

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.

⁷ 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;

⁸ Descriptions of specific programmes relating to youth are found in Chapter 4, Youth and Education.

(vii) 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

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

¹⁰ 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^{a/}

#	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

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

¹² 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	Netherlands	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	Netherlands	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
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
Governance & 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

¹³ Generated from ODA database of Cambodia in <http://cd.c.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, Odar Meanchey, Mondulhiri, 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, Odar Meanchey, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, Sihanoukville, Pailin, Kampong Chhnang, Mondulhiri, 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.

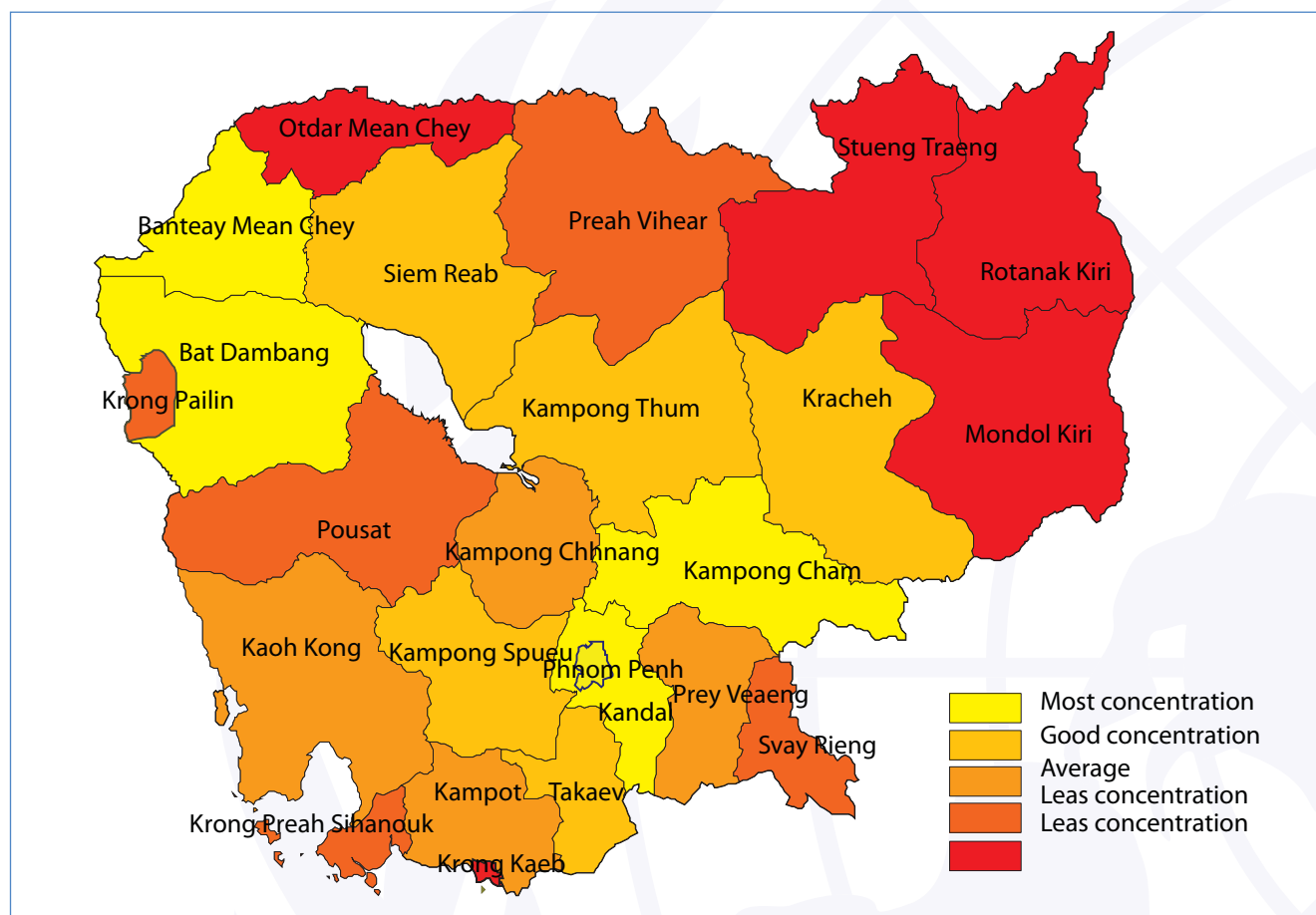
NGOs and IOs have invested resources in both preventative and curative care for those affected by HIV and AIDS and STI, to cover all provinces and towns in Cambodia. Programme concentration in this area has shown fruitful outcomes in the reduction of the incidence of HIV and STI by 2008. Most provinces and towns throughout the country also have primary healthcare and nutrition programmes or projects, except in Odar 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.

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

¹⁵ 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 Futting Liao).

¹⁶ 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, Odar 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 Odar 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, Mondulkiri, 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 integrability 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 real political empowerment for youth.



IV

YOUTH AND EDUCATION



“MY PARENT ASKED...WHAT IS MY EDUCATION WORTH 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 coverage¹⁷. 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

¹⁷ 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/	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

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.

