



Cambodia

Kingdom of Cambodia

Asia

Geography

Area 181,035 sq km. Fertile, forest-covered state of southwest Indo-China on the Mekong River.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	15,053,112	1.66%
2020	17,706,611	1.60%
2030	20,100,161	1.16%

Capital Phnom Penh 1,962,498. **Urbanites** 22.8%. **Pop under 15 yrs** 33%. **Life expectancy** 60.6 yrs.

Peoples

Mon-Khmer 87.9%. 19 peoples. Khmer 86.9%; Tribal groups 1.0%.

Other Southeast Asian 7.7%. Vietnamese 4.2%; Cham(4) 2.4%; Lao 0.6%.

Chinese 4.1%. Six language groups.

Other 0.3%. Various Western and South Asian groups.

Literacy 73.6%. **Official language** Khmer. **All languages** 25. **Indigenous languages** 23. **Languages with Scriptures** 3Bi 3NT 3por.

Economy

One of the world's poorest countries and heavily dependent on foreign aid. Years of war and genocide followed by venal and corrupt governments have hindered development and kept most of the population poor; 38% live below the poverty line. Significant progress is being made in economic development, but the rural poor are being left behind. Agriculture, garments and tourism are the biggest earners, with offshore oil/gas deposits promising future income. Illegal logging and the sex trade enriches a small number of wicked men, but causes suffering to many.

HDI Rank 137th/182. **Public debt** 63% of GDP. **Income/person** \$823 (2% of USA).

Politics

A ceremonial monarchy. Powerful kingdoms from 1st to 14th Centuries. Thereafter for 500 years, a pawn in regional and global conflicts with Thai, Vietnamese, French, Japanese and US invasion, occupation or aggression. A tragic victim of the Vietnam War (1970-75), then of the extreme Marxist Khmer Rouge from 1975, when it endured one of the most savage slaughters in the 20th Century. Almost all former military personnel, civil servants, doctors, educated people and wealthy people and their families were killed, and the nation was turned into a vast labour camp. The Vietnamese army ousted the Khmer Rouge in 1979, but civil war among four contending armies raged with superpower support until 1991. Internationally-initiated democracy arrived in 1993. Since then, the same prime minister has remained in power as elected leader. Corruption is rife and profoundly affects political life.

Religion

Buddhism has been the national religion since the 15th Century. The Khmer Rouge sought to eradicate all religion; 90% of Buddhist monks and most Christians perished. Since 1979 there have been periods of more tolerance, and since 1990 Christians have been allowed to worship openly, but a few limitations on mission activity have been legislated as well.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Buddhist	83.34	12,545,264	1.2%
Ethnoreligionist	4.80	722,549	2.5%
Christian	3.13	471,162	8.4%
Non-religious	2.97	447,077	2.7%
Chinese	2.85	429,014	4.4%
Muslim	2.30	346,222	3.5%
Other	0.26	39,138	1.7%
Hindu	0.22	33,117	5.8%
Baha'i	0.13	19,569	3.3%

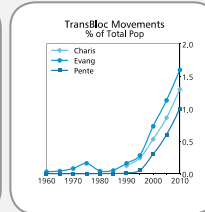
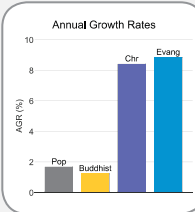
Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	29	1.46	220,000	9.2%
Independent	9	0.25	38,000	4.3%
Anglican	1	<0.01	<1,000	4.4%
Catholic	1	0.16	23,000	2.2%
Marginal	2	0.06	9,000	2.3%
Unaffiliated		1.20	181,000	8.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Foursquare Gospel Ch	P	818	61,364	135,000
Catholic Church	C	21	12,316	23,400
River of Life	I	340	8,533	12,800
Assemblies of God	P	40	2,229	10,700
Methodist Church	P	365	4,800	9,600
Cambodia Baptist Conv	P	175	6,095	8,600
Cambodia for Christ	I	72	5,000	8,000
Latter-day Saints (Mormon)	M	23	3,077	8,000

C

Khmer Evangelical Ch	P	182	2,150	7,950
Seventh-day Adventist	P	8	3,700	7,400
Harvest-time Ministries	I	152	3,804	6,200
New Life Fellowship	I	60	1,400	3,500
Other denominations[25]		453	27,975	50,239
Total Christians[42]		2,709	142,443	291,389

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	1.6	240,196	8.8%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	1.3	195,426	10.3%
Pentecostals	1.0	150,079	12.5%



Answers to Prayer

- 1 An open door for ministry remains**, although some limitations are in place. The great suffering of Cambodians in the past has been transformed into great responsiveness to the gospel as many and diverse ministries see sustained fruit.
- 2 Unprecedented – and unexpected – church growth** over the last 20 years. From only a few thousand Christians surviving into the 1990s (0.07% evangelical in 1985), believers may now top 3.5% of the population. This growth is almost entirely through church multiplication, and done by indigenous church planters and evangelists.

