

FY2009 Women Leader Empowerment
Seminar in Asia Pacific Region

Country Report

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Population and Key Socio-economic Indicators

- Total population 14.08 million, average growth rate 1.81%
- The Country has 20 provinces and 4 municipalities and divided into 185 districts;
- 52.2% are female and 47.8% are male, women out number men 1.2 to 1 in Cambodia's adult population
- Life expectancy F= 67, M=63
- 85.% living in rural area, 15% in urban area and 6.9% in Phnom Penh
- GDP growth averaged 9.4% per year during the last decade, and 11% per year during the last five years, per capita: 550\$
- During 2003-2007; the average rate of inflation was 4.3%;
- 80% of the workforce is in the informal sector of the economy contributing 62% of the GDP (EIC 2005)
- 35% of Household below the poverty line
- Political Stability: Four National Elections; Constitutional Change for Forming a National Government (2006); Stability in Governmental Leadership

Situation of VAW

(statistics & salient features)

Violence has a strong negative impact on the lives of many Cambodian families.

The incidence of violence against women is widespread and the prevalence remains high in Cambodia.

A recent survey indicates:

64% of the Cambodian population knows a husband who physically abused his wife

- 22.5% of the female respondents had already suffered violence from their husbands**
- 30% of men and 26% of women said that violent acts by husbands towards their wives – acts that can cause death such as throwing acid, stabbing or shooting – are sometimes acceptable. The justifications for such abuse include challenging the husband’s dominance over his wife and/or women not fulfilling their gender roles.**
- Although most women do not agree that “a wife should tolerate beatings to keep the family together”,**
- 55% of women agreed with at least one reason which justified a husband beating his wife.**
- 15% of Cambodian men report being beaten by their wife.**
- The Youth Risk Behaviour survey conducted by the Ministry of Education shows that 27 % of young people aged 11-18 has experienced violence in their family in the past month.**

The survey also confirms support options and redress for victims are still limited. And prosecution and protection efforts remain weak but policy framework and prevention.

Legal Framework

Cambodia's legal and policy framework acknowledges the equal rights of women and makes strong commitments to increasing gender equality.

- Cambodian Constitution
- UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW)
- Cambodia Millennium Development Goals (CMDG)
- National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010 (NSDP)

Government Policy on VAW

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RCG) policy called Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency, released in July, 2004 puts "high priority on the enhancement of the role and social status of Cambodian women by focusing attention *on the implementation of the Gender Strategy, capacity building for women in all sectors, changing of social attitudes that discriminate against women, and ensuring the rights of women to actively and equally participate in nation building.*"

The RCG has set the elimination of violence against women as an indicator for development of the country. It has set clear standards, that violence against women is not acceptable in Cambodia. It has given action against violence against women priority. A special Cambodian MDG on Violence against women and children has been set by the Royal Government.

The Cambodian Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) policy document namely Neary Rattanak (Women are Precious Gems) is developed on the government rectangular strategy. "*Neary Rattanak outlines a vision and a five-year plan for the Ministry of Women's Affairs to complement the work of other ministries in their own projects that have an impact on women.*" Combating violence against women is one of the focus programme in the MoWA strategic plan.

The MoWA took the lead in developing a Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims which was adopted in 2005 and implemented in priorities areas beginning 2006. The law establishes the responsibility of local authorities to intervene in cases of domestic violence and provides for protection orders to be issued by courts to protect the victim from any further violence.

The Ministry together with development partners took further actions by mainstreaming the prohibition of sexual harassment and indecent behaviour in the workplace on the Cambodian Labour Law (Art 172). The Ministry has as well advocated for a Law on Trafficking and Sexual exploitation which was passed by the national assembly in 2008.

Early 2009, the MoWA has succeeded to get a National Action Plan to Combat Violence against women adopted at the inter-ministerial meeting government meeting.

Civil Society Intervention

To date, 35 national and 16 international NGOs have a specific focus on women's and gender issues. Civil society organizations are represented in most national gender mainstreaming mechanisms.

Since 1993, civil society groups were very active in addressing gender inequalities. And many initiatives were aimed at reducing gender based violence. However until recently these efforts mainly focused on legal solutions and the impact of violence overlooking the prevention feature.

The National Baseline Survey, Cambodia – 2005 reported the following concerns over the past approaches and strategies:

- ***The levels of domestic violence have not changed since a precedent survey carried out in 1996 (PADV).***
- ***The acceptance of violence as end of conflict is still widely accepted.***
- ***The Message “domestic violence is a crime” does not work with weak law enforcement.***
- ***Focus on pitying the victims, showing real cases contributed to weakened further women's position.***
- ***Rights education focusing exclusively on women did not work.***

Overseas Development Aid

The Government and its development partners have made strong commitment to increasing aid effectiveness, including harmonising efforts towards increasing gender equality.

- RCG co-signing the PARIS DECLARATION ON ENHACING AID EFFECTIVENESS
- Cambodian major donors have GENDER POLICIES

Mechanisms are being put into place to increase harmonisation of government and external development partner efforts, including gender responsive measures .

- The Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum (CDCF) comprising of all development partners has set a Joint Monitoring Indicators (JMIs) annually. Since 2005 GENDER INDICATORS have been included each year.
- National Technical Working Groups have been established for most key sectors and on cross cutting issues including GENDER.
- The Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) is working with MoWA to capture information on gender-related projects, programs and expenditures of donors.
- Donors are providing support to MoWA, the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW) and civil society organisations to advance gender equality, and support for mainstreaming gender in sectoral projects.

Best Practices to Eradicate VAW

Macro-level interventions (wide consultation process)

- Influence of MoWA in the Government Political Platform and on national planning processes to ensure available and adequate resources to implement gender responsible programs. E.g: Gender responsive measures are integrated into priority government donor joint indicators.
- Influence of MoWA in mainstreaming gender into the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDG). E.g: indicators are expanded to sharpen the focus on gender inequalities including gender based violence. To measure the country's development, the RCG has made the fight violence against Women a priority indicator. Cambodia is the first country of the world that included violence against women.
- Advocacy from MoWA for the adoption of key legislations protecting women .

Micro level interventions (wide consultation process)

- Pilot implementation processes in priority areas to feed the lessons learned into a National Plan National Action Plan against Gender Based Violence.
- Adoption of a National Plan National Action Plan against Gender Based Violence as one measure of the CMDG.
- Line Ministries, Donor agencies and NGOs involved in designing and implementing of programs on violence against women.

Major Obstacles to Eradicate VAW

Training of officials on a law alone will not change the prevalence of violence because if people do not understand that violence in the family is not acceptable they will not use the law.

To prevent violence - values need to be changed. It is important to challenge attitudes related to

- the Cambodian values and attitudes about families
- the role of men and women
- the conflict resolution methods
- the acceptance of violence
- the representation of women as victim

Therefore, a holistic approach is needed. We can only reach this goal with firm commitment and coordinated support from all relevant development partners from the mandated competences and across relevant development sectors.

Conclusion/Policy Recommendations

- Consolidate the policy environment towards preventing violence against women.
- Continue to strengthen the legal framework to respond to violence against women
- Reduce the social acceptance and tolerance of violence against women and stigmatization of women subjected to violence
- Increase the quantity, quality and access to social services for women subject to violence and abuse
- Strengthen enforcement of laws related to gender based violence
- Systematize collection of information on violence against women