Safe Tourism.



links up with NGO efforts in community-based care, so that both Government and development partners strengthen community-based support structures that are culturally appropriate and effective in meeting the basic needs of OVC. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Ministry operates a Child Protection Network (CPN) in selected communes in six districts of Prey Veng and Svay Rieng provinces. The CPN has a community-based, multi-disciplinary approach to child protection with a strong focus on child rights and child participation, and has coordination meetings at the commune and provincial levels, in which children and local authorities participate.

MoSVY also plays a critical role in the fight against trafficking in women and children through an anti-human trafficking office under its Department of Social Welfare. In 2005, the Ministry implemented a project on the rehabilitation, reintegration, and follow up of 1,858 victims. The activities have included: (i) repatriation and reintegration of Cambodian children and women victims from Thailand to Cambodia; (ii) receiving Cambodian children and women from Thailand; (iii) repatriation of 10 Vietnamese victims from Cambodia to Viet Nam (also under the support of a government budget); (iv) receiving and reintegration of street children affected by trafficking and begging from Viet Nam; (v) cooperating with other NGOs to tap into their (a) vocational training centres, (b) healthcare centres, (c) counselling, employment placements and (d) reintegration and rehabilitation services to women and children affected by sexual abuse. MoSVY continues to implement reintegration and follow-up on the living conditions of its clients in communities to ensure that they all receive support and improve their living conditions, and to raise awareness of its work. It currently has a transit centre in Poipet supervised by MoSVY's Anti-Trafficking and Reintegration Office (ATRO). ATRO's Child Protection Border Team intercepts, interviews, and refers unaccompanied children deported by Thai police, referring them to the Poipet Transit Centre for assistance by NGOs. It also provides temporary accommodation to children and women victims who are repatriated from Thailand to Cambodia.

MoSVY has been working with the Child Safe Tourism project of the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) since August 2005. One of its key activities was a 2005 study on tourism business establishments (hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and other tourism establishments) and their workers in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Sihanoukville. Information gathering was, however, limited to legitimate (registered) establishments and focused on employer-employee relationships characterised by regular wages.

#### F. Ministry of Tourism

Policies and programmes that impact upon Cambodia's youth at MoT largely relate to its ongoing Child Safe Tourism Programme, which targets children under 18 years of age. It is intended to address the negative effects of tourism growth and development in the country through prevention and protection measures in tourism areas/communities. The programme has two objectives: to increase knowledge and understanding of sexual exploitation of children arising from tourism; and to improve child sex tourism prevention and protection measures in tourism establishments and services in targeted tourism hubs. This initiative is being implemented done through the Child Safe Tourism Commission, which was established through a ministerial order (Prakas) comprising of senior officers and officials of the Ministry. The programme is being undertaken in collaboration with MoSVY, MoLVT and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), as well as travel agencies, trade unions and employers' associations.

## G. Ministry of Women's Affairs

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) is the national machinery for promoting the status of women, including girls and young women. The Ministry published its first Five Year Strategic Plan, Neary Rattanak I (Women are Precious Gems), in February 1999, its 2005-2009 Neary Rattanak II in 2004 and has been recently finalising its 2008-2013 Five Year Strategic Plan or Neary Rattanak III. The strategic plans have formed part of Cambodia's national development plans, such as the second national socio-economic development plan, the Rectangular Strategy of 2004 and the 2006 National Strategic Development Plan. They have focused on: (i) enhancing the participation of women in economic development, especially in micro and small enterprises; (ii) the right to legal protection to enable women to avoid domestic violence, trafficking, rape and all other forms of violence; (iii) women's and girls' right to healthcare to address serious problems such as maternal and infant mortality, nutritional issues and HIV and AIDS; (iv) women's and girls' right to education, literacy and skills training; and (v) the substantive participation of women at all levels in the institutions of governance.

The Ministry has been implementing two *Laws to provide legal protection* to women and young people. The Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Victim Protection was ratified by the National Assembly in 2005, while the *Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation* was passed in 2008. A Technical Working Group led by MoWA has been established for the purpose of working on anti human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation under a MoU with neighbouring countries. In 2008, MoWA also commenced the development of a 'Toolkit for Working with the Young to Address Gender-Based Violence'. The goals of this toolkit for young people are to: (i) raise awareness and understanding of gender and rights issues; (ii) promote a commitment to rights and individual responsibilities; (iii) help youth gain confidence and self protective skills; (iv) encourage young people to critically analyse the world in which they live; and (v) apply the learning to their own relationships and lives to contribute to the reduction of violence in the future. Additionally, MoWA has paid attention to gender roles in the national education curriculum, although violence against women is not specifically addressed. In 2008, with technical assistance and support from the German Development Cooperation, UNFPA and UNIFEM, MoWA piloted awareness-raising initiatives in schools through forums on gender-based violence for young people. The initiative has been very well received by youths, and the Ministry is looking to further enhance and extend relevant activities nationwide.

MoWA is also committed to work towards the economic development of women, especially the young and vulnerable, through various activities. Working skills provision and access to social services are the main emphases in this area. Young and vulnerable women who work in garment factories and in rural areas generally benefit from related programmes. MoWA is also working towards defending the right of female employees through advocacy and policy interventions. It has similarly paid particular attention to the promotion of health among vulnerable women, youths and children. For instance, a range of activities have been implemented in collaboration with MoH and its NGO partners. The Ministry likewise works in partnership with MoEYS to improve women and girls' access to education. The programme mainly focuses on female youth, particularly in improving their access to secondary education. Scholarships for the poor and additional training programmes for young women have been increasingly provided.

### 3.2.2 DONOR-ASSISTED PROGRAMMES

Programmes to support youth inclusion and to mainstream them in development efforts have also become the focus of various donors through overseas development assistance (ODA), with some sectors and sub-sectors receiving greater attention than others (Table 3-1).

The education sector, in the area of promotion youth access to education, for example, has received significant interest from major donors and development institutions. Approximately 14 major international or multilateral donors are involved in this sector at any given point, with total donor assistance exceeding one quarter of a billion US dollars as of September 2006. The health sector has similarly attracted attention in relation to areas that impact on the youth, among which are: sexual and reproductive health, including HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STI); tobacco, alcohol and drug use; primary health care; and accidents, injuries and suicide prevention. Interest and support has also grown for skills-building for livelihoods and income earning among youth as labour market programmes supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and other donors gain momentum. Similarly, youth-focused assistance has become visible in the areas of gender, governance and administration, and community and social welfare. Greater efforts and funding support are needed, however, to benefit youth, as most ODA projects on different sectors and sub-sectors tend to indicate general populations rather than targeting Cambodia's young population.

*Table 3-1. Youth-specific ODA projects, by sector, subsector and status<sup>a/</sup>*

#	Donor	Official Title	Programme Number	Start Date	Completion Date	Budget	Project Status
Health sector (8 projects)							
1	EU/EC	Rural Cambodian Youth Sexual Reproductive Health (RCYSRH)	SANTE/2006/100443	1-Aug-2006	20-Mar-2009	1,485,000 EUR	On-going
2	EU/EC	Prevention of road traffic injuries in Cambodia	ONG-PVD/2006/119595	1-Jan-2007	1-Jan-2010	737,019 EUR	On-going
3	UNFPA	Increased Awareness & Empowerment of Pop. Women & Youth	CMB3R33	1-Jan-2008	31-Dec-2010	3,528,860 USD	On-going
4	UNFPA	Increased Awareness of Women, Men & Youth about RH	CMB3R54	1-Jan-2008	31-Dec-2010	3,018,352 USD	On-going
5	Japan	The Project for Improving Maternal and Child Health Services in Prey Veng Operational District		28-Feb-2008	27-Feb-2009	172,413 USD	On-going
6	Japan	The Project for Improving Maternal and Child Health Service in Rural Area		21-Dec-2006	20-Dec-2009	137,062,000 JPY	On-going
7	WFP	Support for Mother-and-Child Health	10170.2	1-Jan-2008	31-Dec-2010	10,061,052 USD	On-going
8	Belgium	Primary health services to mothers and children in Kg Speu	EMB4244	1-Jan-2003	31-Dec-2007		On-going

