

SITUATION ANALYSIS OF YOUTH IN CAMBODIA

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

United Nations Country Team
May 2009

* A youth at a focus group discussion in Phnom Penh

FOREWARD

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The report does not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the UN.

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ACLEDA	Association of Cambodian Local Economic Development Agency
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CARE	CARE Cambodia
CBOs	Community-based Organisations
CCs	Commune Councils
CDC	Council for the Development of Cambodia
CDHS	Cambodia Demographic Health Survey
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CESSP	Cambodia Education Sector Support Project
CGA	Cambodia Gender Assessment
CLS	Child Labour Survey
CMDG	Cambodia Millennium Development Goals
CNCW	Cambodian National Council for Women
CoM	Council of Ministers
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSES	Cambodia Social Economic Survey
D&D	Decentralisation and Deconcentration
DFID	Department For International Development
EBEP	Expanded Basic Education Programme
EC	European Commission
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EED	Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst/ Evangelical Development Agency
EFA	Education for All
EIC	Economic Institute of Cambodia
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESSP	Education Sector Support Project
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRESH	Focusing Resources on Effective School Health
FSW	Female Sex Workers
GDPs	Gross Domestic Product
GMAGs	Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups
GMAPs	Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans
HCP	Health Coverage Plan
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
HSS	HIV Sentinel Surveillance Survey

ICHA	Ministry's Interdepartmental Committee on HIV/ AIDS
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IDU	Intravenous Drug Use
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IOs	International Organisations
IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child labour
JFPR	Japanese Fund for Poverty Reduction
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KHANA	Khmer HIV/AIDS NGO Alliance
KIIs	Key Informant Interviews
LMI	Labour Market Information
LNGOs	Local Non-Government Organisations
LPPs	Local Planning Processes
LSS	Lower Secondary School
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIME	Ministry of Industry, Mine and Energy
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLVT	Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training
MOPS	Moving Out of Poverty Study
MoSVY	Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MoWRAM	Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
MSME	Medium and Small Micro-Enterprises
NACD	National Authority for Combating Drugs
NCHADS	National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NIS	National Institute of Statistics
NOVCTF	National Orphans and Vulnerable Children Multi-sectoral Task Force
NPDC	National Plan on Drugs Control
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
NYP	National Youth Policy
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
ODs	Operational Districts
OJT	On-the-Job Training
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PAP	Priority Action Programme
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia

RHAC	Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia
RHIYA	Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia
SEILA	Seila Programme
SESDP	Secondary Education Sector Development Project
SIDA	Swedish International Development Authority
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
TWG-G	Technical Working Group on Gender
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Plan
UNICEF	United Nation Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDPs	Village Development Plans
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
YRBS	Youth Risk Behaviour Survey
YSA	Youth Situation Analysis

GLOSSARY OF KHMER TERMS

Angkar	<i>GgÁkar</i>	Organisation
Cham	<i>cam</i>	One of minority groups in Cambodia
Mekong	<i>emKgÁ</i>	Name of Cambodian river
Mith Samlanh children	<i>mitpsMlaj;</i>	Name of an organisation in Cambodia working with street children
Neary Rattanak	<i>narlrtn³</i>	A comprehensive strategic policy focusing on gender and women
Riel	<i>erol</i>	Cambodian currency unit
Tonle Sap	<i>Tenøsab</i>	Name of Cambodian river

CAMBODIAN PLACE NAMES

Boeung Kok	<i>bwgkk;</i>	A lake in Phnom Penh
Cheung Kor	<i>eClgeKa</i>	Village in Sihanouk vills town
Laak	<i>lɤk;</i>	Village in Ratanakiri province
Neak Loeung	<i>GñkelOg</i>	Village in Prey Veng province
Poi Pet province	<i>e):ayEb:t</i>	International border gate located in Banteay Meanchey
Sangker	<i>sEgá</i>	Village in Svay Rieng province
Svahoul	<i>sVah'Yl</i>	Village in

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

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

A Demographic Profile of Youth

Cambodia's youth (aged 15-24 years) comprised 26 per cent of the total population in 2004, while 51 per cent were male.¹ Eight-in-10 (83 per cent) reside in rural areas, with the densest concentrations in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions, at 43 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively. Ethnically, 96.2 per cent of youth are Khmer, 2.2 per cent are Cham; and the remainder are indigenous groups, as well as Chinese, Vietnamese, and Lao. Most (74.2 per cent) belong to households with at least five members; and 35 per cent live below the poverty line (CSES 2004, MoP 2006). Interestingly, a higher proportion (82.1 per cent) of the 15-17 age group are in large households compared to the 18-24 cohort (70.3 per cent). More of the young women than men aged 15-17 and 18-24 are either married, living together with a partner, divorced or have been widowed.

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

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

¹ Statistics cited and tables presented in this section are derived from the youth profile in Appendix A .

comparable, but this changes with apparently fewer females economically active as they reach the ages of 20-24 years.

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

Economic and Social Context

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

Economic growth was rapid between 1994 and 2004, averaging 7.1 per cent annually. This growth has been largely fuelled by garment manufacturing and tourism, both of which employ large numbers of youths. Garment manufacturing grew at an average annual rate of 44 per cent, while tourism grew at 34 per cent yearly during the same period.

The majority of Cambodians (70 per cent) continue to work in agriculture, where growth has averaged 3.3 per cent per year – far below tourism and manufacturing; and today it represents less than 33 per cent (a decline from 46 per cent in 1994) as a share of the economy. Additionally, investment in agriculture has been low considering its importance to rural livelihoods, with public investment equalling only 0.55 per cent of GDP. Land tenure is generally insecure and landlessness is increasing.

With economic gains has come a decline of poverty, from 45 per cent in 1994 to 35 per cent a decade later, with significant urban-rural gaps (poverty in Phnom Penh fell from 11 per cent to 5 per cent over this period). As poverty rates have fallen, inequality has increased over the past decade, rising sharply in rural areas but remaining constant, albeit higher, in urban areas. Inequality rose from 0.26 to 0.36 in rural areas while remaining at 0.43 in urban areas.

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

Employment

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

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

Education

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

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

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

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

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

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

Health

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

Behaviour of concern includes tobacco use (by 13.6 per cent of 15-24 year-old males and 0.8 per cent of females) and alcohol consumption (20.9 per cent of males and 7.4 per cent of females). Many youth say they first consumed alcohol as early as 12 years of age. Young people report that they start to drink early due in part to peer pressure and/or emerging new lifestyle behaviours modelled by adults.

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

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

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

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

Vulnerability

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Participation and Rights

Most project priorities at the local level concern infrastructure, such as schools, roads, canals and irrigation. Little attention has been focused on the social aspects of youth development. The voice of

youth is not incorporated into planning processes, although youths are called upon to participate as labourers once decisions have been made. Youth are rarely called upon to participate in village meetings. There is consequently a need to mainstream youth participation in the development planning process at the local level. This should be incorporated as a key feature of a National Youth Policy (NYP).