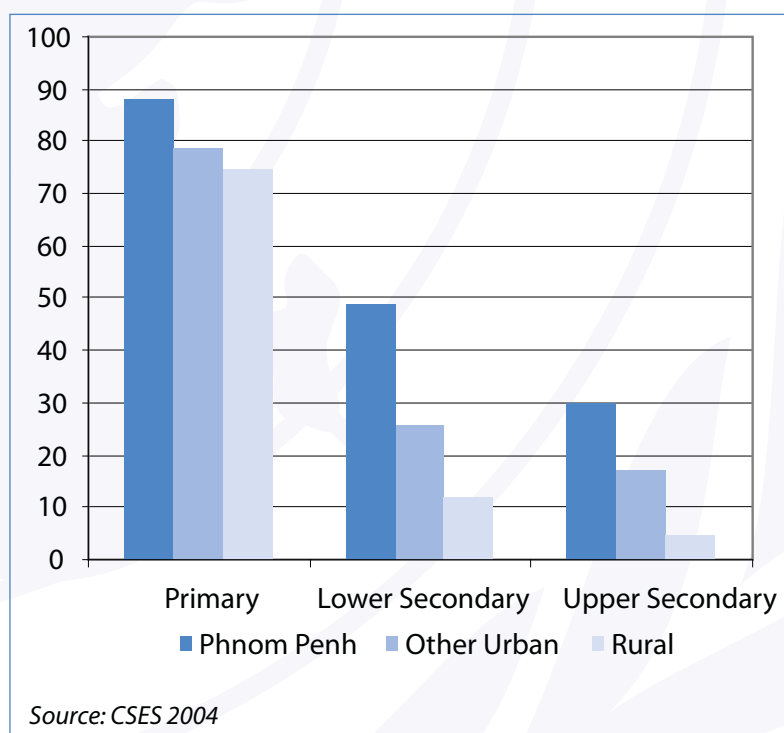
4.2 CURRENT SITUATION OF YOUTH AND EDUCATION: CHALLENGES, AND PERCEPTIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

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)¹⁸. 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.

¹⁸ 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).

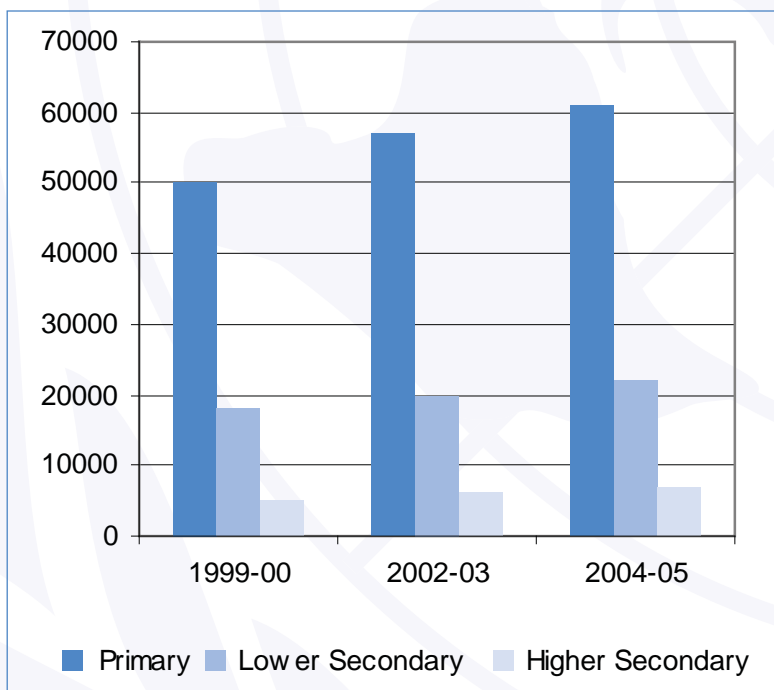
Some poor, especially female, youths still miss out and are illiterate, mostly in rural and remote areas: CSES 2004 indicates that Cambodia has high illiteracy rates among young people aged 15-24 (Figure 4-3). Additionally, evidence from the field study suggests that vulnerable youths are much more likely 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

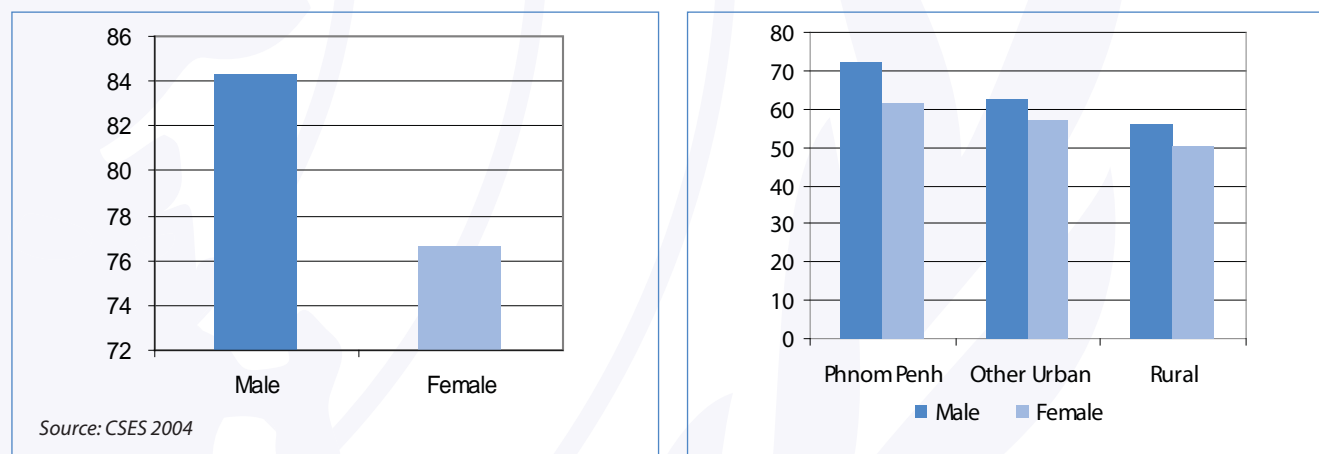
Currently we have seen many more new schools built up everywhere even in some remote areas in our country and many more young people are able to be in school. More children in school mean more human resources for our country development. An important factor for this change is education from other sources 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

4.2.2 YOUTH AND EDUCATION ATTENDANCE, HOW IT IMPACTS ON YOUTH LIVELIHOODS

Table 4-3. Young people aged 5-24 currently attending school, by level and region (%)

Level	Regions		
	Phnom Penh	Other Urban	Rural
Primary	46.2	66.5	80.1
Lower Secondary	22.6	19.3	13.9
High school	15.6	10.9	4.0
Technical/Vocational	2.4	1.0	0.2
Under Graduate/ Graduate	9.9	1.1	0.3
Other	1.7	0.1	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

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 rates¹⁹ 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.”²⁰ 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.²¹ 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.

