

GENDER ANALYSIS (SUMMARY)¹

1. **Demographic trends and traditional gender relations.** In the 2008 census, women comprised 51.4% of the total population of 13.4 million; they headed more than one-quarter of households. A clear legacy of the past conflict in Cambodia, the population is very young: two out of three are under 25 years of age, a product of the baby boom of the 1980s. The vast majority of the population (80.5%) still lives in rural areas, earning a living from agricultural activities. While Khmer women today are more able to exercise autonomy and independence, cultural and traditional norms and low education and literacy still limit girls' and women's choices. Cambodia is a hierarchical society with strong ideas of power and status. Attitudes to gender roles still emphasize a woman's role as household manager and a man's role as provider. Women are severely underrepresented in decision-making processes outside the household. The 2006 gender analysis of the United States Agency for International Development found that while efforts to promote gender equality and women's human rights are gaining momentum, sociocultural norms and a culture of impunity continue to undermine implementation and enforcement.² Its updated gender assessment of 2010 suggests that there are still too few qualified women at all levels, in all sectors and institutions. Traditional belief systems that suggest "proper" roles for men and women have a strong influence on this capacity gap and other dimensions of women's and men's daily lives and opportunities.³

2. **Progress in gender equity and international indices.** Against the backdrop of enormous challenges, the government has managed to make progress in a number of areas. Gaps in education have been reduced with increasing enrollment rates for girls. Among young people, gender parity has almost been reached in literacy rates and mean level of education. Good progress has been achieved in integrating gender in economic development strategies and plans, and the government promotes the rights of female employees. The legal framework to protect women is stronger. The proportion of women elected as members of Parliament has increased slightly from 19.5% in 2003 to 22% in 2008. Cambodia's gender-related development index (GDI) of 0.588 is 99.2% of its human development index (HDI) value of 0.593. Out of 155 countries with both HDI and GDI values, Cambodia ranks in the middle with 74 countries having a better ratio. Cambodia ranks 91st out of 109 countries in the gender empowerment measure, with a value of 0.427.

3. **Gender gaps and challenges.** Persistent and significant gender gaps are a feature of present day Cambodia. The Ministry of Planning's 2010 Millennium Development Goals Update identifies CMDG3 (gender equality) as a goal that is lagging in a number of indicators. These include literacy of adult women, wage employment in the services sector, and the proportion of women in decision-making positions. CMDG5 (maternal health) has seriously off-track elements. According to the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA), the gender gaps and challenges fall into in five areas:

- (i) **Economic empowerment.** Gender disparities in employment are based on traditional attitudes about "appropriate" occupations for women and men. The wage differentials for women with upper secondary and university education are significant. Low literacy limits livelihood alternatives for women. Changes in the structure of the economy and increased economic migration are contributing to increased vulnerability of women workers, exacerbated by the economic crisis.

¹ See ADB. 2011. *Cambodia: Country Gender Analysis*. Manila. (<http://serd-cam.adb.org/>)

² United States Agency for International Development. 2006. *Gender Analysis & Assessment*. Phnom Penh: USAID.

³ United States Agency for International Development. 2010. *Gender Assessment*. Phnom Penh: USAID

The informal economy is a critical source of women's livelihoods. Women's share of wage employment in agriculture is 53% and industry 54%, but in services it is only slightly more than a quarter (27%). Where garment manufacturing accounts for about one-third of women's total wage employment, the public sector accounts for just 2%.