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

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

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale of the Study

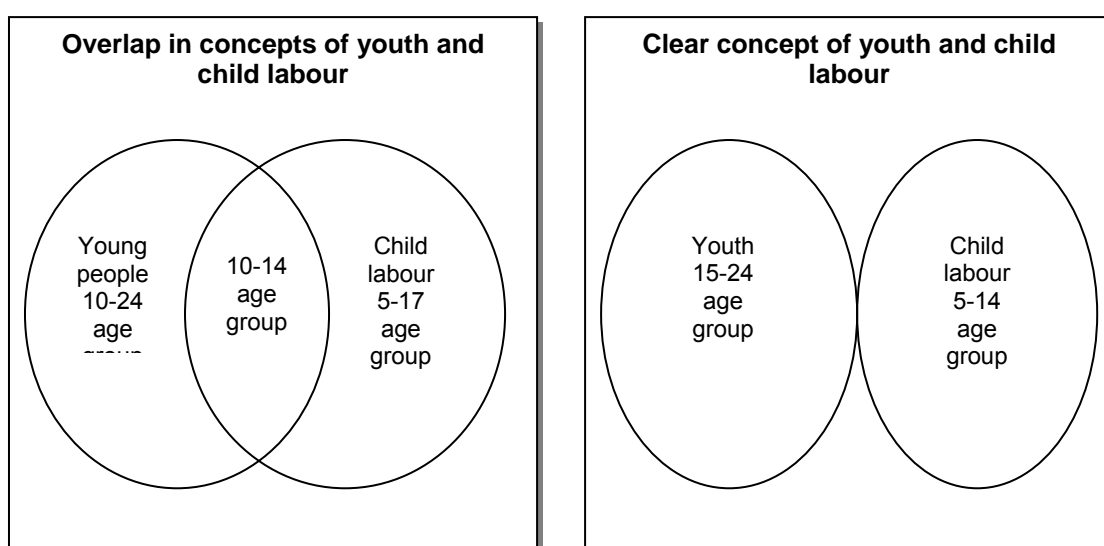
Cambodia is undergoing rapid demographic change. As of 2004², 60 per cent of the population was below 25 years of age. This situation has had major implications for Cambodia's socio-economic and political development, including labour market opportunities, access to public and family resources for youth, and the political future of a country in which the majority of the population have no experience (or even knowledge) of the Khmer Rouge regime or the country's recent conflicts. At the current pace of job creation, Cambodia will not have the capacity to compensate for the increasing numbers of young people entering the workforce annually (currently 300,000 per year, projected to increase to 400,000 per year by 2040). With the real risk of significant unemployment and underemployment, Cambodia faces the challenge of preventing increasing numbers of young people from entering both the informal and illegal economies. Additionally, as neighbouring economies grow, so too will transnational migration. A recent study by CDRI (2007) showed that cross-border demand for unskilled labour has increased, particularly in Thailand, and more recently in Malaysia. The recent trend of migrating to Malaysia has been spearheaded by the Khmer-Muslim community, and is likely to increase significantly in the future; however, migration to Malaysia is primarily conducted illicitly through Thailand.

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

1.2 Defining the Concept of Youth

The UN General Assembly defines 'youth' as individuals aged between 15 and 24 years, and young people between 10 and 24 years (UN General Assembly, 1995). Cambodia's Youth Department at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) defines youth somewhat more expansively as those between the ages of 14 and 30, although the concept is said to be a relatively new cultural import to the country (Bearup 2003)³. This study, however, adopts the UN General Assembly definition .

Figure 1-1. Statistical concept of youth and child labour



² This is based on Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey 2004 (NIS, 2005)

³ Bearup (2003) in his study on *Paupers and Princelings – Youth Attitudes Toward Gangs, Violence, Rape, Drugs and Theft*, provides a detailed description of the origins of the concept in Cambodia.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

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

The study specifically seeks to:

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

1.4 Methodology

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

1-1. Geographical distribution of youth population

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

Figure 1-2. Data collection framework

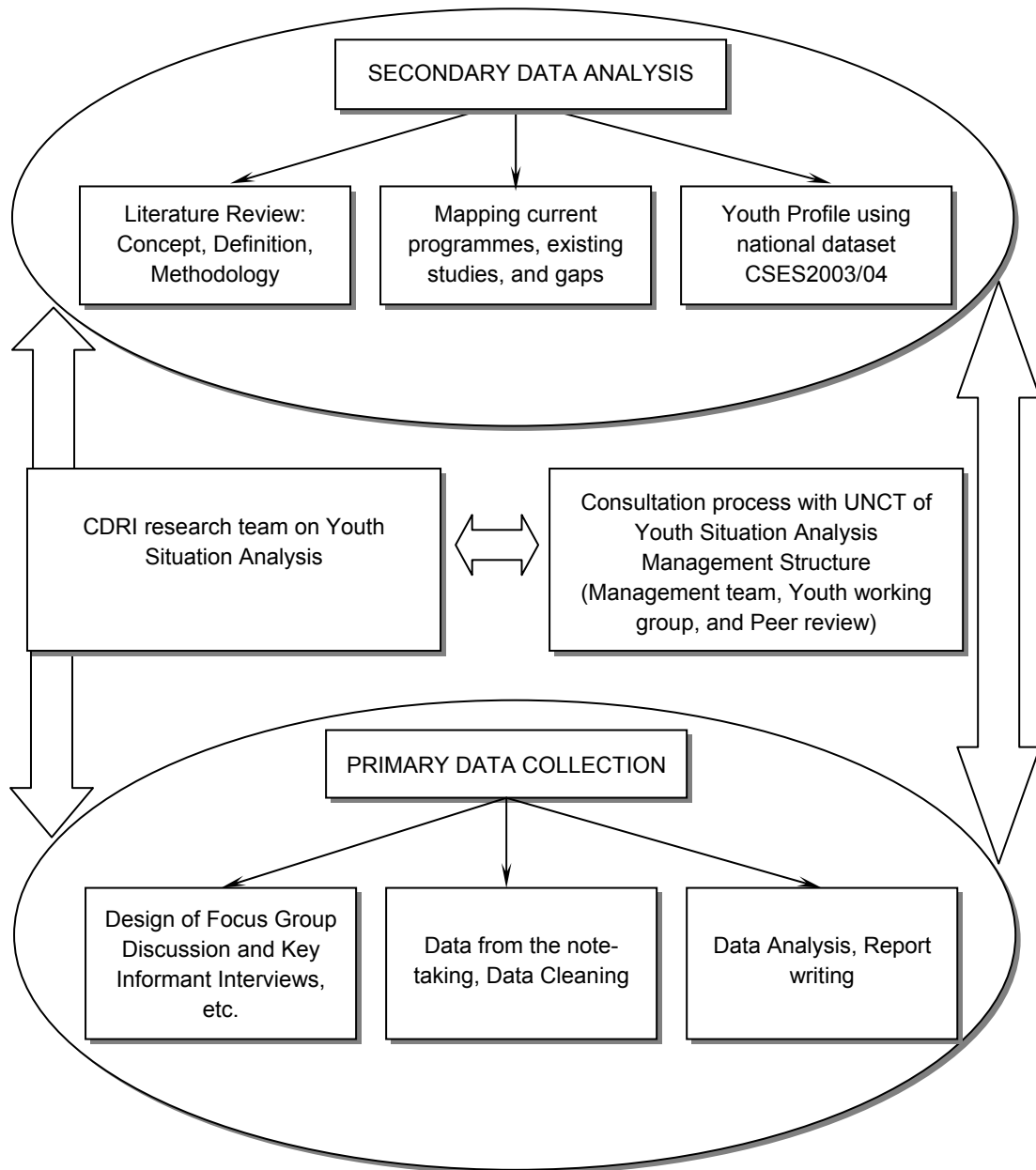
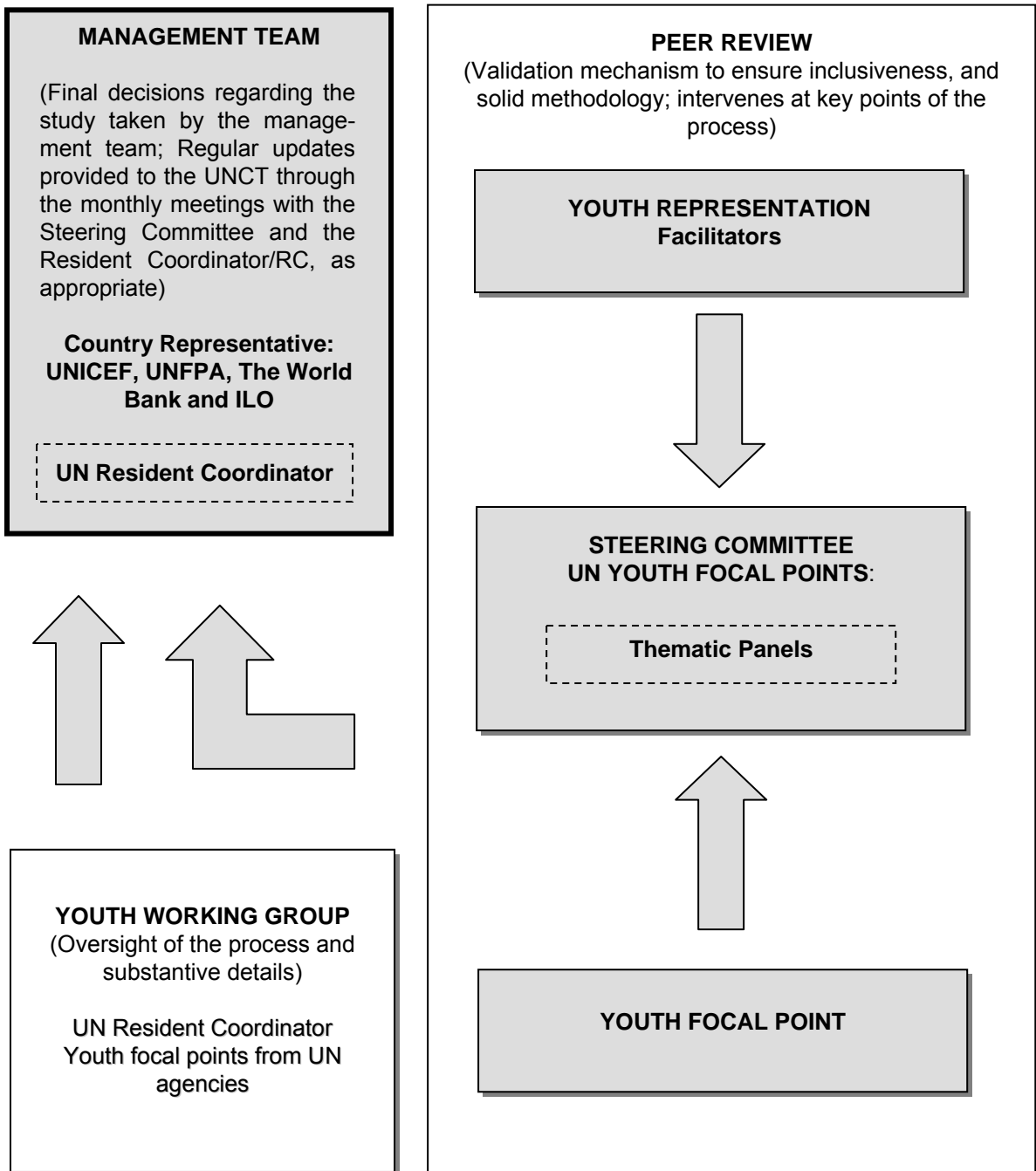


Figure 1-3. Youth situation analysis management structure



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 1-2 Activity/sample summary

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

^{a/} Phnom Penh = 3; Siem Reap = 2; Sihanoukville = 1, depending on available resources

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

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

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

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

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations characterize this study:

- As noted earlier, the focus of this study was on youth aged 15-24. While conforming to UN definitions, it excludes those aged 25-30 who, within the Cambodian context, are also considered 'youth'.
- Data from the Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES) 2007 were not yet available at the time of this study, so we relied upon 2003-4 data. Additionally, it proved difficult to obtain data on sensitive issues such as drug use and abortion.
- The lack of youth-specific data proved to be a challenge, so the study used population data, extracting youth-specific information where possible (e.g. CSES 2004, the Cambodia Inter-Censal Population Survey 2004, the 2005 CDHS, and the 2001 Child Labour Survey). The lack of such national data often precluded analysis by gender, age or geography. Additionally, data limitations did not allow for exploration of youth-specific issues such as early marriage, drug use, abortion and violence.
- The FGD methodology proved difficult for younger participants – aged 15-19 – due to their hesitancy to respond to questions and relatively greater difficulty articulating issues of concern.
- There are very limited data on young people aged 10-14.
- Time and resource constraints limited the mapping exercise, as it was able only to assess the number of interventions at the provincial level.

- Secondary sources were limited, in that it was often difficult to determine which initiatives were still operative. Moreover, the assessment refers only to the number of interventions, rather than to their scope, scale or impact.

CHAPTER 2 – YOUTH DATA AND TRENDS AT A GLANCE

2.1 A Profile of Cambodia's Youth

Cambodia has the youngest population in Southeast Asia, with young people aged 10-24 making up 36 per cent of the total population. Cambodia's youth – defined in this study to be those in the 15-24 age group – comprised 26 per cent of the total population in 2004 (Ministry of Planning 2006). There were slightly more males (51 per cent) than females (49 per cent).⁴ More than 8-in-10 (83 per cent) live in rural areas with the largest concentration being in the Plains and Tonle Sap regions at 43 per cent and 28 per cent, respectively. Ethnically, 96.2 per cent of them are Khmer, about 2.2 per cent are Chams and the remainder make up the indigenous groups, Chinese, Vietnamese and Lao. The majority (74.2 per cent) belong to households with at least five members, which may partly account for the fact that some 35 per cent of the youth population lives below the poverty line (CSES 2004, MoP 2006).

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

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

2-2. Total youth population by age group

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

Nearly 10 per cent of 15-19 year old females and over half (54.3 per cent) of those aged 20-24 are married, compared with 1.6 per cent and 36.2 per cent, respectively, of males in the comparable age groups. This reflects the relatively early age of female marriage, especially in the rural areas where marriages are still often arranged. Youth interviewees for this study, particularly in Phnom Penh, Poipet and Sihanoukville, indicated that they generally do not favour early marriage. Cohabitation is also an extremely rare behaviour, occurring in less than 1 per cent of either age group or gender.