<sup>11</sup> Taken from The UN Secretary General's Database on Violence Against Women in <http://webapps01.un.org/vaw/country/ndaction?countryId=297>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

#### Education sector (9 projects)

1	EU/EC	Improving Livelihoods of Young Cambodians in Difficult Circumstances through Prevention and Sustainable Social Reintegration (Skills & knowledge provision)	ONG-PVD/2005/ 95812	1-Jan-2006	31-Dec-2011	1,262,814 EUR	On-going
2	EU/EC	Improving Access to Quality Primary Education for Cambodian Street and Out-of-School Children, Cambodge	ONG-PVD/2006/118613	1-Jan-2007	31-Dec-2011	750,000 EUR	On-going
3	Nether-lands	Basic Education and Vocational Training for Young Detainees	PKP/KH/5/07	1-Sep-2007	31-Aug-2008	6,548 USD	On-going
4	Japan	Project for Empowering Adolescents in Koh Kong Province, the Kingdom of Cambodia		6-Dec-2007	5-Dec-2008	210,835 USD	On-going
5	Spain	Vocational training and labour integration of the indigenous youth in Ratanakiri	0751	21-Nov-2007	12-May-2009	298,878 EUR	On-going
6	UNFPA	Increased Awareness of Women, Men & Youth about RH	CMB3R54	1-Jan-2008	31-Dec-2010	3,018,352 USD	On-going
7	EU/EC	Child Friendly School Development (CFSD) Project Cambodia	ONG-PVD/2006/119209	1-Jan-2007	31-Dec-2011	750,000 EUR	On-going
8	EU/EC	Improving Access to Quality Primary Education for Cambodian Street and Out-of-School Children, Cambodge	ONG-PVD/2006/118613	1-Jan-2007	31-Dec-2011	750,000 EUR	On-going
9	Nether-lands	Women Living with Children in Prison	PKP/KH/7/07	1-Nov-2007	31-Oct-2008	13,200 USD	On-going

#### Community and Social Welfare sector (6 projects)

1	ILO	Support to Cambodian National Plan of Action on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour	CMB/04/P51/USA	30-Sep-2004	30-Apr-2009	4,750,000 USD	On-going
2	Australia	SCA Child Protection Implementation - NGO Cooperation Agreements	37919	1-Jan-2007	30-Jun-2009	1,034,643 AUD	On-going
3	Australia	World Vision Child Protection Implementation - NGO Cooperation Agreements	37923	2-Oct-2006	30-Jun-2009	1,032,611 AUD	On-going
4	Finland	Prevention of trafficking in women and children	72801602	1-Jan-2000	31-Dec-2009	3,447,644 EUR	On-going
5	UNICEF	Country Programme Action Plan 2006-2010, Child Protection Programme	YS304	1-Jan-2006	31-Dec-2010	15,977,160 USD	On-going
6	Australia	SCA Child Protection Implementation - NGO Cooperation Agreements	37919	1-Jan-2007	30-Jun-2009	1,034,643 AUD	On-going



## HIV and AIDS sector (6 projects)

1	UK	Empowering Community Participation in Advocating Vulnerable Children's Rights	CSCF 436/ MIS Code 144683012	1-Jun-2008	30-May-2013	463,336 GBP	On-going
2	UNESCO	"Love and Relationship" Film Festival Addressing Perceptions of Gender and Raising Awareness of HIV	406GLO0082.4	1-Nov-2008	31-Dec-2009	25,948 USD	On-going
3	UNFPA	Increased Awareness & Empowerment of Pop. Women & Youth	CMB3R33	1-Jan-2008	31-Dec-2010	3,528,860 USD	On-going
4	UNFPA	Increased Awareness of Women, Men & Youth about RH	CMB3R54	1-Jan-2008	31-Dec-2010	3,018,352 USD	On-going
5	EU/EC	Increasing the Relevance and Effectiveness of HIV and AIDS Prevention and Care among Youths Through a Cambodia-Thailand Partnership	SANTE/2003/ 45809	1-Feb-2004	31-Dec-2007	2,420,269 EUR	On-going
6	USA	Improved Health Services in HIV and AIDS and Infectious Diseases as well as in Maternal, Child and Reproductive Health	442-009	1-Sep-2002	30-Sep-2011	247,418,852 USD	On-going

## Water and Sanitation sector (1 project)

1	UNICEF	Country Programme Action Plan 2006-2010, Seth Koma (Community Action for Child Rights) Programme	SK301	1-Jan-2006	31-Dec-2010	15,877,600 USD	On-going
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## Gender sector (1 project)

1	EU/EC	Utilising the Buddhist monks and school students to prevent sexual abuse and child labour	DDH/2006/128535	9-Jun-2006	8-Dec-2008	99,973 EUR	On-going
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## Governance &amp; Administration (8 projects)

1	EU/EC	Promote human rights to reduce trafficking and sexual/labour exploitation of women and children	DDH/2005/113980	22-Dec-2005	22-Jun-2008	51,103 EUR	On-going
2	EU/EC	The ChildSafe Network Project	EIDHR/2008/164770	18-Nov-2008	30-Jun-2012	150,000 EUR	On-going
3	EU/EC	Children's Legal Protection	DDH/2003/075495	29-Dec-2003	31-Dec-2007	1,141,000 EUR	On-going
4	EU/EC	Providing Legal Advocacy, Representation, and Education to Sustain Children Rights and Prevent Child-Related Crimes in Cambodia Justice System	DDH/2007/144489	5-Dec-2007	5-Dec-2010	99,999 EUR	On-going
5	UNFPA	Increased Awareness of Women, Men & Youth about RH	CMB3R54	1-Jan-2008	31-Dec-2010	3,018,352 USD	On-going
6	UNICEF	Country Programme Action Plan 2006-2010, Seth Koma (Community Action for Child Rights) Programme	SK301	1-Jan-2006	31-Dec-2010	15,877,600 USD	On-going
7	UK	Empowering Community Participation in Advocating Vulnerable Children's Rights	CSCF 436/ MIS Code 144683012	1-Jun-2008	30-May-2013	463,336 GBP	On-going
8	UK	Preventing Violence against Children in Cambodia	CSCF 452/ MIS Code 144683013	31-Jul-2008	30-Jun-2013	497,190 GBP	On-going

<sup>13</sup> Generated from ODA database of Cambodia in <http://cdc.kjmer.biz>

### 3.2.3 NGO PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH

The national programme mapping by NGOs and international organisations (IOs) working on youth promotion and protection activities is of importance to policy planning and intervention. Although MoEYS has been designated by the RGC to establish a National Youth Programme, there has been slow progress toward its formulation as the Ministry lacks technical and financial resources. At the Inter-ministerial level, cooperation and collaboration remain uncertain.

Youth employment is an issue of national consequence not only for its intrinsic importance but also because the lack of proper investment in youth schemes will prevent Cambodia from attaining its poverty reduction goals by 2015, as laid out in the targets of the CMDGs. The growing number of NGOs and IOs working in the area of youth development primarily compensates for the absence of a National Youth Programme. The present analysis mapped NGO and IO work drawing upon the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia's inventory of all NGOs and IOs working on youth concerns. Difficulties were encountered, however, in defining the organizations' programme provinces because of a lack of clarity regarding whether the reported initiatives were still being implemented.

To produce an aggregated picture of all programmes focused on youth, a Principle Components Analysis was run on existing data on programmes by province and area of intervention. This analysis generated a resulting factor score index from which a concentration index of 0 to 1 was produced, (Appendix A/ Annex 3-5 for details). The index reflects the density and concentration of programmes by areas of intervention and by province. Figure 3-1 presents a concentration index map of youth programmes in the country.

The major findings from the mapping of NGO and IO youth-related programmes were:

- NGO and IO programmes for youth tend to concentrate in areas that are easily accessible, with Kep, Stung Treng, Otdar Meanchey, Monduliri, Ratanakiri, Sihanoukville, Svay Rieng, Pailin, Preah Vihear and Pursat receiving less support. This suggests that while infrastructure has improved throughout the country in the past few years, many NGOs and IOs have not expanded their reach.