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,²² 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.

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

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

²¹Individual 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.

²²http://www.moc.gov.kh/national_data_resource.

I have three children. I usually spend around,3500 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.

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.

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.

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

“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 EDUCATION²³

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.

4.4 POLICY AND PROGRAMMING IMPLICATIONS

Develop a more responsive education policy for youth: Based on the present situation analysis, the education investment and assistance from donors and the Government appears to expand young people's schooling opportunities, but they do not close the economic gap. A pro-poor education policy needs to address the educational disparities of the poor, those young people living in rural areas and the educational disadvantages of females.

²³The issue of youth and civic engagement is discussed in Chapter 8.

Improve the relevance of education to employment opportunities: Education contributes to worker productivity and is fundamental to the creation of a competitive knowledge-based economy. Currently, there is a mismatch between present and future economic needs and what young people are learning. Both early school-leaving and the relatively low quality of education for those who remain are disadvantageous to Cambodia's competitive future. Therefore, priority needs to be given to school retention, expanded access to lower and upper secondary schools, practical education oriented to employment needs and life skills training.

Additionally, there should be opportunities to integrate education with work experience so that young people can apply what they are learning in the classroom to the workplace. Additionally, OJT programmes could provide young people with voluntary as well as paid experiences that would expand their civic engagement, teach principles of democracy, provide them with experiences where they would have a voice in the community, and provide opportunities to contribute and teach practical skills. Even if today there are not the jobs for an educated population, without education the future for both youth and the nation itself is not bright. Education must extend past primary schooling through upper secondary school and beyond.

V

YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT



***NO MATTER HOW HARD WE WORK, OUR SALARY FROM THE GARMENT FACTORY IS BARELY ENOUGH AT PRESENT FOR OUR MONTHLY EXPENSES...WE ARE IN DEBT ALMOST EVERY MONTH BUT THIS JOB SUITS US SINCE WE KNOW NOTHING...* – FGD WITH FEMALE YOUTH WORKING IN GARMENT FACTORIES, PHNOM PENH**

Cambodia has experienced strong economic growth, averaging 8.2 per cent per annum between 1997 and 2007 (CDRI 2008). This growth has brought about changes to the structure of the economy. However, much of the growth has been concentrated in a few sectors: garment manufacturing, construction, transport and tourism and restaurants. The agriculture sector still absorbs more than 60 per cent of the labour force despite its comparably slower growth rate at 3.4 per cent between 1994 and 2004. Overall, most of the increased demand has been in the urban areas, accelerating the rural-urban divide. Recently, employment is estimated to have grown at a rate of 3.3 per annum from 1997 to 2007. Currently 300,000 young people are entering the labour market annually – a number that is expected to rise to 400,000 over the years ahead (UNDP and ILO 2007). Without sustainable growth unemployment will become an increasing problem.

Without a coordinated response, Cambodia will likely suffer not only huge youth unemployment, but a paucity of decent work opportunities and high levels of economic and social uncertainty. Recently, the Government and other stakeholders have worked to address the problem of youth unemployment both through policies, such as employment legislation for youth, and enhancing social protection. The youth employment challenge is enormous. With economic and political stability bringing in more investment for rural and agricultural development, as noted previously, education will be key to the opening door to decent employment.

5.1 A REVIEW OF YOUTH-RELATED EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

The Government has implemented many regulatory mechanisms and social safety nets in support of an active youth labour force. The National Strategic Development Plan (2006–2010) sets out measures to implement the Rectangular Strategy and to meet the Cambodian Millennium Development Goal targets for 2010. Towards this aim, MoLVT strategically focuses on four main areas: (1) job creation; (2) improved working conditions; (3) implementation of social safety nets in conjunction with the labour law; and (4) human resource development (MoLVT 2008a).

5.1.1 LEGISLATION AND INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES

Cambodia has ratified several International Conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is also a signatory to several fundamental ILO conventions, and it has a law of Social Security Schemes for Persons Defined by the Provisions of the Labour Law as discussed in Chapter 3.

The Government has also paid considerable attention to the enforcement of labour legislation that applies to the formal economy; for instance, the number of inspections and registration of employer and employee organizations have increased. The RGC also established a Labour Advisory Committee and an Arbitration Council in accordance with the Labour Law. To date, over 500 enterprise level unions, 16 federations of trade unions and 1 confederation of trade unions, with over 200,000 members, have been registered. As part of its commitment to child and youth protection, focus was placed on the establishment of Child Protection Networks, which have benefited many districts, communes and villages (Nhean 2004).

As the government structure addressing youth employment, MoLVT is responsible for labour issues. Its strategic framework focuses on institutional and capacity building, development of national policy and legislation and enforcement, and the sectoral programme for labour. Other ministries also have roles. MoEYS implements programmes under the *Education for All* framework, including the equivalency programme for out-of-school youth, formal education covering primary, secondary and tertiary education, non-formal education and vocational training. Mol enforces the laws through its police power and coordinates the policies and programmes to the provincial level. MoWA is responsible for programmes relating to female youth. Similarly, provincial and district structures were set up to localize the implementation of youth-related interventions, including youth and employment.

5.1.2 SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME ON YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

Three ministries are working to generate potential employment opportunities for youth and poor people in Cambodia. These are MoLVT, MoSVY²⁴; and MoWA. Vocational training by these agencies has been conducted through their municipal/provincial centres in active collaboration with NGOs, donors and other development agencies such as ADB, the World Bank and UNESCO. The trainings are based on labour market needs, and have been designed jointly to upgrade skills development and to develop the National Employment Policy, which, in accordance with the Policy of Vocational Training and Skills Development, is aimed at helping needy people find suitable jobs and helping enterprises to find qualified manpower. NGOs and development agencies also have specific capacity building programmes that work through vocational training and micro-finance for poor households to increase their income-earning activities. Table 5.1 presents a summary of the major programmes currently operating in Cambodia.