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

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

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

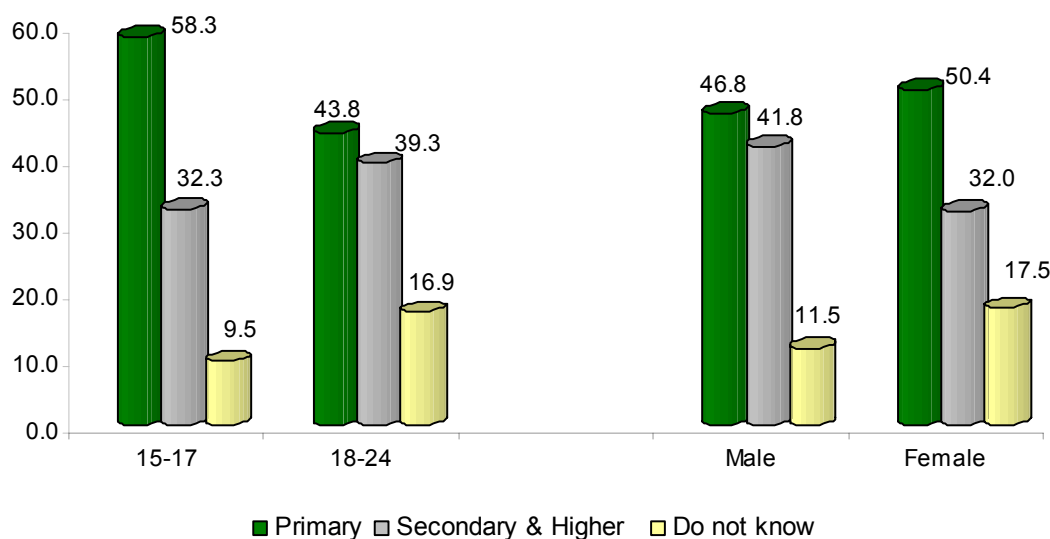
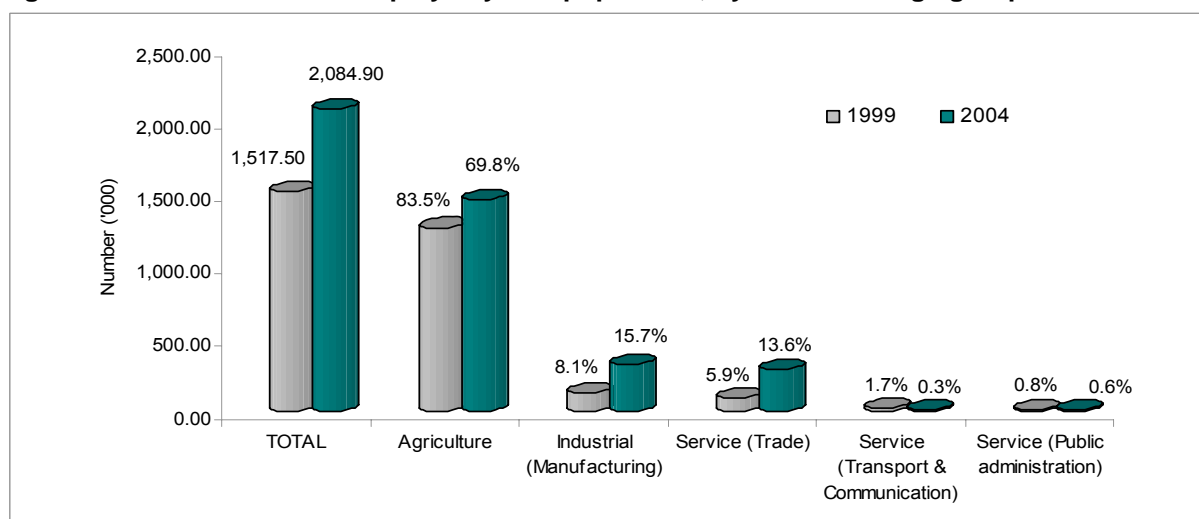


Table 2-3. Literacy by age group, sex and sector (%)

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

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

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



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

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

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

Age group	None	Primary	Lower Secondary	Upper Secondary	Total
15-19	13.4	42.2	34.5	10.0	100.0
20-24	18.9	36.2	25.4	19.3	100.0
25-29	23.7	37.0	22.4	17.0	100.0

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

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

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

2.2 Trends in Key Areas Affecting Youth

a. Education

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

Those who are poor, rural and (especially) female are more likely to be illiterate: CSES 2004 indicates that Cambodia has high illiteracy rates among young people aged 15-24 compared to the rest of the region. Additionally, vulnerable youth are much more likely to be over-aged or late school entrants. Late school entry may be related to structural factors such as child labour or malnutrition (e.g. in Ratanakiri and Poipet). While there have been substantial strides in reducing the gender and urban-rural gaps in

education, the country's poorest have not benefited as much. In FGDs with female youth aged 20-24, the majority consistently said that, with even a few years of formal education, they could better plan their families and have fewer children, have better knowledge of how to provide children with better nutrition, ensure they are immunized and procure appropriate medical care, thereby reducing child mortality. Barriers appear to be both financial and social. For example, parents in Svay Rieng, Siem Reap, Poipet and Sihanoukville reported that, while they would like to send both their male and female children to school, they were more inclined to support their male children's education since their daughters were more likely to be needed for housework.

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

b. Employment

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

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

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

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

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

c. Health

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

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

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

Both young males and young females have a good understanding of sexual and reproductive health and related infections. Youth interviewees learned about these issues from sex education and awareness campaigns in schools, and from NGOs in their villages. They also received training not only about sexual and reproductive health but also on HIV and AIDS. The youths' other sources of

information on sexual and reproductive health are television, village information boards, village peer educators (where there are such programmes) and community libraries.

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

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

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

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

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

d. Vulnerability

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

The mental health needs of youth often go undetected. As noted previously, the NIS/NIPH survey (2008) observed suicide to be a leading cause of death among 15-17 year-olds. FGD findings suggest that mental health issues stem from violence in the home, a perceived lack of caring from the family, feelings of isolation that result from migration for work, and the increased vulnerability of migrants who may enter into abusive relationships in exchange for friendship or food and shelter.

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

Sexual abuse appears to be increasing. The proportion of homicides associated with rape has increased from 2003 to 2004 (ADHOC 2005). The victims include sex workers, garment workers and working in beer halls and *karaoke* establishments, the latter two occupations mainly employing young women (MoWA 2008).⁵ Perpetrators have included young urban men, male university students, some members of the police and gang members, who engage in *bauk* or gang rape. Failure to report such events is common due to the shame and stigma associated with it, distrust of the judicial system, costs

⁵ In a 2006 study, ILO found the average age of beer promotion girls to be 22.7 years.

of prosecution, unofficial 'compensation' settlements between perpetrators and victims, and fear of retaliation from the perpetrator (LICADHO 2006).

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

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

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

e. Participation and rights

The needs and perspectives of youth are yet to be reflected in government policies and programmes. Such a lack of recognition appears to stem from an *age or knowledge hierarchy* (Brown 2008) in which community leaders feel that young people have little to contribute (Yong 2005). Additionally, Cambodian parents are wary and discouraging of civic engagement by their children, since this implies political involvement, which historically has been associated with risks (KYA 2008) as well as the failure of the education system to impart the values necessary for the development of skills among young people to help build and participate in modern democratic societies and ensuring good governance.