In the area of health (particularly sexual and reproductive health (SRH); HIV and AIDS and STI; primary healthcare and nutrition; and tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse), the least concentration of interventions occurs in Kep, Otdar Meanchey, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, Sihanoukville, Pailin, Kampong Chhnang, Monduliri, Svay Rieng, Preah Vihear, Kampot and Prey Veng. No NGOs or IOs work on SRH in Kep, Stung Treng, Sihanoukville and Kampong Chhnang. Efforts in SRH do not focus directly on youth.

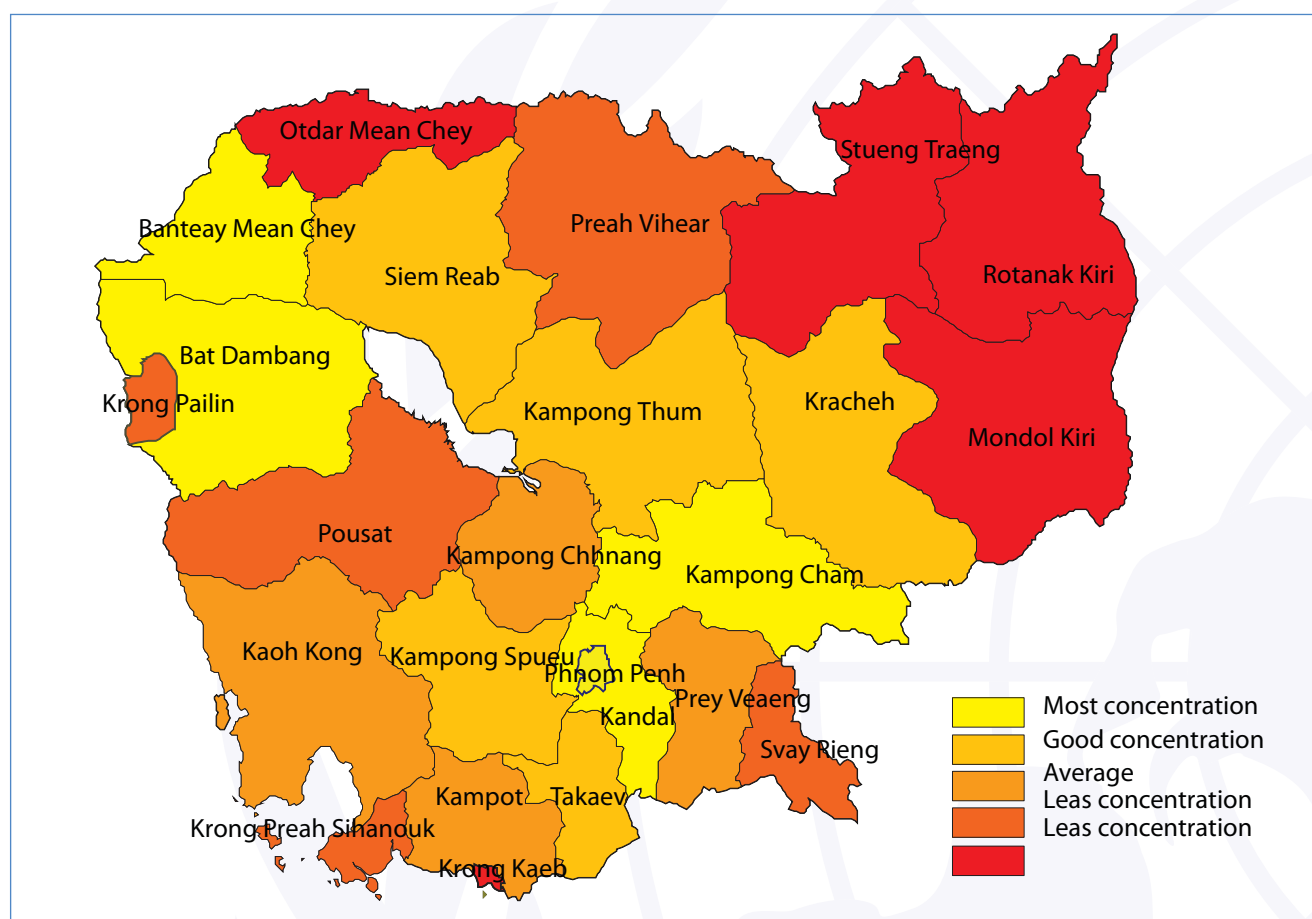
NGOs and IOs have invested resources in both preventative and curative care for those affected by HIV and AIDS and STI, to cover all provinces and towns in Cambodia. Programme concentration in this area has shown fruitful outcomes in the reduction of the incidence of HIV and STI by 2008. Most provinces and towns throughout the country also have primary healthcare and nutrition programmes or projects, except in Otdar Meanchey, suggesting that this province could have been unintentionally overlooked by the NGOs and IOs. This mapping could help promote increased intervention from development partners for more equitable distribution of programme and project resources across provinces.

<sup>14</sup> Directory of International Development Assistance in Cambodia 2005-06 and the Directory of Cambodian NGOs 2006-07

<sup>15</sup> Principle components analysis (PCA) is a tool of exploratory multivariate data analysis, especially when the intent is to gain an overview of and an insight into the relationships between a set of variables and evaluate units (e.g., programmes) with respect to those variables (The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Research Methods, volume 2, edited by Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman and Tim Futing Liao).

<sup>16</sup> Appendix A/ Annex 3-6 also presents the resulting indices in tabular form and Annex 3-7 presents this mapped out.

FIGURE 3-1. CONCENTRATION INDEX MAP OF YOUTH PROGRAMMES IN CAMBODIA



Tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse programmes are also being covered by NGOs and IOs in provinces and towns throughout Cambodia. This is because these issues have recently been highly publicised by donors and other development partners. The six variables concerning education for youth examined in this study were vocational/skills training, non-formal education, scholarship/fellowship, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education. Kep, Otdar Meanchey, Stung Treng, Svay Rieng, Preah Vihear, Mondulkiri, Ratanakiri, Pursat, Kampong Chhnang, Prey Veng and Koh Kong have a lower concentration of education programme interventions. This implies that these provinces and towns need more attention as a priority of future investment.

NGO and IO education programmes focus on primary rather than lower or upper secondary education. NGOs and IOs work to support primary education in almost all provinces and towns, except in Kep and Stung Treng provinces. The mapping activity did not find any NGO or IOs supporting secondary and tertiary education.

The highest dropout rate in Grades 1-6 is approximately 20 per cent (Koh Kong, Pursat, Ratanakiri, Pailin, Mondulkiri, Stung Treng, Preah Vihear, and Otdar Meanchey). School retention and re-entry initiatives in these provinces, especially, need to be a priority if Cambodia is to reach its education-related MDGs. The lack of NGO and IO initiatives in a number of the areas in highest need is an issue that needs to be better understood and addressed.

Vocational/skills training programmes are well covered by NGOs and IOs throughout the country's provinces and towns, and are an advantage, as investments on such programmes will help poor households acquire income-earning skills. These vocational/skills trainings are critically needed to prevent young people's migration to find jobs in the urban centres and in other countries.

One way to close the gender disparity gap in education is to provide scholarships or fellowships to female students. While scholarship and fellowship programmes have been covered throughout provinces and towns by NGOs and IOs, this effort needs to be continued and further expanded in order to scale-up the number of young beneficiaries in rural areas.

Civic engagement and citizenship, democracy, human rights and advocacy, combating child and sexual exploitation, protecting child rights and juvenile delinquency, and domestic violence/ gender-based violence are also well covered by NGOs and IOs in many parts of Cambodia. However, several provinces and municipalities, such as Krong Kep, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, Mondulhiri, Kratie, Krong Preah Sihanouk, Pursat and Kampong Speu, receive less attention with regard to these programme areas. Resources will need to be redirected to support programmes or projects in these provinces.