- (ii) **Education.** Gender disparities in primary and lower secondary education have been virtually eliminated, most likely as a result of policies to promote scholarships to poor girls in grades 7–9. However, girls drop out of lower secondary education more than boys. The ratio of girls to boys in upper secondary education was 73% in 2008. Among adults age 25 or greater, 66% of rural women have not completed primary school, as compared with 40% of urban women and 24% of urban men (2008 census). For the 2008/09 academic year, the lower secondary completion rate was just 48.7% (MOP MDG Update 2010). Two out of five women age 25–44 are illiterate (versus 1 in 10 men). Although improving in younger age groups, 23% of young women age 15–24 are illiterate (versus 16% of young men).
- (iii) **Legal protection.** Violence against women is widely prevalent with indications of increasing incidence of some forms of gender-based violence, particularly rape. Knowledge of legal rights is low among both women and men, but women tend to be comparatively disadvantaged because they are more isolated than men. A widespread culture of impunity protects perpetrators rather than victims of violence, corruption, and abuse.
- (iv) **Health.** Infant and child mortality rates have declined significantly. The under-5 mortality rate decreased from 127 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 83 in 2005. The MDG target is on track, but major disparities continue between urban and rural areas and educated and uneducated mothers. The MDG target for maternal mortality is unlikely to be met. The maternal mortality ratio increased to 461 deaths per 100,000 live births (2008 census) from 437 in 1997. In 2008 just over half of all births (58%) were attended by skilled health personnel (with disparities between rural and urban areas). Women make up a growing proportion of people living with HIV, from 38% in 1997 to 52% in 2006.
- (v) **Public decision-making and politics.** Women's participation in decision-making is limited by traditional beliefs and notions that women are not well suited for high positions and decision-making. The number of women in senior positions of the civil service is low, as is the number of women in the judiciary, both as judges and prosecutors. In 2008, women held 22% of the seats in the National Assembly. There were no female provincial governors in 2009, and only 17% of the deputy governors were women. In 2009, women comprised 15% of Cambodia's commune council members, but only 4% of the commune or Sangkat chiefs.

4. **Institutional assessment.** Cambodia's national machinery for the promotion of gender equity includes MOWA, the Cambodia National Council for Women, the Technical Working Group on Gender, gender mainstreaming action groups in line ministries, and new women and children's consultative committees at all levels of subnational government. The legal framework includes the Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of the Victim (2005) and the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation (2008), but enforcement could be stronger. The government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1992 with no reservations. A strong commitment to gender equality was reflected in the 2008 Rectangular Strategy Phase II. The National Socioeconomic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006–2009 clearly defined gender mainstreaming as

strategic to all sectors. The ADB country strategy and program midterm review in 2007 noted that mainstreaming gender still faced significant constraints, including (i) limited gender awareness among stakeholders; (ii) limited capacity related to gender analysis and the assessment of the differential impact of policies and projects on men, women, girls, and boys; and (iii) persisting gender stereotypes about what women can and cannot or should not do.⁴ The NSDP Update, 2009–2013 echoes this finding, calling for strengthened national capacity for gender analysis, research, and advocacy. It recognizes that attitude and behavioral changes for gender equality and women's rights require a long-term effort with strong commitment.

5. **ADB contributions to gender equity.** ADB has pursued gender equality in Cambodia by mainstreaming gender in its operations. Project-specific gender action plans (GAPs) with gender design features, targets, and indicators have promoted women's participation and access to benefits in agriculture, rural development, irrigation and water resources, education, health, and rural water supply and sanitation. Gender-related loan and grant assurances have helped improve the monitoring and documenting of gender equality results in the rural development and health sectors. ADB's long-term engagement and support for MOWA included grant assistance from the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR) for Women's Development Centers (2006–2010), which aimed at economic empowerment for rural women in Siem Reap and in Kampong Chhnang.⁵ JFPR grant assistance for Targeted Assistance for Education of Poor Girls and Indigenous Children (2002–2006) and technical assistance for Dormitories and Learning Centers for Secondary School Girls (2006–2008) have contributed to better gender outcomes under ADB's education sector development programs.⁶ Technical assistance for Capacity Building of Female Commune Council Networks (2007–2009) strengthened gender equality results under the Second Commune Council Development Project.⁷

6. ADB has made significant contributions to the development of Cambodia's National Social Protection Strategy for the Poor and Vulnerable through the government's interim working group on social safety nets. A detailed poverty and vulnerability analysis forms the basis of the strategy, which includes strong gender analysis and recognizes women of reproductive age as making up one of the most vulnerable population groups. Approved in March 2011, the strategy will expand ongoing targeted programs and develop new initiatives including conditional cash transfers for women and children, and gender-sensitive labor-intensive public works programs.

7. **Strengthening gender mainstreaming in new operations.** The 2009 country assistance program evaluation indicates that although ADB gender-related operations were generally effective, gender-based outcome indicators in the results frameworks were insufficient and need to be remedied.⁸ Recently approved operations in Cambodia with a GAP and categorized with a gender equity theme (GEN) or effective gender mainstreaming (EGM) are in the traditionally "gender-friendly" sectors of education, agriculture and rural development, and rural water supply and sanitation. This is broadly consistent with ADB-wide findings. Achieving corporate gender targets will be a challenge given Strategy 2020's emphasis on overcoming the

⁴ ADB. 2007. *Country Strategy and Program Midterm Review: Cambodia, 2005–2009*. Manila.