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 3 – MAPPING CURRENT DONOR–SUPPORTED AND GOVERNMENTAL YOUTH PROGRAMMES

3.1 International Covenants and Conventions on Youth and Young Children

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

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

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

Bilateral treaties and memorandums of agreement also underpin particular issues that affect youth. To promote safe migration for work, Cambodia has mutual labour cooperation agreements with Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on *Cooperation in the Employment of Workers* signed in May 2003, the Thai Government has accepted and legalized the status of Cambodians who are working in Thailand illegally (Lee, n.d.). Both countries also set up an Inter-Ministries Working Group for Cooperation to issue identification cards to Khmer migrant workers in Thailand, which allows them to apply for a work permit. Cambodia’s official mutual agreement with Malaysia, *Recruitment Procedures for Cambodian Nationals for Employment in Malaysia* (1997/1999), has allowed the country, since 1998, to officially send its workers to Malaysia, the majority of whom are women, who work as domestic workers, factory workers and shop assistants. Another related agreement is the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT), an MoU, signed in 2004 by Cambodia and five countries in the Mekong region (China, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam), which recognises the special vulnerability of women and children to trafficking and enables the six countries to actively work together to stop the rising trend of human trafficking in the region (MoT 2006).

As part of its efforts to address the illicit drug use problems in the country and in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, Cambodia is a signatory to an MoU on Drug Control, together with China, Laos PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam. The programme accompanying this MoU aims to: expand the work to develop the capacity to reduce demand among groups practicing high-risk behaviour; take action against amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) abuse in the East Asia and Pacific Region; reduce HIV

vulnerability from drug abuse; and improve regional responses to the combined problems of drug abuse and HIV vulnerability (Burrows 2003). The RGC also participates in the bilateral and trilateral annual sub-regional MoU ministerial meetings with Viet Nam and Laos PDR on drug control and cooperation, and in provincial level meetings among border provinces of Cambodia, Thailand, Viet Nam and Laos PDR (National Authority for Combating Drugs 2005).

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

3.2 National Legal Frameworks in Support of Cambodian Youth

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

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

Several legislative frameworks lend guidance to the formulation of a national policy and reinforce the need for youth participation in all social, economic and political activities. Article 34 of Cambodia's Constitution, for example, provides that Khmer citizens of either sex who are at least 18 years old shall enjoy the right to vote and to stand as candidates for election if they are at least 25 years old. Article 31 also states that the Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognise and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the covenants and conventions related to human rights, women's, and children's rights. Section 8 on Women and Child Labour of the Labour law of Cambodia⁶ 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

⁶ 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.

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 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).

⁷ Descriptions of specific programmes relating to youth are found in Chapter 4, Youth and Education.

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

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

C. Ministry of Health

In the fourth legislature of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the Ministry of Health (MoH) – together with line ministries and their development partners – is charged with improving the country's health by enhancing health services, especially reproductive, maternal and infant and child health services. The core strategies as reflected in its 2008-2015 Health Strategic Plan are: (i) further improve coverage and access to health services; (ii) strengthen the delivery of quality basic health services; (iii) strengthen the delivery of quality care; (iv) improve the attitudes of health providers sector-wide to become more responsive; (v) develop a culture of quality in public health and service delivery and their management; (vi) increase the number of midwives; (vii) 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 (Mol) 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 Mol 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 Mol 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"⁸ 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 Rehabilitation⁹

MoSAVY 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 and 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

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

⁹ Parts of this description on MoSAVY 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.

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 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.

MoSAVY 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. MoSAVY 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 MoSAVY'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.

MoSAVY 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 MoSAVY, 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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

¹⁰ Taken from The UN Secretary General's Database on Violence Against Women in <http://webapps01.un.org/vaw/countryInd.action?countryId=297>

¹¹ Ibid

sectors and sub-sectors receiving greater attention than others (Table 3-1).¹²

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 AIDS and 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/2006/10 0443	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
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, Cambodia	ONG-PVD/2006/118613	1-Jan-2007	31-Dec-2011	750,000 EUR	On-going

¹² Appendix A/ Annexes 3-1 and 3-2 also provide a list of the UN agency initiatives among youth in Cambodia.

#	Donor	Official Title	Programme Number	Start Date	Completion Date	Budget	Project Status
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, Cambodia	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/US A	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

#	Donor	Official Title	Programme Number	Start Date	Completion Date	Budget	Project Status
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

^{a/} Generated from ODA database of Cambodia in <http://cdc.khmer.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.¹³ 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 Analysis¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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

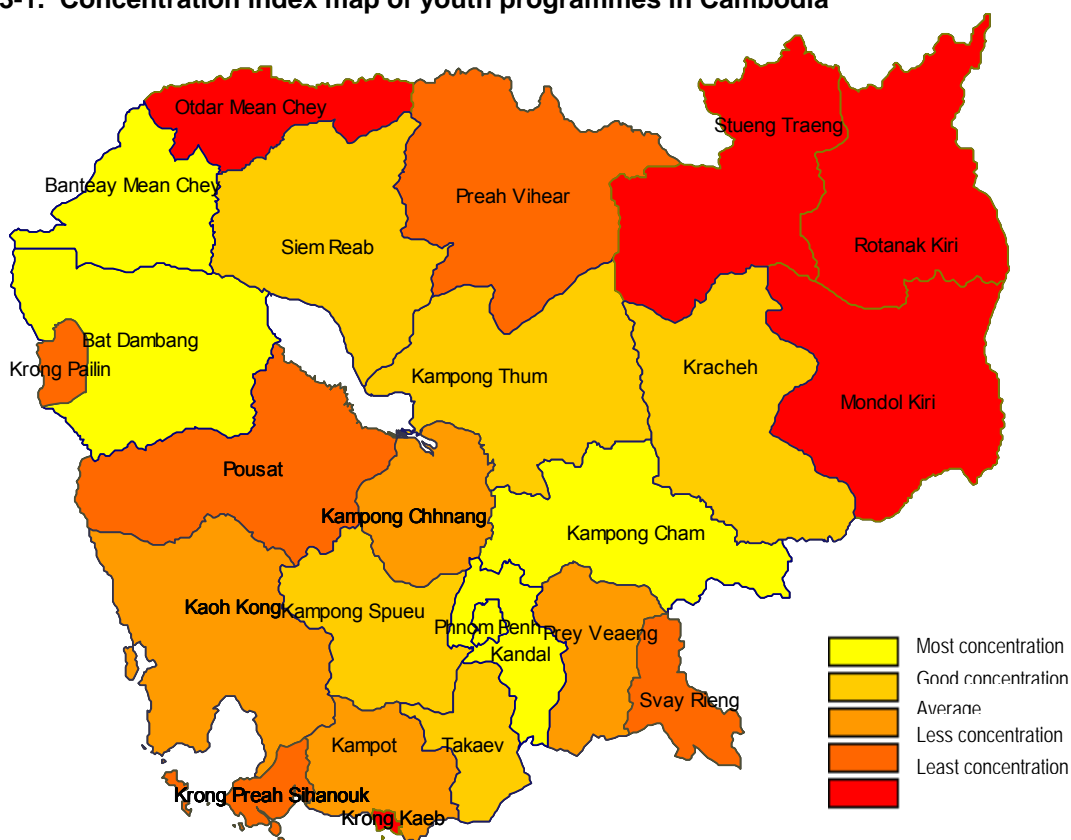
- NGO and IO programmes for youth tend to concentrate in areas that are easily accessible, with Kep, Stung Treng, Otdar Meanchey, Monduliri, Ratanakiri, Sihanoukville, Svay Rieng, Pailin, Preah Vihear and Pursat receiving less support. This suggests that while infrastructure has improved throughout the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

¹³ Directory of International Development Assistance in Cambodia 2005-06 and the Directory of Cambodian NGOs 2006-07

¹⁴ Principle components analysis (PCA) is a tool of exploratory multivariate data analysis, especially when the intent is to gain an overview of and an insight into the relationships between a set of variables and evaluate units (e.g., programmes) with respect to those variables (*The Sage Encyclopedia of Social Research Methods*, volume 2, edited by Michael S. Lewis-Beck, Alan Bryman and Tim Futing Liao).