Challenges for Prayer

- 1 The scars of the terrible genocide of 1975-79 remain evident.** Nearly two million were killed, over 60,000 lost life or limb to landmines and most of the population over age 30 need deep healing from the trauma of their losses and suffering. Pray for:
 - a) Justice to be seen** to be done regarding those who perpetrated the crimes. International tribunals face difficulty in bringing the Cambodian government/judiciary on board with the justice process, and the culture of corruption and impunity still holds sway. The beginning of Khmer Rouge trials should assist in this process.
 - b) Healing for the deep psychological wounds.** Many cope with the trauma through detachment and suppression of trauma, some by inflicting pain on others. Pray that counselling and the Holy Spirit might bring true restoration.
 - c) A government that seeks the good of all**, and is worthy of the trust of the people. Violence, manipulation, graft and selfishness hitherto have been the rule. The situation is so ingrained and endemic on every level that it must be torn out by the roots.
- 2 Spiritual darkness persists in Cambodia** and must be lifted by prayer. That darkness is seen in the ubiquitous spirit shrines, Buddhism's opposition to any ideological rival and a general moral collapse. Structures of sin are prevalent throughout, and the people of Cambodia are made to suffer by the enemy of souls. Pray for the light of the gospel to so shine that the structures of society as well as of individuals may be decisively changed. Beyond the gripping poverty are the following:
 - a) Land grabbing.** Unscrupulous officials (who pocket the income) have sold huge swathes of Cambodia's land to rapacious foreign developers and speculators, with locals driven out and evicted from their homes to make way for hotels and resorts. Cambodia is being sold/stolen from under the feet of its own people.
 - b) Children at risk.** The genocide of the 1970s and 1980s created a very young nation where 60% of the population are 24 years old or younger. But many of this generation are sadly exploited by others. Pray for deliverance and salvation for these:

- i *Child labourers*. Poverty forces over 1.5 million children under age 15 to work to survive and supplement their family's meagre income, often at the price of their education, their health or even their lives.
 - ii *Sex trade victims* number up to 100,000. A recent study estimated 20% of tourists to Cambodia made use of the sex trade, often with the young or underage. Yet even this is a small amount compared to the widespread use of prostitutes by Cambodian men. That factor combined with others, gives the nation one of the highest rates of HIV in Asia. Many poor parents sell their own children to traffickers for as little as \$10. The Vietnamese ethnic minority is especially targeted by traffickers, being both light-skinned and detested by most Khmer. The much-publicized rescues of these girls, as young as age six, are only the beginning of a long process of healing and equipping for a life after the sex trade.
 - iii *Homeless children and orphans*. Family structures shattered by the Khmer Rouge and subsequent poverty caused high numbers of street kids and unwanted children. Many Christian ministries see a high response to Jesus' love among these precious souls. At one point, orphanages were booming, but as the population stabilizes, drop-in centres and increased ministry to extended families are becoming more appropriate.
- c) **Drug trafficking and abuse** have increased greatly in the last 15 years. Addictive drugs hold sway over many locals, while crime lords profit from the suffering.

3 The Cambodian Church has survived against all odds. Beginning in 1923, **CMA** missionaries laboured for 47 years before breakthrough began. Then the Church was nearly extinguished during the slaughter of the 1970s; 90% of Christians died or fled to Thai refugee camps – where a great harvest was reaped for the Kingdom. During the 1990s, churches spread to all 19 provinces. Pray for:

- a) **Continued freedom of religion**. The constitution guarantees it, but the government has re-affirmed the ban on door-to-door evangelism and on public distribution of tracts. The use of financial inducements for purposes of conversion by some religious groups has forced responsible Christian groups to reconsider their methods and avoid such negative associations. Pray for continued freedom to wisely and appropriately spread the good news.
- b) **Freedom and deliverance** from past sin, hatred, suffering and abuse through the blood of Jesus. Deep healing is required for many who suffered acute trauma. Many of the former Khmer Rouge have become believers; receiving God's forgiveness for past crimes is essential.
- c) **Children and young people** to be effectively disciplined in the churches and shown how to live in healthy family structures; few are equipped for this. But this generation must begin to lead the Cambodian Church now.
- d) **Future growth and vision**. Mission Kampuchea 2021 is a shared vision by the national Churches to see a church in every village and people group in Cambodia by 2021. Currently, an estimated 11,000 villages are without a church.