### 3.3 POLICY AND PROGRAMMING IMPLICATIONS

This chapter attempts to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing Government programmes and donor support to institute youth participation as a right in all social, economic, and political activities. Overall, governmental development programmes have youth as a focus in development programmes, although efforts tend to remain limited. In most cases, however, Cambodia's youth are not targeted and are simply assumed to be part of the larger populations that are expected to benefit from such programmes. This may be due in part to the lack of recognition of young people's critical roles in the advancement of society.

The Government has implemented many regulatory mechanisms and social safety nets towards creating an active youth labour force. Policies and programmes in accordance with these mechanisms, however, should address the long-term as well as the immediate problems of youth and employment. For the most part, emphasis should be placed on programmes and actions that will reduce unemployment and promote the integratability of youth as the most productive labour force and engine of growth for economic development.

The Decentralisation and Deconcentration framework, aligned with the four pillars of RGC's Rectangular Strategy: (good governance, including deepening democracy and participation; economic development; social transformation; and justice) has opened up opportunities for the participation of youth and marginalized groups. Under this framework the Commune Councils can be strengthened to become more effective service delivery protagonists and advocates for their local constituents. Including youths as members of the Commune Councils, and thus local authority decision-making, will begin to address some roadblocks that undermine their political participation.

Youth-related, gender-responsive policies have not received the attention they deserve. Gender equity issues affecting youth should be taken into account and be accorded high priority in future long-term and strategic planning by MoWA and related ministries. Research into gender gaps and gender-related and crosscutting issues pertaining to youth and all aspects of their human development should be examined in all sectors of development – economic, labour and employment, education, health, and social services – to inform policy



decisions and programming among government line ministries and departments.

The national mapping activity of NGO and IO work found that there are significant gaps in geographical coverage in terms of density and concentration of programme and project interventions. This suggests that despite important recent achievements in expanding the reach of improved transport and communication networks, more distant and remote areas continue to lag behind more accessible rural and urban areas, particularly with respect to health and education services. One reason for this is that NGOs and IOs may prefer to concentrate their efforts and resources in more accessible areas, since on a per unit cost basis, it is probably more efficient to serve densely populated areas. Such a trend could also be explained by Government policies that do not locate health posts and school facilities in remote areas where population is scattered. However, this will also depend on the objective of the intervention. If the overall objective is to reduce poverty among youth, then more interventions will have to be set in place in regions where young people are frequently vulnerable, particularly in relation to access to employment, education and health.

There appears to be a time lag between infrastructure development and the targeting of development interventions. Once road access to certain areas has been improved, for example, it takes time to plan a particular intervention and mobilize resources, implying a need for more forward-looking interventions that anticipate improved access. This in turn suggests the need for better information and coordination at appropriate levels of administration. The Government may need to take a more pro-active role in terms of encouraging NGOs and IOs to intervene in poorly served areas.

NGOs, IOs, and government agencies each have comparative advantages. For example, NGOs generally have an advantage in terms of their flexibility to target and contact hard-to-reach groups, while IOs may have an advantage in terms of resources and technical capacity. The Government often has an advantage in terms of the scope of information and coverage, access to information, and institutional mandates for action. Each of these development players needs to coordinate and consult with one another in order to most effectively provide complementary packages of inputs and services for youth. This is important in terms of poverty reduction, as poorly-served these areas tend to have higher poverty rates than many areas that have abundant interventions. Moreover, in light of increasing spending on health, subsidies would have an important impact on poverty reduction. In terms of targeting, education support interventions from NGOs and IOs tend to focus on primary education than on lower and higher secondary education. This seems appropriate now because there is a real need to ensure that more students enrol in and complete primary education, which in turn will stimulate more demand for lower secondary education.

If youth are to become an engine of growth for the country, much needs to be done to ensure that their participation in community development planning at the village, commune, municipal, and district levels is expanded. A mechanism to ensure youths' voices are heard in decision making and development planning at these levels should be enshrined in the National Youth Policy being formulated by the RGC. Capacity building for youth in development planning can start at the village level by fostering youth representation in the governance activities of the Village Development Councils, and not merely confining them to voting during election periods or contributing their labour in the building of community infrastructure. With support from NGOs and IOs, the same type of political involvement and capacity building should also be replicated at the commune, municipal, district and provincial levels, and by establishing a village development youth council or some form of formal youth organization at all levels. In this way, youth will be able to represent themselves in governance and be trained at an early age to participate in the development process, including running for elective positions in government. Creating village-level youth associations and incorporating them into commune, municipal, district and provincial levels can also be a big move towards







## IV YOUTH AND EDUCATION



*“MY PARENT ASKED...WHAT WOULD MY EDUCATION BE WORTH FOR SINCE IN OUR HOUSE WE HAVE NOTHING TO EAT?” – POOR YOUNG FEMALE, SIEM REAP PROVINCE*

Education is generally viewed as one of the most powerful weapons against poverty and vulnerability (Anand and Sen 1994; Sen 1999). It is also seen as a unique means for empowering marginal youth toward better prospects for enhancing their lives. Both theory and empirical evidence suggest that education is vital to economic growth and poverty reduction (World Bank 2007a).

In recent years, education in Cambodia has improved substantially. Enrolment rates have increased and socio-economic gaps have been gradually reduced in rural and urban areas, at the same time as significant improvements have been made in facilities and teaching materials. However, early school leaving remains a significant problem, and the poorest are most likely to leave school for jobs that trap them in a persistent cycle of poverty.

The availability of education is not the only issue; so is the quality of information. Schools that teach life skills, enhance civic engagement, provide for health education and link education with employment opportunities appear to have the most positive impact. This study argues for a more relevant education policy that is inclusive of vulnerable youth and caters to employment and labour market needs.

### 4.1 YOUTH EDUCATION-RELATED POLICIES AND SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

#### 4.1.1 REVIEW OF EDUCATION POLICY FOR YOUTHS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In recent years, the Government has made efforts to simultaneously improve the quality of education and minimize the inequality in access to education for young people, through the establishment of a realistic pro-poor national education plan. The Education for All (EFA) National Plan 2003-2015 aims to encourage equal education provision to young people. The Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) involves major reforms designed around 12 priority action programmes (PAPs). However, they are designed to address overall access, rather than specific gender imbalance in terms of access for girls. Significant outputs, strategies and priorities to address challenges in the education sector are explicitly articulated in the Education Strategic Plan (ESP), 2006-2010, which operationalizes the 2003-2015 National Plan on Education for All and reflects the CMDGs of ensuring access to nine-year basic education for Cambodian people (Box 4.1). This programme has made significant strides in realizing its major priorities of increasing the number of primary and lower secondary schools, expanding enrolment levels in lower secondary education (enabling the completion of basic education up to standard 9), and increasing literacy levels for 15-24 year olds.

#### BOX: 4.1 FOCUS OF ESSP 2006- 2010

*The ESSP lays out policy priorities that diverge from previous policy formulations for basic education in three main respects:*

- *increased emphasis on demand-side interventions*
- *greater importance placed on improving education quality*
- *stronger focus on lower secondary education*

These efforts notwithstanding, access to education is still geographically limited and is shaped by wealth status. Rural youth and other indigent populations of young people are still most likely to be excluded. Additionally, the quality of education still needs to be standardized to meet international criteria.

#### 4.1.2 EDUCATION EXPENDITURE AND SUPPORT

A critical factor in achieving poverty reduction through education and ensuring wider access has been a significantly increase in education's recurrent budget share in recent years. The increase has generally been seen to be more pro-poor and to some extent well distributed. Government spending on education doubled from the 1990s reaching 18.9 per cent in 2006. The World Bank (2006) suggests that this prioritized government spending has resulted in the balance of benefit accruing to the poor.

Due to MoEYS investment in school facilities and instructional materials over the past several years, a notable transformation has taken place in various levels of education. Systems performance, however, varies widely across regions in terms of quality, efficiency and coverage<sup>17</sup>. National data on education sector performance indicates that improvements in primary and secondary completion are still insufficient and that more effort is required to reach the target indicator by 2015. This poses a major challenge for Cambodia, especially in terms of maintaining the gains achieved at the younger grades while expanding capacity in the middle school years, for as primary school capacity increases, so too will demand at the secondary school level. Additionally, while expanded capacity is critical, so is assuring the quality of education.