¹⁵ 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



In the area of health (particularly sexual and reproductive health (SRH); HIV and AIDS and STI; primary healthcare and nutrition; and tobacco, alcohol and drug abuse), the least concentration of interventions occurs in Kep, Otdar Meanchey, Stung Treng, Ratanakiri, Sihanoukville, Pailin, Kampong Chhnang, Mondulkiri, 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 AIDS and STI by 2008. Most provinces and towns throughout the country also have **primary healthcare and nutrition** programmes or projects, except in Otdar Meanchey, suggesting that this province could have been unintentionally overlooked by the NGOs and IOs. This mapping could help promote increased intervention from development partners for more equitable distribution of programme and project resources across provinces.

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

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

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

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

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

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

3.3 Policy and Programming Implications

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

village-level youth associations and incorporating them into commune, municipal, district and provincial levels can also be a big move towards real political empowerment for youth.

CHAPTER 4 – YOUTH AND EDUCATION

“My parent asked...what would my education be worth for since in our house we have nothing to eat?” – Poor young female, Siem Reap Province

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

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

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

4.1 Youth Education-related Policies and Support Programmes

4.1.1 Review of Education Policy for Youths and Young People

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

Box: 4.1 Focus of ESSP 2006- 2010

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

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

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

4.1.2 Education Expenditure and Support

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

Due to MoEYS investment in school facilities and instructional materials over the past several years, a notable transformation has taken place in various levels of education. Systems performance, however, varies widely across regions in terms of quality, efficiency and coverage.¹⁶ 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

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

¹⁶ 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

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

^{a/} 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 4-1: 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

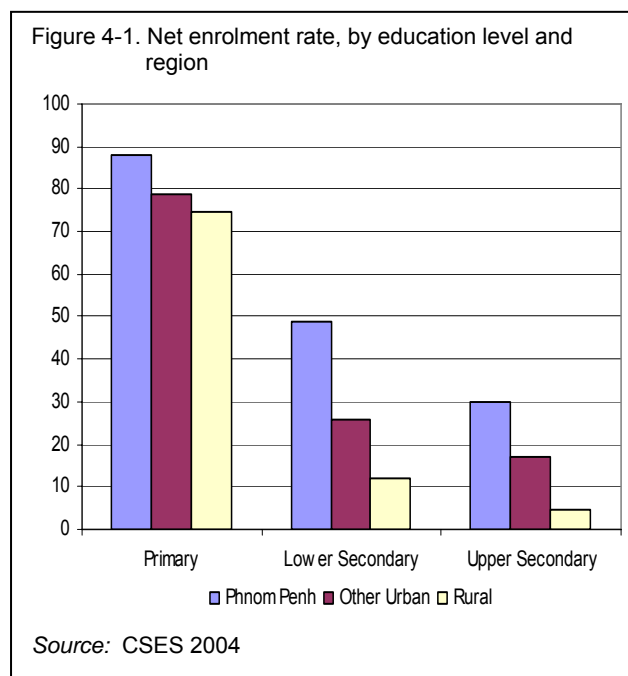
It is worth noting that most NGO- supported education interventions concentrate on major urban areas suggesting the benefits of education and improved access to it have not reached young people in rural and remote areas. Appendix A/ Annex 4-1 provides statistical data on the number of development partners 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).¹⁷ 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.

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).

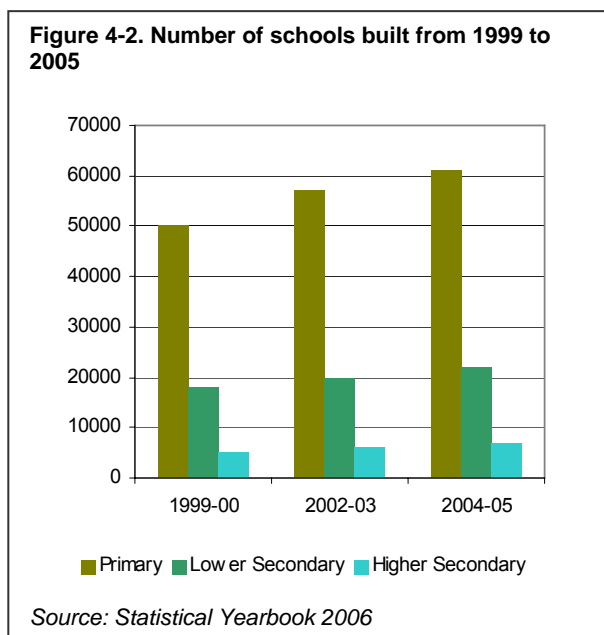
Distance is one of the main barriers to school attendance, especially for poor or indigent families in Ratanakiri and Siem Reap. FGDs with parent groups suggest that poor or female-headed households, in particular, are reluctant to send their children to school or to let them continue their education to lower or upper secondary level. due to the time required and transportation costs.

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.

¹⁷ 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.

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.

Box 4-2: 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)

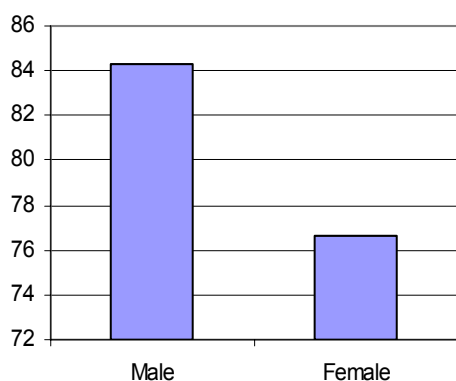
Parents now also have more intention to send their children to school with both and what is seen as a reasonable fee policy together with government subsidies - Scholarship for the poor.

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

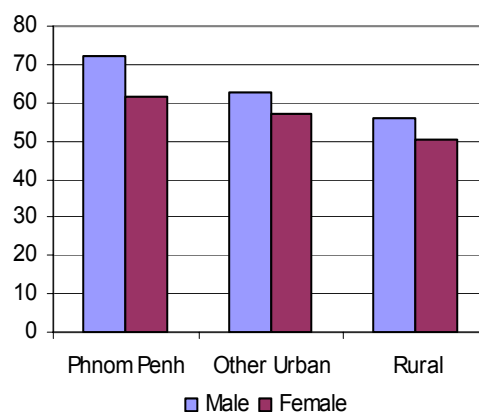
Source: CDRI 2006b

Figure 4-3. Increases in literacy among young people and in-school students, by gender and location

Percentage Young people (age 15-24) Literacy Rates



Percentage of in-school young people (5-24) by region



Source: CSES 2004

Box 4-3: 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 rates¹⁸ 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.”¹⁹ 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.