⁵ ADB. 2005. *Proposed Grant Assistance to the Kingdom of Cambodia for Women's Development Centers*. Manila (JFPR Grant 9081-CAM).

⁶ ADB. 2002. *Proposed Grant Assistance to the Kingdom of Cambodia for the Targeted Assistance for Education of Poor Girls and Indigenous Children*. Manila (JFPR Grant 9028-CAM); ADB. 2006. *Technical Assistance to the Kingdom of Cambodia for Dormitories and Learning Centers for Secondary Schoolgirls*. Manila (TA 4777-CAM).

⁷ ADB. 2006. *Report and Recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors: Proposed Asian Development Fund Grant and Technical Assistance Grant to the Kingdom of Cambodia for the Commune Council Development Project 2*. Manila (TA 4892-CAM).

⁸ ADB. 2009. *Country Assistance Program Evaluation: Cambodia—Growth and Sector Reform*. Manila.

infrastructure deficit in developing member countries. Operations will shift more to infrastructure and other sectors that have not traditionally lent themselves to directly addressing gender equity issues. In Cambodia, projects approved in 2010 under the GEN or EGM categories include health (communicable disease control) and, for the first time, transport (rural roads).

8. **Issues in gender action plan implementation.** While opportunities have been missed in terms of approved projects that could or should have had a stronger gender focus (e.g., the Emergency Food Assistance Project), the mere existence of a GAP does not necessarily ensure strong implementation. A 2009 review of three project GAPs had mixed results that were largely dependent on the extent of supervision by ADB staff, executing agencies, and consultant teams. In one case, although the GAP was part of the report and recommendation of the President to the Board of Directors, little attention was paid to it during the course of project implementation or during review missions. The two other projects had a full-time social development or gender specialist on the consultant team, which made GAP implementation more effective. Early on in the project, management teams should translate higher GAP targets into a series of smaller actions and methods that local stakeholders can understand. The Cambodia Resident Mission gender specialist will closely monitor implementation of project-specific GAPs.

9. **ADB's gender strategy in Cambodia.** Through the 2011–2013 country partnership strategy, ADB will invest in gender equity in Cambodia in both core and non core areas (Table).

ADB Planned Investments in Gender Equity, 2011–2013

Strategy 2020	Investments in Gender Equity by Sector, Cambodia 2011–2013
core areas	Education. Gender equity in education and vocational training is necessary for a better quality workforce and more inclusive growth. ADB will contribute to gender equality results through the Enhancing Education Quality Project, the Strengthening Technical and Vocational Education and Training Project, and pilot programs in postharvest technology and skills bridging through a JFPR grant. Regional technical assistance on gender-responsive decentralized governance will improve policy, planning, budgeting, and project design in Cambodia's education sector. A second regional initiative will look at women and employment.
	Infrastructure. ADB's strategy for gender mainstreaming in infrastructure emphasizes the links of infrastructure to better public health for women and men (through rural water supply and sanitation) and better access to services and markets (with improved rural roads). ADB will promote gender-inclusive infrastructure development through the Second Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project and the proposed Rural Roads Improvement Project. Any planned projects with resettlement impacts will ensure that resettlement plans are developed using the ADB gender and resettlement checklist.
	Environment. Environmentally sustainable growth will be imperative for Cambodia, where a significant proportion of the population depends on access to natural resources for their livelihoods. Gender equity will be a focus of the proposed Water Resources Management Sector Development Program and the Tonle Sap Resource Management and Conservation Project.
other areas	Agriculture. The vast majority of Cambodia's poor still live in rural areas. Support for gender mainstreaming in agriculture and rural development is an underlying component of inclusive growth. ADB will deliver gender-equitable benefits through two Tonle Sap operations, one focusing on smallholder development, the other on lowland rural development.
	Health. Cambodia's increasing integration in an ever more connected GMS puts the population at risk for communicable diseases, particularly in border areas. ADB will closely focus on gender issues under the proposed Second Regional Communicable Disease Control Project and under continued work on HIV/AIDS and transport.

ADB = Asian Development Bank, GMS = Greater Mekong Subregion, JFPR = Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction
Source: ADB