On recognising the requirement for human capital in response to economic and social development, stakeholders have made major efforts and investment in education, and promoted access to education for young people (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1. Trends in education support from development partners to the sub-sector

Education Sector	2007	2008	2009	2010
	USD '000			
Non-Formal and General Education Development	26,020	36,299	26,877	20,746
Trained Educational Development on Technical, Higher Education and Scientific Research	6,837	6,235	5,596	2,933
Youth and Sport Development	2,749	2,651	331	331
Strengthening Good Governance	97	244	14	14
Education Service Management and Support	3,181	2,671	428	195
Other	5,721	11,053	1,286	540
Total Expenditure from Development Partners	44,605	59,153	34,514	24,760

Source: MoEYS 2008

<sup>17</sup> For CSES 2004, Cambodia was geographically divided into four major natural endowment zones: the 'Plains' area (Phnom Penh, Kandal, Kompong Cham, Svay Rieng, Prey veng and Takeo) Tonle Sap area, the coastal zone; and the plateau zone.



Approximately 14 major international and multilateral donors are involved in the education sector at any given time (Table 4-2). As of September 2006, total donor assistance to the sector exceeded US\$ 250 million. Support from major donors in 2006 increased by 58.6 per cent over the previous year

Table 4-2. Development partners in the education sector 2005, 2006

Donor	Amount reported a/ USD '000	2005	2006
AUF	3,115	345	382
ADB	44,670	9,613	14,865
Belgium	10,763	2,560	4,460
DFID	4,936	664	1,503
EC	28,681	3,174	8,787
France	20,061	2,421	2,196
JICA	17,439	1,981	4,342
Sida	1,315	70	152
UNICEF/Sida	53,824	6,423	6,033
UNESCO	974	203	191
UNFPA	10,102	1,233	993
USAID	9,679	3,300	3,000
World Bank	29,800	2,450	5,450
WFP	21,099	5,233	10,578
Total	256,458	39,670	62,932

Figures represent totals of multi-year projects, converted to US dollars at current exchanges rates  
Source: Cambodia Education Sector, Donor Performance Report 2005/2006, September 2006, p 14

#### BOX 4-2: CESSP- WORLD BANK-SUPPORTED PROJECT FOR GREATER ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

*The Bank's most recent Cambodian Education Sector Support Project [CESSP] is a specific investment loan that supports greater access to education services with a focus on poor and underserved communes. Key indicators of progress include student enrolment and progress improvements and increases in education quality, as measured by increases in net primary enrolment rates and improved student achievement scores in Khmer and mathematics for grades three, six and nine. CESSP consists of three components, operating from 2005 to 2010. Partner coordination with MOEYS, ADB, UNICEF, USAID, Belgium and several NGOs is regularly maintained. This is a standalone project, with ring-fenced financing managed by a PIU employing Bank-specified financial controls and reporting procedures.*

Source: Donor Performance Report 2005/2006

It is worth noting that most NGO- supported education interventions concentrate on major urban areas suggesting the benefits of education and improved access to it have not reached young people in rural and remote areas. Appendix A/ Annex 4-1 provides statistical data on the number of development partners and education projects by province.

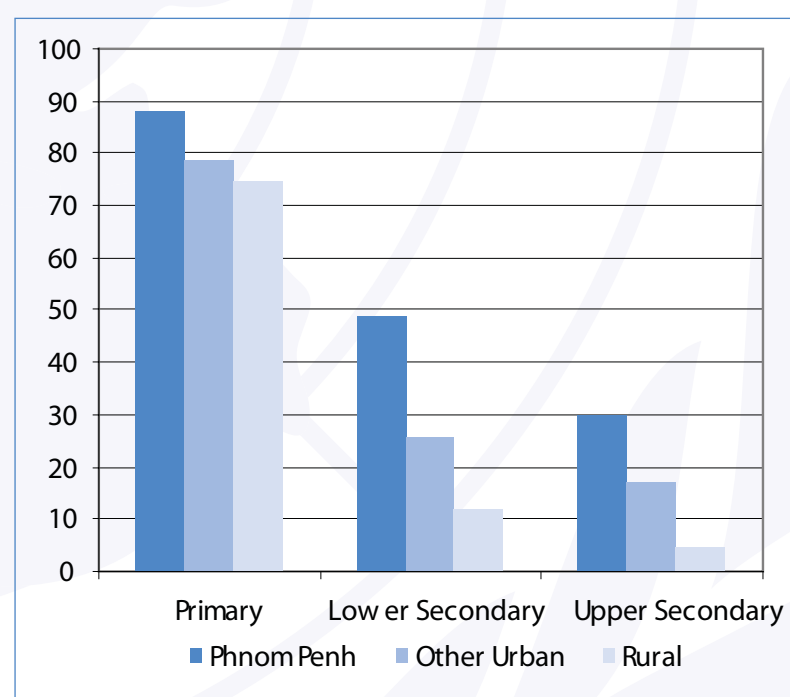
## 4.2 CURRENT SITUATION OF YOUTH AND EDUCATION: CHALLENGES, AND PERCEPTIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

### 4.2.1 EDUCATION ENROLMENT RATE

**Young people's access to primary and secondary education:** Enrolment has increased significantly in rural and urban areas, including Phnom Penh, during the last decade, resulting in considerably higher literacy rates among young people across gender and socio-economic groups, particularly at the primary level (Figure 4.1)<sup>18</sup>. A focus on primary and lower secondary education, backed with rising public spending and more pro-poor development interventions by the Government and stakeholders, has resulted in more schools and trained teachers, lower direct costs to households and, to some extent, improvement in education quality and increasing primary enrolment rates, which have risen particularly quickly for young women and men from the bottom quintile (World Bank 2006).

**Poor and marginal youth still face tremendously limited access to secondary education:** Newly constructed schools for poor young people and children have made access to primary schooling relatively equal, but considerable differences can be seen between lower and upper secondary schools. Findings from FGDs with youth and parent groups consistently suggest that, with the increased number of schools, most families are now able to send their children to primary school. CSES 2004 data substantiates this in its findings that the mean distance to the nearest primary school is 2.25 kilometres for those in the poorest quintile, which is comparable to other income strata. The same cannot be said for secondary education.

FIGURE 4-1. NET ENROLMENT RATE, BY EDUCATION LEVEL AND REGION



The average distance, for instance, to the nearest lower secondary school for the poorest household is 7.66 kilometres, which is more than twice the 3.09 kilometres for the wealthiest quintile (World Bank 2006). For upper secondary schools the differences are even greater: 16.9 kilometres and 7.3 kilometres for the poorest and wealthiest quintile villages, respectively. Additionally, few villages have any secondary school (fewer than 6 per cent, even for the wealthiest villages).

Distance is one of the main barriers to school attendance, especially for poor or indigent families in Ratanakiri and Siem Reap. FGDs with parent groups suggest that poor or female-headed households, in particular, are reluctant

to send their children to school or to let them continue their education to lower or upper secondary level, due to the time required and transportation costs.

<sup>18</sup> Cambodia's education structure consists of the following: Pre-school education lasts three years and caters to children aged 3-5. It is not compulsory. Primary education is for children aged 6-11. The primary education program Primary education lasts six years and is the first stage of basic education. General secondary education is divided into lower secondary and upper secondary school. Lower secondary is for Grades 7-9 and, in principle, compulsory for students aged 12-14. Upper secondary school is not compulsory and includes Grades 10-12. Post secondary education includes technical/vocational and higher education.

There are an estimated 7.6 primary schools for every secondary school. However, there appears to be a slow and steady increase in the availability of secondary schools (World Bank 2006). Compared with 1998, when 32 of Cambodia’s 183 districts did not have a lower secondary school and 81 did not have an upper secondary school, in 2004, only 14 districts were still without a lower secondary school and 45 districts lacked an upper secondary school (Figure 4-2).