4.2.3 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’.²⁰ 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,²¹ so the cost of sending all five children to school is beyond the means of many families, as it could consume between 75 per cent and 100 per cent of their income, depending on their poverty status (World Bank 2006). Under these circumstances, difficult decisions are made about which children remain in school.

I have three children. I usually spend around ,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

¹⁸ Survival rate in this context refers to the number of pupils who complete their education

¹⁹ Drop-out rate: the number of pupils who leave school before completing their education

²⁰ Individual factors that are powerfully linked to school retention include aptitude, motivation, gender, the presence of physical or mental disabilities, and access to early childhood nutrition and stimulation programmes.

²¹ http://www.moc.gov.kh/national_data_resource

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 4-4).

Box 4-4: 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 MoSAVY in preparing training courses at Women in Development Centers, and proposed dormitories for girls.

Source: MoWA 2006

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).

4.2.4 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 MoL.

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 4-5). The balance and sequencing of education policies across the three dimensions – post primary education opportunities, tools to enhance education decision making, and second-chance education options – as well as prioritization among them (basic skills rather than post-basic skills) depends on the state of the education system (how it performs in preparing youth for work and life), its level of development, its overall development priorities, and the priorities of its young people.

Box 4-5: 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.

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

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

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

4.3 Health and Civic Education Programmes for Youth

4.3.1 Youth and Health Education

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

Box 4-6: Youth reception of health education

The local NGO, Reproductive Health of Cambodia (RHAC) has come to educate youth on reproductive health and HIV and AIDS. 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 and AIDS', MoEYS has implemented since 1999 an HIV and AIDS 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 and AIDS in the education sector; integrating HIV/AIDS in the national curriculum; and training pre- and in-service teachers and education officers.

4.3.2 Youth and Civic Education²²

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:

²² The issue of youth and civic engagement is discussed in Chapter 8.

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.

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.

CHAPTER 5 – 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. 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 70 per cent of the labour force despite its comparably slower growth rate (3.4 per cent). 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. 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. MoE 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, MoSAVY²³, 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.

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

²³ Vocational training is being offered to disabled persons and street children, but this programme is not large-scale

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

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

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 5-5). Industry accounts for an additional 3 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. Percentage of young employed population by sector and age group

	10-14	15-19	20-24	25-29
Agriculture sector				
Agriculture	68.4	81.4	64.2	38.7
Industrial sector				
Manufacturing	3.6	13.7	18.9	8.3
Service sector				
Trade	9.7	14.8	13.6	8.7
Transport and communication	0.1	0.3	0.4	0.1

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

Source: CSES 2004

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 GDP²⁴ 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.

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

²⁴ As the third engine of economic growth, agriculture's share was 31 per cent of the GDP in 2004

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 Center, 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.

CHAPTER 6 – 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 sexually transmitted infections (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 and 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.

6.2.1 Sexual and Reproductive Health

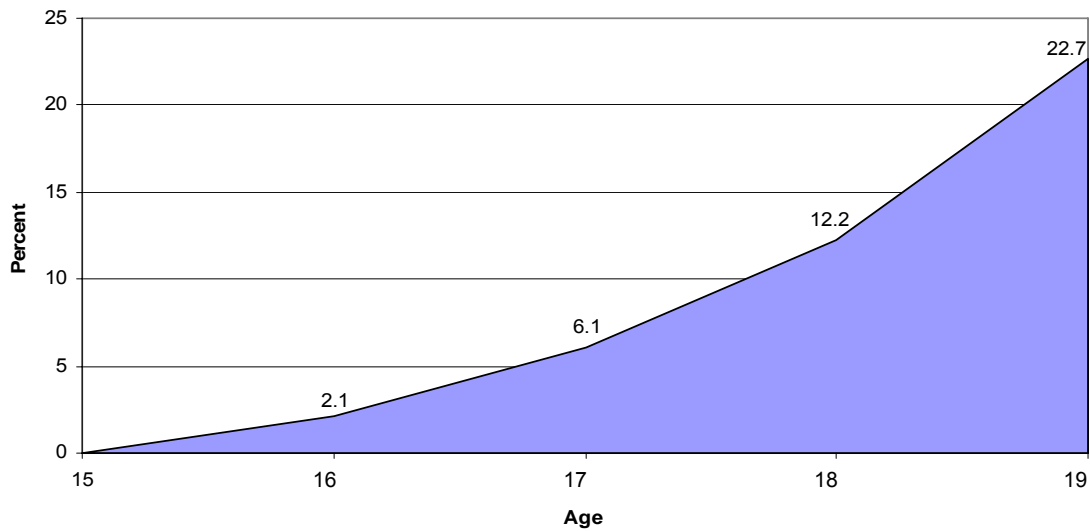
Age at first marriage

The age at first marriage is linked to women's reproductive health and maternal mortality. The average age for first marriage in Cambodia is relatively young compared to other countries in the region (UNICEF 2005), at 20 for women and 22 for men. They are slightly higher in urban areas, 21 for females and 24 for males (CDHS, 2005). According to CDHS 2005, the median age of first marriage for women has decreased about half a year over the past generation.

Unplanned pregnancy

According to CDHS 2005, approximately 8 per cent of Cambodian women aged 15-19 have become mothers or are currently pregnant with their first child. About 23 per cent of young married women have already given birth by the age of 19 (Figure 6.1). Early childbearing is far more common in rural areas, where 8.3 per cent of 15-19 year-olds had given birth, compared to only 6.0 per cent in urban areas (CDHS 2005).

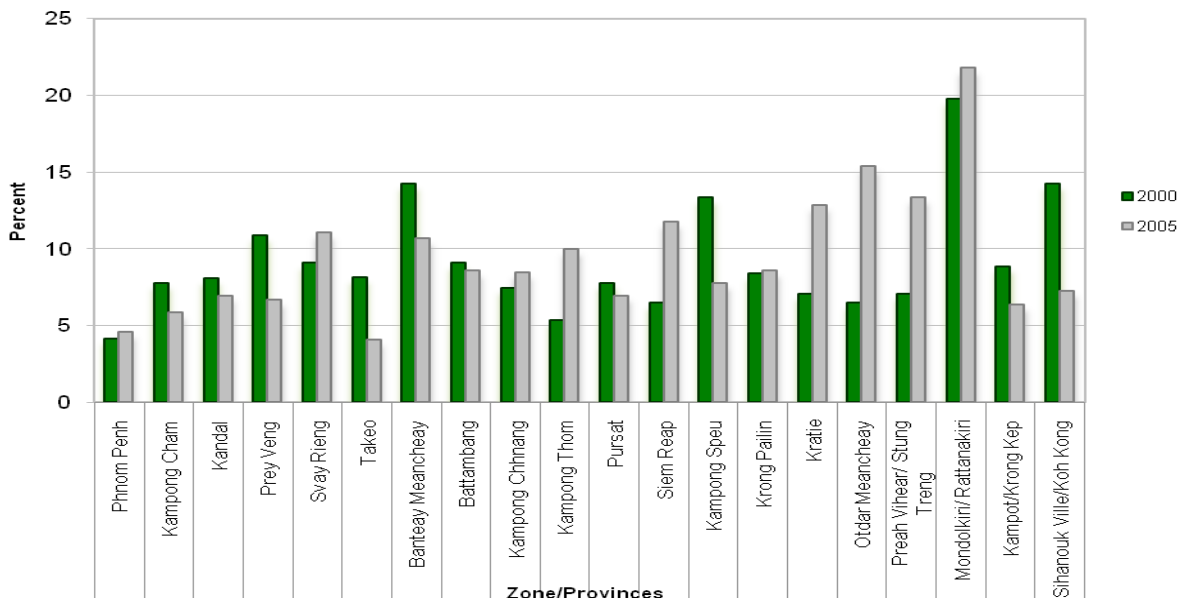
Figure 6-1. Percentage of currently married women aged 15-19 who have begun childbearing, 2005