Despite the limited coverage of social protection and employment programmes for youth, local and international NGOs have programmes/projects focusing on this specific issue. The detailed coverage of these programmes may be viewed in Appendix A/ Annexes 3-4 and 3-5 of this report.

²⁴Vocational training is being offered to disabled persons and street children, but this programme is not large-scale

Table 5-1. Labour market programmes (2005-2006)

Programme	Institution/ Agency	Beneficiaries (Number)	Expenditure (Million US\$)
Vocational Training (MoLVT)	MoLVT	13,000	0.78
Vocational training for orphans and widowed and female-headed households	MoWA	2,447	0.11
Vocational training (SESDP)	MoLVT/ADB	N/A	1.08
Food for Asset (Food for Work)	WFP	11,504	0.14
Total		25,504	1.97

Source: ADB 2006

5.2 STATISTICAL PROFILE OF YOUTH AND EMPLOYMENT

In recent years, youth population has increased remarkably. The Ministry of Planning (MoP) (2006) indicates that those aged 15–24 represented 26 per cent of the population in 2004, and that large numbers of them are entering the labour force as a result of a baby boom in the 1980s. A common issue among this group is rising unemployment. Because Cambodia's poor and very poor youth cannot afford to be unemployed, they work for low pay, with little or no social or safety protection and on short-term or informal contracts. The findings presented below suggest that measures must be taken to ensure that youth do not add to underemployment in the countryside or to higher rates of urban unemployment, but that they should contribute instead to growth and development through productive employment.

5.2.1 EMPLOYED YOUTH

Youth labour force participation rate: Cambodia's labour force participation rate is one the highest in the region. A large proportion of youths born in the 1980s began to reach working age in the mid-1990s. As large numbers of young people began entering the labour force, the economy came under enormous pressure to create new jobs. Tables 5.2 shows labour force participation by age and gender. Some 75 per cent of all those aged 10 and older were economically active in 2004.

Table 5-2. Total and economically active population by age group- CSES 2003-04

Age Group	Total			Men			Women		
	Total Population	Active Population	Activity Rate	Total Population	Active Population	Activity Rate	Total Population	Active Population	Activity Rate
0-14	1,817,863	874,591	48.1	924,885	454,441	49.1	892,978	420,150	47.1
15-19	1,705,251	1,241,165	72.8	875,578	634,646	72.5	829,673	606,519	73.1
20-24	1,443,322	1,206,606	83.6	717,496	624,888	87.1	725,826	581,718	80.1
25-29	815,318	708,957	87.0	388,058	367,958	94.8	427,260	340,999	79.8
Total	5,781,754	4,031,319	69.7%	2,906,017	2,081,933	71.6%	2,875,737	1,949,386	67.8%

Source: CSES 2004

Table 5-3. Youth labour force participation, by level of education

Age group	No or only some education	Primary not completed/ class 1-5	Primary completed/ class 6-8	Lower secondary completed/ class 9-11	Upper secondary completed/ class 12-13	Post secondary education
10-14	11.3	78.1	10.4	0.2	-	-
15-19	13.4	42.2	34.5	8.9	1.0	0.1
20-24	18.9	36.3	25.4	11.6	5.7	2.0

Source: CSES 2004

Cambodia is largely agricultural, with 60 per cent of its labour force in farming (Table 5-4). Industry accounts for an additional 13 per cent of employment, while the service sector employs approximately 27 per cent. We find that those who are younger tend to be employed in agriculture while those aged 20-24 are more likely to work in manufacturing even if the majority of them still work in agriculture. Compared to their 15-19 year-old counterparts, this latter age group are equally active in trade, transport and communication, as well as public administration.

The increased number of young people making up the manufacturing sector points to the migration of young workers to urban areas.

Table 5-4. Employment distribution by sector for young people aged 10 and older

	Total	Male	Female
Agriculture	60.3	61.4	59.2
Industry	12.5	11.7	13.4
Services	27.2	26.9	27.4
Total	100	100	100

Source: CSES 2004

Table 5-5.. Total number of employed population by sectors and age group (1,000)

	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	Total
Agriculture sector					
Agriculture	683.5	813.5	641.8	386.6	2,525.3
Industrial sector					
Manufacturing	36.0	137.4	189.2	82.5	445.1
Service sector					
Trade	97.0	148.0	136.4	86.5	467.8
Transport and communication	0.5	2.8	3.5	1.4	8.2
Public administration	0.1	1.6	10.7	14.1	26.5
All sectors	817.0	1,103.1	981.8	571.1	3,472.9

Source: CSES 2004

YOUTH WORKING HOURS

Based on the 2004 CSES, young people aged 15-19 work between 15 and 44 hours per week, suggesting that they are engaged in part- or full-time employment, in both the formal and informal sector. While males are more likely than females to be working fewer than 45 hours/week, the converse is true for employment of more than 55 hours per week. For those over 24 working an average of 9.5 hours per day, six days a week is the norm, suggesting that they primarily work in low-paying, unskilled jobs, and that a large number perhaps work in the informal economy.

Table 5-6. Distribution of employed population by age group, and average number of hours worked per week

Hours worked	15-19			20-24		
	Male	Female	Both Sexes	Male	Female	Both Sexes
1-14	18.4	16.4	17.4	8.4	10.9	9.6
15-29	28.8	23.0	25.9	14.7	14.5	14.6

WAGES AND EARNINGS

Young people aged 15-19 in Phnom Penh earn on average between 200,000 and 299,000 Riels per month (US\$50-US\$75), which is significantly higher than their peers in other urban or rural areas (Table 5-7). Moreover, those who are 20-24 years old have higher wage earning potential in Phnom Penh compared to elsewhere in the country.