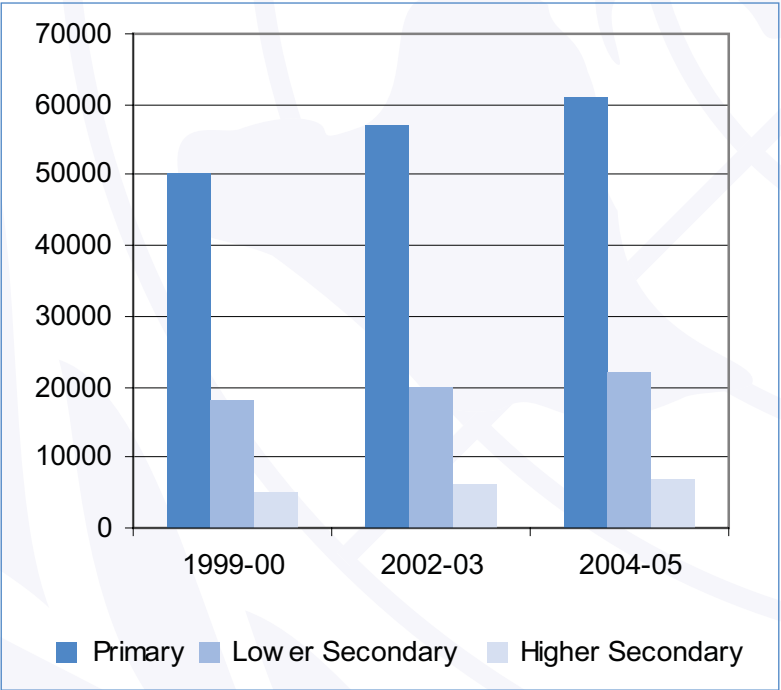
*Some poor, especially female, youths still miss out and are illiterate, mostly in rural and remote areas:* CSES 2004 indicates that Cambodia has high illiteracy rates among young people aged 15-24 (Figure 4-3). Additionally, evidence from the field study suggests that vulnerable youths are much more likely to be over-aged or late entrants to secondary school, due to factors including child labour or malnutrition (for example, in Ratanakiri and Poipet). Box 4.4 shows that the Education Sector Support Programme (ESSP) has a policy to achieve equitable access to education and enhance enrolment rates.

While the attention paid to formal education has appeared to have impact on reducing illiteracy, informal educational opportunities, such as those targeting adults and out-of-school youth, are also worthy of additional attention. There remains the significant challenge of creating gender balance in education.

Parents in Svay Rieng, Siem Reap, Poipet and Sihanoukville, for instance, reported that while they would like to send both their sons and daughters to school, they preferred to send sons, since their daughters were needed at home to perform chores.

Complementing the findings of a previous CDRI poverty study, the present field research found that investment in girls’ education could yield some of the highest returns of any investment, such as fostering more young female participation in development and welfare, and reducing some of the most pernicious effects of poverty. The World Bank Equity Report (2007b) also notes that educated girls and women are more likely to send their children to school and to keep them there longer, and are more receptive to the adoption of environmentally friendly technology.

FIGURE 4-2. NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BUILT FROM 1999 TO 2005



### BOX 4-3: POLITICAL STABILITY AND GRADUAL ECONOMIC GROWTH CONTRIBUTE TO AN INCREASED NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND MORE YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDING SCHOOL

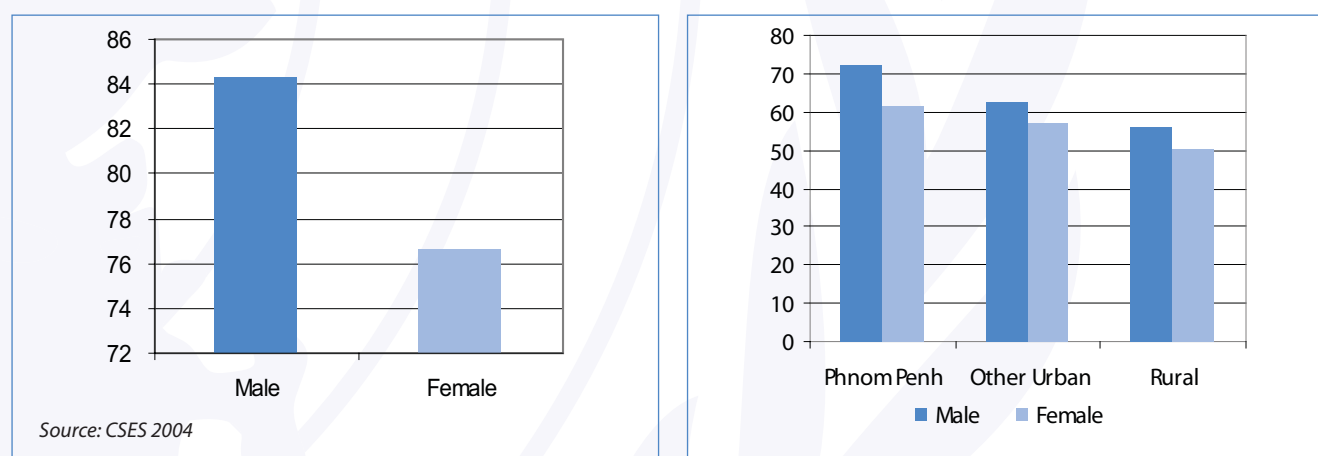
*Currently we have seen many more new schools built up everywhere even in some remote areas in our country and many more young people are able to be in school. More children in school mean more human resources for our country development. An important factor for this change is education from other sources to the parent in our community. People are now more alert and see the importance of sending their son or daughter to school. – FGD with male youth 20-24, Svahoul Village, Siem Reap)*

Parents now also have more intention to send their children to school with both and what is seen as a reasonable fee policy together with government subsidies - Scholarship for the poor.

*In our community, most parents now gradually change their mind and perceptions on their children's education. They tend to push their children more than before – and there are good schools and education is free even the poor could access– FGD in Kratie with male youth.*

Source: CDRI 2006b

FIGURE 4-3. INCREASES IN LITERACY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE AND IN-SCHOOL STUDENTS, BY GENDER AND LOCATION



### BOX 4-4: TO ACHIEVE THE POLICY OF EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EDUCATION SERVICES, MOEYS HAS EFFICIENTLY IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES INCLUDING:

- The abolition of unofficial contributions from parents.
- The provision of school operation budgets.
- The strengthening teaching and learning management.
- The provision core textbooks to students, free-of-charge.
- Continuous teacher development.
- Scholarships for poor students, especially girls, which is combined with re-entry and equivalency programmes for drop-out students.

Source: Education Sector Performance Report 2005



Table 4-2. Development partners in the education sector 2005, 2006

Donor	Amount reported a/	2005	2006
	USD '000		
AUF	3,115	345	382
ADB	44,670	9,613	14,865
Belgium	10,763	2,560	4,460
DFID	4,936	664	1,503
EC	28,681	3,174	8,787
France	20,061	2,421	2,196
JICA	17,439	1,981	4,342
Sida	1,315	70	152
UNICEF/Sida	53,824	6,423	6,033
UNESCO	974	203	191
UNFPA	10,102	1,233	993
USAID	9,679	3,300	3,000
World Bank	29,800	2,450	5,450
WFP	21,099	5,233	10,578
Total	256,458	39,670	62,932

Source: CSES 2004

#### 4.2.3 EARLY SCHOOL-LEAVING: A MAJOR BARRIER TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

One of the biggest problems cited in relation to education in Cambodia is high attrition rates<sup>19</sup> for Grades 1-9 (MoEYS 2008). The National Strategic Development Plan Progress Report for 2006 notes that “these unwanted trends arise from a high level of repetition and drop-out at these two levels.”<sup>20</sup> Because of this, MoEYS has focused on a large school facilities development programme to respond to incomplete primary schools and to bring educational service delivery opportunities closer to children’s homes. The school curriculum is also being revamped in order to improve the relevance of education, particularly in the area of life skills, and to discourage school dropout. School re-entry schemes are also being piloted on a small scale. Major reasons for leaving school early include (in descending order of importance): not wanting to be in school; having to help with household chores; having to contribute financially to the family; poor school performance; and distance to school.