4 Mature leadership for the churches is the greatest challenge. The loss of so many educated people in the Khmer Rouge slaughter, combined with the dysfunctional society, pushed many new Christians quickly into leadership before they were ready. Pray for:

- a) **The Bible schools** – Phnom Penh Bible School, Cambodia For Christ (CFC) Ministry Training College, **AoG** and Methodists are just a few among several Bible schools. Residential, full-time academic programmes can be a difficult model to successfully translate into the Cambodian context of life and ministry.
- b) **Existing pastors**. Their lack of training, their need to provide for themselves and the overwhelming practical needs of the faithful are huge challenges. Numerous leadership training courses are available that offer on-the-job development for Christian leaders. Pray for wisdom, holiness, power in the Spirit and ways to build up their fledgling congregations spiritually, relationally and economically.
- c) **Unity**. That any religious group can register directly with the Ministry of Religion, plus the existence of 13 Protestant umbrella groups, indicate the fragmentation of this rather small national Church. Divisiveness has been a problem in the short history of the Church here. The Evangelical Fellowship of Cambodia represents about 80% of the Christian community; it is increasingly able to cooperate with other notable networks, such as the Cambodian

Christian Evangelical Alliance, Cambodian Christian Federation and the Cambodian Baptist Convention. Pray for a greater sense of unity and for more partnerships that are effective.

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5 Foreign Christian workers can contribute in many ways to the myriad challenges facing the Cambodian Church. Pray for more long-term expatriate workers who learn the language, identify with the culture and serve for the long haul. Ministries can easily fall into the trap of “short-termism” and burdensome mission trips. Training and discipling the burgeoning Cambodian Church to finish the task are just as vital as the essential humanitarian work being done, and much pioneer evangelism remains unfinished. There is great freedom for ministry when it is done in a culturally appropriate and sensitive manner.

6 Christian ministry to physical needs is a major concern.

a) **The social needs are enormous.** The murder of most of those with skills or an education makes expatriate input essential. Rehabilitation, orphanages, reconstruction, health care, projects for agriculture, fisheries, water management and education are all ministries where Christians have significant input. Pray for:

i *The dozens of Christian NGOs* both large and small (ICFG, CORD, World Relief, **FH**, **WEC**, **OMF**, **CMA**, **WVI**, **AoG**, **YWAM**, **AOI**, Mennonites and many others).

ii *Effective cooperation among Christian agencies.* A fine example of foreign agencies working together is International Cooperation Cambodia, constituting SAO, SIL, Interact, World Concern and Danmission.

b) **The complex issues of poverty, foreign aid and dependency.** An honest desire to alleviate suffering can cause as many problems as it solves. Overlapping with evangelism, it can also generate both the “rice Christian” phenomenon and resentment from the Buddhist majority over underhanded proselytism tactics. Pray for wisdom and sensitivity for Christians ministering to physical needs.

7 Pray for the less-reached. The window of opportunity that now sees many enter the Kingdom may not stay open for much longer; the opportunities must be urgently seized. Pray for:

a) **The Buddhist majority.** Buddhism has lost some of its monopolistic grip on the people, but reactionary forces are moving against the clearly noticeable growth of the Church.

b) **The Cham, almost entirely Muslim.** The majority practice folk Islam, which incorporates animistic practices into more orthodox Islamic practices; within this is a strong strain of Fojihed Islam, which is rife with pre-Islamic magic and superstitions. There are a few Christians; pray for them to be gathered into fellowship together. Khmer Christians have not yet met this evangelistic challenge; pray also for wisdom for those already reaching out to the Cham.

c) **The tribal peoples.** Only among the Mnong, Jarai, Krueng and Stieng have significant numbers come to Christ. A further 18 Southeast Asian peoples can be considered unevangelized; pray for loving and appropriate witness to these peoples.

d) **The six Chinese language groups** constitute nearly 600,000 people who have largely assimilated into Cambodian society, but who are mostly unreached. Pray for Chinese believers from abroad to come as apostles to these people.

8 Christian ministries have diversified in recent years. Pray specifically for:

a) **Literature.** **CMA** has translated a range of materials, especially for church planting training. The Bible Society and others provide Khmer Bibles, NTs and Scripture portions. A new Khmer Bible was completed in 1998. Lifewords tracts and literature are widely appreciated.

b) **Fount of Wisdom** is a joint effort of **CMA**, **EFC**, **AoG** and **OMF** that trains Cambodian Christian writers, encourages production of indigenous materials for the Church and translates useful Christian literature from other languages. Pray for its positive impact on the Church and on the nation.

c) **The JESUS film** is being used in Khmer, Chinese, Vietnamese and other tongues. Father’s Hope is another film being used by The Book of Hope team to reach out to Cambodians.

d) Audio and video resources. **GRN** provides audio resources in 18 languages. God's Story and Megavoice both have material in Khmer.

e) Christian radio. Over 300 hours per week, many in Khmer and on FM, can be heard. **FEBC** broadcasts 115 hours per week on local FM radio with notable response. **TWR, GFA,** World Harvest Radio and Lutheran Hour also broadcast in Khmer or various minority languages.