Table 5-7. Earnings by geographical location and age group

'000 Riels/ Month	10-14				15-19			
	Phnom Penh	Other Urban	Rural	All areas	Phnom Penh	Other Urban	Rural	All areas
Less than 50	-	26.0	62.5	59.7	3.5	10.1	22.8	19.5
50-99	36.0	37.9	18.2	19.5	9.2	26.8	18.9	18.6
100-149	-	14.4	9.2	9.2	8.9	26.7	14.2	14.9
150-199	-	10.2	8.0	8.0	25.5	9.7	16.3	16.7
200-299	30.9	11.5	1.3	2.4	40.1	22.4	23.0	24.8
300-499	-	-	0.7	0.6	8.0	3.9	3.9	4.3
500 & over	33.1	-	-	0.7	4.9	0.3	0.8	1.2

Table 5-8. Earnings by geographical location and age group

'000 Riels/ Month	20-24				25-29			
	Phnom Penh	Other Urban	Rural	All areas	Phnom Penh	Other Urban	Rural	All areas
Less than 50	3.8	9.7	15.8	13.0	4.0	7.9	17.6	13.3
50-99	3.6	20.8	13.6	12.9	7.3	11.1	15.7	13.2
100-149	8.7	18.1	13.0	13.0	9.6	20.3	18.9	16.9
150-199	16.4	10.0	17.5	16.4	13.8	14.5	11.8	12.6
200-299	29.2	27.5	31.1	30.3	24.6	26.0	23.8	24.2
300-499	23.3	8.3	7.3	10.1	25.6	8.9	8.9	12.8
500 & over	15.0	5.6	1.6	4.4	15.1	11.3	3.4	7.1

Source: CSES 2004

The implications of this data are that a large proportion of youth with low skills and poor educational backgrounds will have very limited opportunities to work as wage labourers in either the formal or informal economies. In addition, rural youths are likely to suffer more from having low-paid jobs and remaining at risk from having to migrate to urban and border areas.

Overall, the employment prospects for males are better than for females, and this is true even in the garment industry, which disproportionately employs females, the difference is almost 7 per cent. (table 5-9). Available jobs for male youths are predominantly found in construction or selling their labour. Demand for female workers appears to lie more in the area of unpaid jobs as family helpers, which puts them at the bottom in the conventional occupational ladder, and, at the same time, in terms of income and status in the labour market.

Table 5-9. Labour force by gender, location and employment status

	Employees	Employers	Own Account Workers	Unpaid family helpers	Other	Total
Cambodia						
Both sexes	20.0	0.1	34.4	43.3	2.3	100
Male	23.3	0.1	39.7	34.8	1.2	100
Female	16.6	0.1	28.8	52.0	2.5	100
Phnom Penh						
Both sexes	48.0	0.1	27.1	22.9	1.9	100
Male	56.3	0	23.5	18.7	2.4	100
Female	39.1	0.1	31	27.4	2.4	100
Other Urban						
Both sexes	26.3	0.2	34.5	36.5	2.6	100
Male	32.6	0.3	36.3	28.8	2.1	100
Female	19.5	0	32.6	44.7	3.1	100
Rural						
Both sexes	16.7	0.1	35	46	2.3	100
Male	19.1	0.1	41.7	37.1	2	100
Female	14.3	0.1	28.2	55	2.4	100

Source: CSES 2004

5.2.2 UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Unemployment in Phnom Penh in 2004 among 15-19 year-olds was 6.2 per cent, with little gender variation (CSES 2004). The rates were slightly higher for those aged 20-24, nearly 8 per cent (9.3 per cent for males and 6.5 per cent for females). Interestingly, unemployment rates in rural areas are much lower at 0.8 per cent overall. The relatively higher unemployment rates of youths in Phnom Penh and other urban areas may reflect rural-to-urban migration in search of employment. Likewise, in low technology agriculture, there appears still to be room for 'one more pair of hands'.

When considering youth unemployment, its definition becomes important. Specifically, in the strictest definition ("not working even for one hour last week and seeking work"), youth unemployment appears to be low. However if a more relaxed definition ("those not working but available to work") is used, a somewhat different picture emerges (Table 5-10). Using this definition, the highest rates of unemployment appear to also occur among educated youth.

Table 5-10. Youth unemployment rates

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

Source: CSES 2004

5.3. YOUTH HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT

Economic shocks and poverty are key factors that push young people into work. Limited education, poor knowledge and lack of skills additionally place youth, particularly from the rural poor, in extremely vulnerable working conditions. As found by this study, destitute households expect their children to engage in income-generating work to supplement earnings. Youths sell their labour, migrate, and work for low pay in hazardous conditions as means of accessing employment opportunities. FGDs for this study reveal that low education and lack of a social network pose major barriers, and leave them trapped in hazardous work conditions, as they are exposed to workplace toxin/chemical hazards that have long-term health repercussions. This study found that youth and work-related vulnerability occurs in various forms and impacts upon this population group in a variety of different ways.

Losing a job or being jobless, whether short or long term, can impact badly on young people's livelihoods. In Poipet, young people said that, despite their hard work, their jobs remain largely uncertain and render their future hopeless. Many live in social environments that expose them to drug use, potential HIV infection and youth gangs. Of particular concern are those who work along the borders or in Thailand as cart pullers.

The impairment to physical, mental, and social health as a consequence of long and harsh working conditions at this critical stage of life has permanent effects on the quality of adult life (MoLVT 2008b). The lack of adequate hygiene and sanitation in young people's work places and living quarters pose health-related problems that are exacerbated by a lack of access to health services.