#### 4.2.4 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO YOUTH SCHOOL DROPOUT: FIELD FINDINGS

Household factors: School attainment and learning are related to household income, birth order, and, importantly, the education level of parents – especially mothers.<sup>21</sup> Catastrophic family health problems, the loss of a parent, and other shocks or risks faced by families can also affect school attendance and progress. These factors, which are linked to HIV and AIDS, are increasingly disrupting children’s school participation.

<sup>19</sup> Survival rate in this context refers to the number of pupils who complete their education.

<sup>20</sup> Drop-out rate: the number of pupils who leave school before completing their education.

<sup>21</sup> Individual factors that are powerfully linked to school retention include aptitude, motivation, gender, the presence of physical or mental disabilities, and access to early childhood nutrition and stimulation programmes.

*My father got sick and died last year; after his death only my mother supported the whole family. She sold our remaining farmland to repay debt and buy food... we are now very difficult, my brother, sister and I could not go to school anymore... we have to work to support the family – Individual interview with a street youth, Poipet*

Although direct school-related household costs have been reduced since the introduction of the Priority Action Programme (PAP) in 2000, they remain substantial for poor and very poor households. The average Cambodian family includes 5.7 and 5.3 children in urban and rural areas, respectively,<sup>22</sup> so the cost of sending all five children to school is beyond the means of many families, as it could consume between 75 per cent and 100 per cent of their income, depending on their poverty status (World Bank 2006). Under these circumstances, difficult decisions are made about which children remain in school.

*I have three children. I usually spend around 3,500 riels to buy my children's score... but not knowledge for my children... Moreover if our children do not buy goods from their teacher at school, they are stared at when seen buying from others... the food corner at school is mostly full of teacher's goods... so we have to give a lot of money to our children to attend school... Over the past four or five years, there has been an increase in extra classes that students have to take to pass the exams... Before, students took extra classes only during their exam year, but now we have them even at primary level – FGD with mothers group, Svahoul Village, Siem Reap*

*Earning income is getting harder and harder but food and consumer goods are getting more and more expensive. Soon, we will hardly earn enough to buy enough rice to eat. We have to pay a lot of money for our kids' education and will less afford this in the future and we are even doubtful about their future prospects with education... – FGD with fathers' group, Ratanakiri*

It is not so important for children to have high education... all we want is just to let them be able to read, write and do some calculation... though they may have good education they still work as waiter or waitress... we are poor and to get work for children, we need social network so they may not need high education. FGD with mothers' group, Phnom Penh

In addition to tuition, there are additional school-related costs including uniforms, pocket money, transport and supplementary tutoring. In the face of tough financial decisions it is usually the males who remain in school:

*We prefer to support our sons to continue their education for as long as possible, despite our limited capacity, because we believe that our sons can do almost anything. They can work far away from home with less insecurity and can find higher positions than our daughters... the girls however, have at least some chance to work in a garment factory or at least to do housework, which cannot be done by the boys.... FGD with parent groups*

**Demand for child labour:** Children contribute about 28 per cent of total household income, according to the Child Labour Survey (CLS) of 2001. The majority of the interviewed youths reported that providing labour for household needs is a factor contributing to their dropping out of school. It also interferes with schooling by reducing the time available for school activities and diminishing school performance as a result of physical exhaustion.

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.moc.gov.kh/national\\_data\\_resource](http://www.moc.gov.kh/national_data_resource).

*Being born into a poor family pushes us to have very limited choices, we need to help our parents eke out a living which is why we have to quit our schooling at a very early age...we really regret that our student life is over...we do not expect to have better life with our current job since we know nothing... – FGD with males aged 20-24, Sangke Village, Svay Rieng*

*Because we are poor, our children quit school at an early age or after only one or two years to help the family earn extra money for living... Living in poverty without good knowledge results in our kids remaining shortsighted and powerless... – FGD with fathers' group, Svahoul Village, Siem Reap*

Forms of child labour across all six study areas included income-earning for subsistence-oriented productive or trading activities, and household productive tasks (e.g., caring for younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, getting water), many of which are necessary in order to free parents to work, which may include prolonged absences elsewhere in Cambodia or in Thailand. Children may also follow their parents when they migrate for work. Many youths reported that it is essential for them to work to reduce the vulnerability of their individual families. These issues were frequently reflected in focus group comments:

*When we were in school we had high hopes that in the near future we would find a very good job with good pay because of our precious knowledge. But now everything has changed because we had to leave school and come to work here to help our parents and family... – FGD with female youth 20-24, Poi Pet, Banteay Meanchey*

*We are not happy that we did not have a chance to stay long in school. It is difficult for those who have little knowledge to make money. For example, if we cannot read or write we cannot work in jobs such as in garment factories; we totally lose hope and do not know what else to do besides rice farming and selling our labour... – FGD with female youth 20-24, Cheung Kor village, Sihanoukville*

**Girls' Employment:** According to the 2001 CLS, 87 per cent of girls aged 15-17 were working at the time of the survey, compared to 81 per cent of boys (Understanding Children's Work, 2006). From age 12, household work is significantly more likely to interfere with girls' education than boys'. Children who work more than 14 hours a week – who are more likely to be poor, rural and female – start to fall behind in grade attainment compared to their peers who only attend school (Ragatz 2005).

Discussions across the six study provinces among youth aged 15-19 and 20-24 years yielded similar and consistent responses to the effect that females were more likely to be engaged in both productive and domestic work than the males. They strongly argued that girls seem to have more demanding work than the boys. The burden of housework and productive work is a particular problem for rural households.

*In principle, men and women have equal rights to education; but families hardly decide in favour of their daughter's education when school is far away from home... Many households here are still poor and both men and women have to work... the young women need to work hard to sustain the livelihood of the family... – FGD with mothers' group, Ratanakiri*

*We really want to pursue our education just like other girls from rich families, but it seems totally impossible since our family is very poor and need our support in making money. We at least have to help our family with housework such as caring for our little brother or sister or looking after the animals...those who have a good education can find a good job in garment factories in Phnom Penh...It is difficult for us even to go to search for work since we can hardly read or write... – FGD with female youth (age 20-24), Sangke Village, Svay Rieng*

Field observations also suggest that young women drop out of school to migrate for work to supplement family income. Many young people and youths seek employment in urban Poipet. Information gathered reveals, however, that only a small proportion of them get decent jobs, while large numbers work under difficult and vulnerable conditions.

To reduce the direct costs of education and to mitigate the loss of income due to time spent at school, MoEYS has launched a significant initiative to provide targeted 'scholarships' to encourage poor children – particularly girls – to remain in school (Box 4-5).

#### BOX 4-5: INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE GIRLS' DROP OUT RATE

*To address high drop out and illiteracy rates of girls and women, MoWA has focused on non-formal education, including literacy, childcare and vocational training for women. MoWA also promotes equal participation by girls and boys in primary and secondary schools, and schooling for more female students at all levels. MoWA has worked with MoEYS in the development of textbooks, and with MoSVY in preparing training courses at Women in Development Centers, and proposed dormitories for girls.*

Source: Education Sector Performance Report 2005

**Physical factors:** A range of community factors also impact on student retention rates, including the availability of roads, public transport, water, and electricity, which affect the cost of making education accessible to all children.

*Physical infrastructure in the village, including schools, pagodas and roads, has been slightly improved over the past two or three years. Its impact on the improvement of the villagers' livelihood is doubtful – Male youth group, Svahoul Village, Siem Reap*

*No ethnic female young in the village has completed secondary level...sometimes they are not able to attend the class because the school is located far away from home and the road is bad...More girls give up their schooling than boys because the school is far away from home and they fear for their security...we want more schools built in our province – FGD with female youth (age 20-24) Ratanakiri*

**Quality of education:** Discussions with stakeholders and FGD for this study consistently suggested that the quality of education currently provided falls short of acceptable standards, particularly in rural areas such as Ratanakiri, Banteay Meanchey. Poor quality in education results from scarce resources, insufficiently trained teachers and principals, inadequate professional development opportunities, and weak local capacity to take responsibility for school improvements at facility, district and provincial levels. Teacher quality and attendance at schools are indispensable elements for student achievement.