Health conditions of people working in Thailand are very bad...they work extremely hard... and the owner forces them to use drugs in order to accelerate their physical strength...most of them want come back to work in the country... – Discussion with Banteay Meanchey Provincial Department of Labour and Vocational Training

While at work we need to work very hard, every day we don't have enough food to eat so our health rapidly goes down. We finally quit the job and become jobless...there is nothing else we can do.... – Street Youth in Poipet

Field interviews with young people disclosed that available health services for workers are considerably limited. The expense of healthcare is, likewise, a barrier for them when viewed against the current inflation rate and increasing food prices, as their salaries are no longer sufficient to meet monthly and other expenses.

These force them to work much harder to supplement their incomes to support themselves and their families in rural areas. Heavy work, together with difficult working conditions and unhygienic living situations, worsen their already poor health status. Proper health services have not reached the youths working in garment factories, construction, and other sectors. Improved access to health services is critically important to youth.

Working in garment factory is very hard and difficult. The smell from the clothes makes it very difficult for us to work and is even dangerous to our health... Most women workers here have stomach ache because they do not eat regularly. Our health is weaker and weaker through time because we need to work overtime for additional income. Since everything is much expensive now than before, our monthly salary cannot meet expenses so we have to work harder so we can send some money to our family in the village... – FGD with female youth working at garment factory, Sihanoukville

Once employed, missing work due to illness can result in reduced income or job loss, which often has broader repercussions, since extended families often depend on remittances from their relatives working in urban areas or abroad. The death of a family member, especially if the family member is young, also has a devastating impact as it represents the loss of productive labour. A number of families reported falling deeper into poverty when their children are not able to find a job or fall sick.

We can get about 8000 riels from our heavy work a day long...and it is a very difficult and dangerous job...if we have work accident we have to pay with our own money or borrow from friends or relatives, today's job is barely adequate just for ourselves... – Young construction worker, Poipet

Efforts towards the provision of better working conditions for marginal youth are therefore strategic measures to reduce their vulnerability, as they would serve as a safety net in current working conditions. Reducing the vulnerability of marginal youth at work can only make them more capable and transform them into productive members of the labour force, and ultimately lessen the helplessness of families in the face of economic shocks.

5.4 PROSPECTS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

5.4.1 FOCUS ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

According to the World Bank's 2006 Poverty Assessment Report, the number of working-age adults for whom agriculture is the primary sector of activity grew by about 2.7 per cent annually over the previous decade 1993–2003, to 4.9 million in 2003. Cambodia's high demographic growth rate and limited production and service sectors have left agriculture to absorb a growing national labour force.

Annual public investment, inclusive of both donor and government funds in agriculture sector, has grown in recent years but remains very low at about 1.4 per cent in agricultural GDP (or about 0.5 per cent of the total GDP) (World Bank 2006). With the substantial growth in GDP²⁵ in the last decade, there is a need to change the nature of growth in order to absorb young labour force entrants, and focus should be placed on agricultural development and investment. There is every reason to believe that agriculture will remain the mainstay of the Cambodian economy for the foreseeable future.

²⁵ As the third engine of economic growth, agriculture's share was 31 per cent of the GDP in 2004

However, despite the prominence of agriculture as the main source of employment and livelihood, this is being undermined by land concentration and the loss of land. Distressed poor families sell their farmland for short-term gain but without a means of on-going support. For example:

My son got seriously ill last year, and we had shortage of food; I had to mortgage our rice field to get 80 dollars...up to now I have no money to get it back...I am so worried that my land will go to the creditor...

– FGDs with mother group, Sangke Village, Svay Rieng

With low rice yields, the loss or lack of agricultural land, the reduction in natural resource stocks and little improvement of agriculture infrastructure in rural communities, a number of youths migrate to urban areas or the border to seek jobs. This indicates that agriculture alone will not be able to support local livelihoods, and the lack of improvements in the sector will ultimately impact upon youth in negative way.

We move to work in Poipet as cart puller because of poverty in the village, have no agricultural land, some of us have less agricultural land and there are even too many members in the family... Any year when there is not much rain for farming, our parents cannot afford to feed us... Our family usually in debt...we eat only twice per day...there is almost no job for us in the village besides farming, that is why we decide to come to work here even as it is hard and dangerous...but we have no other choice... – Discussion with group of youth cart pullers, Poipet

While a considerable proportion of youth is employed in garment factories, it is unlikely that the sector will be the primary economic engine of the country. Rather, there is need for the Government to reverse the less-than-positive trends in the agriculture sector in order to ensure rural livelihoods, especially among youth. Growth will have to be based on raising productivity, particularly in agriculture, in which a large proportion of the young population is concentrated.

5.4.2 PROMOTE LOCALLY AVAILABLE JOBS FOR MARGINAL YOUTH: FOCUS ON SME AND AGRO-INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

Creating jobs for youths in rural communities needs to extend beyond farming. We envision two potential scenarios for promoting locally available jobs for youth, namely: (1) small and medium enterprise (SME) development; and (2) agro-industry development.

SME DEVELOPMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT CREATION

SMEs dominate economic activities in Cambodia and account for a substantial part of total employment. Increasingly the key to the development of Cambodia, SMEs make up approximately 99 per cent of all enterprises and almost half of all employment (RGC 2005). Because of their importance to economic growth and poverty reduction, the Government has emphasized the important role SMEs play through various policy documents, including the Second Socio-Economic Development Plan and National Poverty Reduction Strategy. Despite progress in recent years, SME development faces considerable challenges (Box 5.1).

BOX 5-1: CONSTRAINTS TO SME DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY RESPONSE

An analysis of the SME sector shows that the major obstacles for its development relate first to an inadequate legal and regulatory framework. Thus, many of the necessary institutions, laws and regulations needed for an efficient private sector are currently missing or being developed. Furthermore, some of the existing institutions and regulations need reforming to improve the enabling environment for businesses. Secondly, there is limited access to finance. The primary cause of poor access to finance relates to the lack of suitable collateral, uncertain land titles, the lack of a comprehensive legal framework and poor contract enforcement, as well as a lack of diversity in financial institutions. There is also a lack of support services in the form of private sector business development services (BDS) or the provision of public goods and services.

Given these constraints, the Framework sets out a vision for the SME Sub-Committee that promotes a positive business environment, which will lead to a competitive SME sector, contribute to the creation of quality employment, and improve the range of goods and services available to the people of Cambodia. The vision is to be implemented through market-based solutions that draw on the experience of other countries, particularly those in the region facing similar problems.

In order to implement the Government's 'Rectangular Strategy' and achieve a conducive business environment, the SME Development Framework focuses on three key areas: (i) regulatory and legal framework; (ii) access to finance; and (iii) SME support activities. Several issues are identified and discussed within each of these three key areas. The discussion includes background information and the constraints and objectives faced by SMEs. For each sub-topic, the discussion then shifts to actions to be taken in two phases: Phase I: 2005-07, and Phase II: 2008-10.

Source: MIME 2005: Cambodia Small and Medium Enterprise Development Programme

Increasing demand for skilled labour, especially for SMEs, has been found across study areas. However, in most of the areas we assessed, youth have limited aspirations concerning future employment opportunities in their villages, citing the lack of locally available job opportunities. Again and again, the lack of education and skills are seen as major employment barriers that trap young people in menial jobs and in poverty.

Some see expanding vocational training as one means of addressing this problem. Currently, the capacity of vocational training institutions is a limitation to scaling up the required skills among youth. For those who are able to access such training, vocational centres are able to successfully link the young graduates to the labour market and with micro-financing schemes.

Every year thousands of youth apply for our vocational training programmes in Poipet, Sihanoukville and other Don Bosco centres. Most of them come from rural areas, particularly from poor families...however, our centres have limited capacity to take in all of them...with limited funds we accept only a proportion of the applicants...we are always happy that our students could get jobs with good salary after completing the study and could contribute to improving their livelihood and to development as a whole... if we could, we would expand our programme in the future and more evenly distribute this to include the more unskilled, low educated or the poor youth...

– Vice Principal of Don Bosco Vocational Training centre, Sihanoukville

AGRO-INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT AND JOB CREATION

As The World Bank (2006) has proposed, there is a need to increase the focus on agro-industry and agribusiness, and on rural livelihood improvement. Under the 2006-2010 NSDP, the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF) prepared the Agriculture and Water Resources Strategy in response to the emphasis on strengthening the agriculture sector. One sub-programme is on agriculture and agribusiness support (value chain).

MAFF sees that increasing production and diversifying agriculture will serve as a basis for downstream value-added processing (Technical Working Group on Agriculture and Water 2007). There are also opportunities for profitable development in the agribusiness value chain. For instance, 'upstream' marketing facilities such as transportation must be improved. This implies opportunities for the private sector and also for farmers and other people in rural areas to work cooperatively to add value to agricultural production. Thus, the policy and the current pattern of growth in agro-industry and agribusiness offer considerable openings for improving the livelihood of rural youth. At the same time, this will offer locally available on-farm and off-farm jobs and can be a source of cash income for young and adult workers.

Findings from FGDs and informal discussions with youths and their parents in Cheung Kor Village, Sihanoukville, substantiate the prospects for agro-industry and agribusiness. In this study area, an oil palm plantation has employed local people, especially youth, from surrounding villages with daily wage rates estimated at between 5,000 and 10,000 Riel. With jobs being available, the majority of youths are able to work close to their villages. Some families also reported that their livelihoods were much improved after the agro-industry development in their area. The downside to this development, however, is that some young people are reluctant to continue their education, due to their ability to earn income for their families and eventually drop out of school for full time employment in the plantation.

5.4.3 SCALING UP SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR YOUTH

FGDs across the study area expose the importance of vocational training provision to poor and marginal youth. Vocational training programmes may be a cost effective way of reducing youth vulnerability and linking them to employment opportunities. Priority should be given to marginalized youths, especially those who are out-of-school.

ADB (2006) points out that the expenditure on labour market programme stands at USD 2.21 million, with a total of 41,951 beneficiaries and is financed by international donor agencies, NGOs and the Government. In practice, the majority of the donor funds for this programme are channelled through NGOs and other development agencies in close collaboration with central government. The beneficiaries are mostly youths, including female heads of households. Currently, total social protection expenditure on this concern is far below the demand coming from the increasing youth population and those who require such skills provision (World Bank 2006b). Limited opportunities from vocational training programmes are a key constraint to promoting youth employability towards stimulating economic growth in the country.

5.5 POLICY AND PROGRAMMING IMPLICATIONS

Despite the significant progress in its economic development in the last decade, Cambodia remains among the poorest countries in Asia. This can be seen as the foremost challenge for the country and for creating broad-based economic development to provide employment to enable the rapidly increasing labour market to move out of poverty. Enhancing Cambodia's human resources, particularly youth, is crucial for the country's economic future.

An important observation of this study is the mismatch between the supply and demand of the young labour force, resulting in continuing poor youth employability. To better integrate youth into the labour market attention needs to be paid to the following: (i) agricultural development; (ii) improving locally available jobs for youth that focus on SME development and agro-industry; (iii) skills promotion and (iv) scaling up social protection programmes for youth. For relevant interventions to take place, more

collaborative and active implementation among stakeholders (the Government, private sector and development agencies) is required in the areas that promote decent jobs and equal access for Cambodian youth.

Another important issue to take into account relates to youth employment policy. A responsive government policy to enable a suitable labour market environment for youth is now critically needed. Skills development must be an integral part of the broader employment and development strategies. The challenge for government policy is to develop and foster institutional arrangements through which government ministries, employers, workers and training institutions can respond effectively to changing skills and training needs, and play a strategic and forward-looking role in facilitating and sustaining technological, economic and social advancement.