*We are not angry that the teacher does not come to teach regularly or that they take some money from the students in classes. We always acknowledge that the teacher has a very low salary...how can they live with this...it is not enough...the teachers have to travel far, they need to spend on gasoline, and now everything is so expensive...so they have to do this... – FGD with female youth (15-19), Ratanakiri*

Expanding access without ensuring minimally adequate quality is a formula for low efficiency in education, which possibly leads to high grade repetition and large numbers of students dropping out before completing basic education (World Bank 2006).



#### 4.2.5 THE LACK OF QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF EDUCATION PUTS CAMBODIA AT AN ONGOING DISADVANTAGE

Low retention and high dropout rates increase the vulnerability of young people in rural areas and continue to put the nation at a comparable disadvantage. Those who leave school early tend to work for subsistence-level pay and in unskilled jobs. Moreover, they are unlikely to access new work opportunities that will demand skilled workers in either rural and urban areas, as has recently been reported by the MoLVT.

Limitations in human capital are fundamentally inadequate for sustained economic growth, stable democratic institutions and poverty reduction in Cambodia. Poverty, economic shocks, and schooling quality force many young people to leave school without acquiring the basic skills they need for work and life. Allowing these youths to remain illiterate or semi-literate and unskilled throughout their lives is costly to them, their families and to the nation as a whole.

The provision of education is one of the best options to link youth to decent employment opportunities, lift their future livelihoods and reduce their vulnerability. To include and reintegrate early school-leavers, MoEYS now operates adult literacy programmes that teach not only reading, writing and arithmetic, but also job and life skills relevant to local contexts (ESSP 2006) (Box 4-6). The balance and sequencing of education policies across the three dimensions – post primary education opportunities, tools to enhance education decision making, and second-chance education options – as well as prioritization among them (basic skills rather than post-basic skills) depends on the state of the education system (how it performs in preparing youth for work and life), its level of development, its overall development priorities, and the priorities of its young people.

#### BOX 4-6: YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE OUT-OF-SCHOOL AND EQUIVALENCY PROGRAMMES

*To appeal to out of-school youth, there is need to take into account why young people have dropped out or never attended school, the challenges they will face in order to stay in a programme, and how they can be integrated into the formal education sector or find employment. All these vary by age, skill and the local environment. Equivalency, literacy, and job training programmes may serve different youth populations, but their common aim of providing competencies for work and life requires a more integrated approach: literacy and equivalency programmes that include life skills and vocational training, and vocational training programmes that also include life skills. Equivalency systems use more practical curricula, more flexible schedules, and less formal instruction methods than regular schools. They depend on a strong partnership between the formal education sector, private providers of programmes, and prospective employers. Without this partnership, the graduates of equivalency systems will be left holding diplomas that allow neither reintegration into the regular school system nor employment in jobs requiring a certain level of competency. The mode of delivery must take into account why young people have dropped out. Knowing that even small costs can be a barrier to enrolment for the poorest, successful programmes provide textbooks, notebooks and pencils.*

*Successful equivalency programs that hope to reintegrate people into the formal education system often use teaching methods that are similar to those recommended above for formal schools - student-centered learning, regular assessment and remedial sessions to involve students in their learning progress. Programmes for older youth, however, often use very different approaches.*

Source: ESSP 2006

In this context, vocational training programmes for out-of-school youth can be also more cost effective when training is targeted and tailored to the needs of the local labour markets. Vocational training is most effective for higher earners than lower earners illustrating the complementarity of vocational and academic skills.

*“We want to learn skills from vocational training and education so that we can earn extra income to support our families and ease our parents’ worries. The vocational training should cover (1) agricultural techniques such as animal rearing, farming, (2) sewing skills for young women which could help them get work not far from their villages and (3) English for some kind of job in Siem Reap town” – FGD with male and female youth, Svahoul Village, Siem Reap*

Programmes also tend to be more effective when they include On-the-Job Training (OJT) and employer sponsorship. Thus, vocational programmes for youth are most likely to improve the employment and earnings prospects of participants when training is provided as part of a comprehensive package that includes employment services, counselling and life skills.

### 4.3 HEALTH AND CIVIC EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR YOUTH

#### 4.3.1 YOUTH AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Good health is essential to an educated and economically productive work force (World Bank 2006). According to the CDHS 2000, young people of poor and very poor families are at increased risk of malnutrition and disease. As health impacts upon education, the converse is also true. For example, in comparison with their peers, better educated women are more likely to delay marriage and childbearing, have fewer children and healthier babies, enjoy better earning potential, and have stronger decision making and negotiation skills as well as higher self esteem (World Bank 2007a).

#### BOX 4-7: YOUTH RECEPTION OF HEALTH EDUCATION

*The local NGO, Reproductive Health of Cambodia (RHAC) has come to educate youth on reproductive health and HIV. RHAC’s education programme focuses on how to protect against HIV infection, through measures such as having only one partner and always using a condoms. At the time of this study, we observed young men and women learning together, which initially inhibited the women; however, over time they were empowered to speak and indicated the burdens and negative economic consequences of large family size and the desire to limit families to between two and four children.*

*The young women’s group expressed the opinion that the reproductive health and HIV and AIDS education carried out by RHAC is very beneficial but too short; they want the programme to be available in the class.*

*Source: Field Research 2008*

To date, the potential benefits of health education are yet to be fully realized. With the training of teachers, there is evidence that students can receive the added information that will benefit their health and nutrition and in turn improve academic functioning.

As a key player in the 'National Response to HIV/AIDS', MoEYS has implemented since 1999 an HIV programme that aims to prevent students, out-of-school youth and the MoEYS labour force from being infected and affected by HIV. Among the top priorities of the Ministry's Interdepartmental Committee on HIV/AIDS (ICHA) to strengthen this programme are: developing policies; setting up systems; mainstreaming HIV responses in the education sector; integrating HIV information into the national curriculum; and training pre- and in-service teachers and education officers.

#### 4.3.2 YOUTH AND CIVIC EDUCATION<sup>23</sup>

CDRI's 2007 'Moving Out of Poverty Study' (MOPS) suggests that poor governance and weak institutions have contributed to rising inequality and unequal access to infrastructure and social services, which has the consequence of halting economic growth and poverty reduction. Compounding the problem, the present situation analysis suggests the education system has failed to impart the values necessary for the development of the skills required to build democratic institutions and ensure good governance.

*We have little knowledge about this issue [democracy] because we have not heard so much about this and we have rare communication with the higher level (local authority)... we have the opportunity sometimes to participate in meetings but we did not talk at all. Old people will not be interested in what we raise...* – FGD with male youth (age 20-24) Sangke Village, Svay Rieng

*We realise that the contribution of youth to our community's development is very important...being able to express our ideas could help us improve our capacity and know more about development, sometimes we have some good ideas but do not have good opportunity to express them, so we keep them in our minds...* – FGD with female youth, Siem Reap

Commune Council members complain that it is difficult to encourage old or young people to participate in development schemes:

*It is difficult at the moment to persuade people, especially youth, to participate in the development of the commune... . They are busy with their daily activities and they are simply reluctant to join meetings or participate in commune development activities... . The Commune Council always faces problems in disseminating information on development to young people when they remain uninterested...* – Commune chief in Cheung Kor Commune, Sihanoukville

Achieving a truly democratic society can only be attained through a well-informed citizenry. The comments above suggest missed opportunities to integrate civic education into education programmes.

Constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on a minimum quality education as well as free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information (USAID 2002). Increasingly, the democratic process in Cambodia is calling for a more pluralistic and open society, whereby different groups, including youth, could play a more challenging role in public decision-making and in the development process, which eventually affect their own future. This constitutes an important step in enhancing youth participation because unless decisions impacting upon young people's lives are subject to close examination by those they affect, they are unlikely to be sustainable.

<sup>23</sup>The issue of youth and civic engagement is discussed in Chapter 8.



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