5.5.1 RESEARCH GAPS

The findings of this study point to the need for further research on several areas that relate to youth and their employment, particularly:

- A comprehensive study that can support the formulation of a solid and youth-responsive employment policy. Such a study should explore how to best enhance inter-ministerial collaboration and strengthen the links between education, vocational training, labour market entry and lifelong learning for male and female youth. This study could also define the role of the Government and its development partners in promoting such a policy.
- The gathering of accurate information on youth living standards in relation to their incomes and consumption and the cost of living for youths employed in different types of jobs. A survey would identify living standards in different areas of the country, this would allow only limited interpretation in detail by locality, of the results.
- Widespread poverty and vulnerability, combined with data constraints, make it difficult to measure the extent of youth and employment vulnerability. A more in-depth study should be undertaken on youth employment and vulnerability that also examines this issue's larger context.

VI

YOUTH AND HEALTH



Growing up in a developing nation like Cambodia creates both opportunities and challenges for young people, and a number of these challenges relate to health (UN Report on Situation of Youth, 2003). Social and cultural transformations have shaped young people's exposure to, and capacity to deal with, risk situations. Increased materialism and urbanization have brought with them economic, social and cultural shifts (Jourdan 2008). A critical factor is the continued development of information communication technology (ICT), which provides access to hitherto unavailable information, and can influence young people's perceptions and expectations particularly in relation to social, emotional and sexual health issues. Increasing numbers of young people find themselves in vulnerable environments, especially those who migrate from rural to urban areas seeking employment or education and find themselves living without family and social support (UN Economic and Social Council, 2000). Such environments have been shown to contribute to risks including HIV infection, alcohol and drug abuse, accidents and injury, sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. Additionally, smoking, lack of exercise and involvement in criminal behaviour are reported to be problems for some youths. The development of unhealthy behaviour during adolescence can have both immediate and lifelong consequences, and many global and regional reports have called for attention to youth health issues (World Report on Youth 2005).

6.1 HEALTH POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES SUPPORTING YOUTH

A number of laws and policies that are supportive of young people's health have been developed and adopted by the MoH and other relevant ministries and agencies. These include the abortion law; the women and family law; the law against domestic violence; the law against trafficking and sexual exploitation; 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; the national population policy; and the national strategic plan for a comprehensive response to HIV/ AIDS.

The National Birth Spacing Policy was established in 1995, while the Safe Motherhood Policy was adopted in 1997, giving high priority to safe motherhood and including action plan directives to reduce mortality and morbidity and improve women's health. The policies aim to enhance maternity care services, including birth spacing services, antenatal care, delivery services, essential obstetric care, the treatment of complicated abortions and the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS. The key strategic documents are the National Strategic Plan for Reproductive and Sexual Health 2008-2012 and the National Strategic Plan for Reproductive and Sexual Health 2006-2010, the overall goal of both being to attain a better quality of life for all women, men and adolescents through the provision of effective and appropriate sexual and reproductive health programmes. Four priority objectives were set out within the plan: (i) improved policy and resource environment for reproductive and sexual health priorities (e.g. maternal and newborn health, STIs and HIV and AIDS, and family planning); (ii) increased

availability and strengthened delivery of quality reproductive and sexual health services; (iii) strengthened community awareness of reproductive and sexual health needs and rights and increased demand for services; and (iv) an expanded evidence base to inform policy and strategy development.

In September 2005, the National Authority for Combating Drugs (NACD) published the Five-Year National Plan on Drugs Control 2005-2010 (NPDC 2005-2010) (<http://www.nacd.gov.kh>). The Plan aims to minimize drug-related harm to individuals, families and society. A structure for implementation, monitoring and reviewing this strategy is in place and includes opportunities for agencies and NGOs to work with the committees that oversee the strategy. NPDC 2005-2010 has identified youth as a 'high risk' group.

In 2005, MoEYS, in collaboration with the National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD (NCHADS)/ MoH, established the Programme on Life Skills for HIV and AIDS Education. It targeted in- and out-of-school youth, and piloted its first phase in two provinces (Siem Reap and Kampong Speu), subsequently expanding to 12 provinces in 2006/07. The Programme aimed to mainstream and strengthen the life skills of primary students (Grades 5-6) and secondary students through classroom teaching and a peer educator approach. Through the peer education-based approach, the Programme also targeted out-of-school youths aged 13-19, including street children, especially in Phnom Penh. However, there has been little if any monitoring or implementation data on these programmes and it is difficult to assess the reach, content or quality of what was being delivered to adolescents.

The Second Expanded Basic Education Programme (EBEPII) 2006-2010 was instituted in line with the Ministry's strategic priorities outlined in the current Education Strategic Plan and the Education Sector Support Programme 2006-2010. EBEPII mainly focuses on the integration of life skills associated with HIV and AIDS, drug abuse, early sexual initiation and reproductive health into the new curriculum. It will also integrate these life skills modules into community-based vocational skills training programmes within the framework of local life skills in collaboration with MoLVT. EBEPII will advocate for the use of these materials by the MoEYS Youth Department in its regular outreach activities with out-of-school youths aged 10-24. Key objectives of the programme are implementation and prevention activities for both in- and out-of-school young people, with an emphasis on the development of positive attitudes and behaviour change, and the necessary involvement of local communities.

6.2 CURRENT SITUATION

While there are no nationally available baseline data about the health behaviour and status of young Cambodians, smaller surveys suggest that sexual and reproductive health issues, including sexually transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS, unplanned pregnancy and unsafe abortion, are all areas of concern for adolescent/youth health. Other causes of morbidity and mortality include traffic accidents and injuries, drug abuse and gang violence. Negative lifestyle factors such as tobacco use, excessive alcohol consumption, drug abuse and poor use of leisure time undermine the ability of youths to move towards independent and responsible adulthood and full participation in society (World Youth Report 2007).

The major challenges to youth health include: sexual and reproductive health issues, including sexually transmitted infections and HIV and AIDS, unwanted pregnancy, pregnancy-related illnesses and unsafe abortion; mental health (suicide); accidents, including drowning, traffic accidents, falls, injuries from sharp objects and animal bites; and violence.