Source: CDHS 2005

In geographic terms, the percentage of young married women in mountain/forest or remote regions who have begun childbearing increased between 2000 and 2005 (Figure 6-2). The highest proportion was found in Mondolkiri/Ratanakiri, where childbearing increased from 19.8 per cent in 2000 to 21.8 per cent in 2005. Other increases over the same period were measured in Otdar Meanchey (6.5 per cent to 15.4 per cent), Preah Vihear/Steung Treng (7.1 per cent to 13.4 per cent) and Kratie (7.8 per cent to 12.9 per cent). Increases also occurred in provinces within the Tonle Sap zone, including Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Cham and Siem Reap.

Figure 6-2. Trends in childbearing among currently married women aged 15-19, 2000 to 2005



Source: CDHS 2000 & 2005

Abortion

Data on abortions has not been disaggregated well enough to identify adolescent and young women within the overall figures, which relate to women aged 15-49. According to CDHS 2000 and 2005, the

percentage of abortions among women aged 15-49 increased from 5 per cent in 2000 to 8 per cent in 2005. The proportion of women aged 15-19 who reported having had an induced abortion was less than 1 per cent in 2005. However, under-reporting of such behaviour is common. The most common place to get an abortion for women aged 15-34 was at private clinics (35.3 per cent), followed by other homes (33.7 per cent), private homes (11.5 per cent) and public health facilities (10.8 per cent). Given the lack of regulation of private providers, this is a cause for concern. The percentage of women who obtained an abortion from a trained professional was 87.3 per cent among urban women and 76.1 per cent among rural women (CDHS 2005). The fact that almost 1-in-4 women did not use an untrained provider is an issue requiring further study.

6.2.2 Youth Awareness of Health-Related Issues

Contraceptive knowledge and use

In general, knowledge of family planning methods among married women is good, particularly among young married women aged 15-24. However, less is known about those who are unmarried. About 97.3 per cent of those aged 15-19 know at least one method of contraception and exactly the same percentage know of modern methods (CDHS 2005). Those aged 20-24 had even better knowledge, at 99.2 per cent and 99 per cent, respectively. In practice, however, the use of contraception among married women remains low, with 20.8 per cent of the 15-19 age group reporting the current use of any method, and 13.7 per cent reporting the use of a modern method. The proportions are higher among the 20-24 age group, with 34.6 per cent reporting using any method and 23.3 per cent reporting using a modern method. The most popular method of contraception by young married women is the pill, followed by withdrawal and injectables (Table 6-1). Information does not appear to exist on unmarried people's knowledge and use of contraceptives.

Table 6-1. Contraceptive method use by currently married women aged 15-24, 2005 (%)

Contraceptive method	15-19	20-24
All married women	100.0	100.0
Contraception	20.8	34.6
Daily pill	7.0	10.7
Monthly pill	0.6	1.6
IUD	1.7	1.0
Injectables	1.6	6.3
Male condom	2.8	3.0
Rhythm	1.2	3.3
Withdrawal	5.9	7.9
Other	0.1	0.6
Not currently using	79.2	65.4

Source: CDHS 2005

Knowledge of sexual and reproductive health

According to FGD participants, both young males and females have a good understanding of sexual and reproductive health and related infections. Youth interviewees stated that they learned from sexual education and awareness campaigns provided by NGOs in their villages, and in school. They mentioned training provided by the Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) on sexual and reproductive health and HIV and AIDS. Some also cited other sources of information such as television, village and community library information boards, the latter being supported by the NGO, Open Forum of Cambodia. FGD participants also cited peer educators in their villages as another information source.

Besides learning from school, I received training on sexual and reproductive health from a local NGO, called RHAC, through its staff, who often come to my village. The training conducted in the village gathers all the youth and sometimes both parents to participate in

the training also. I have also learnt through the community library in the village and from the TV in my house... – FGD, 15-19 year old female, Sangker village, Svay Rieng

Although there has been improvement in terms of increased awareness of sexual and reproductive health among young people, the depth of penetration across the country is not clear. Key informants suggest that where there are no NGO or governmental programmes, awareness is much more limited. They also observed that while awareness-raising efforts of locally based organizations, and the dissemination of public information on sexual and reproductive health, HIV and AIDS and STI among young people have been significant achievements, they need to be expanded.

It is most likely that many rural youths have limited access to information on reproductive health. Consequently, they may have incomplete knowledge and understanding of important issues such as sexuality, contraception and safe sex.

Perceptions about marriage and family planning

The majority of the young FGD participants knew that early marriage or pregnancy for women between 15 and 18 can have health consequences for both mothers and children, and negatively impact upon employment opportunities. There was a range of opinions on the appropriate age for marriage for young people. However, there was a general consensus that the ideal family size would be between two and three children. They reasoned that, with a fairly small household, parents have enough time to work to earn income, while mothers and children can enjoy good health.

Gender and culture-related issues

Historically, culture and tradition limited the amount of sex information provided to those who were not married, especially females. Elders felt that sex was not a topic fit for conversation; and if it was to be discussed at all, it was the role of parents.

Slowly, traditional attitudes have shifted and there is now awareness that sex education is important for young people. Young unmarried people, especially girls, are allowed to talk more openly within the family, and have the opportunity to participate in community meetings to discuss issues concerning their health, such as sexual and reproductive health, family planning and abortion.

Unlike our old generation, the young people in modern society have a lot of opportunities to learn about sex and reproductive health from many sources of information, such as school, TV and radio. More practically, some non-government organisations send their staff to educate people in the village, especially youth, about HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health. Elders from previous generations heard mostly from their parents only. Sometimes because the household is very busy with farm or business activities, children in the household have no chance to learn about this... – FGD with mothers' group, Sangker village, Svay Rieng

Knowledge of other impacts on health

In 2006, through its Reproductive Health Initiative for Youth in Asia (RHIYA) project, UNFPA-Cambodia conducted a youth reproductive health survey that targeted 10-24 year-olds and posed several questions on knowledge and experiences related to illicit drug use. The survey found that awareness of prohibited drugs among young people was very high (over 90 per cent of males and females aged 10-14, and over 98 per cent in the 15-24 age group).

However, the MoEYS 2004 Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) among young people aged 11-18 found that only 43 per cent reported receiving education about drugs, nationwide. Interviewees said they learned about drugs from school (38 per cent), other organizations (2.7 per cent) and other sources (1.8 per cent). Only 40.6 per cent of the males and 42.5 per cent of the females reported awareness of drugs. Out-of-school youths had significantly lower awareness of illicit substances (10.2

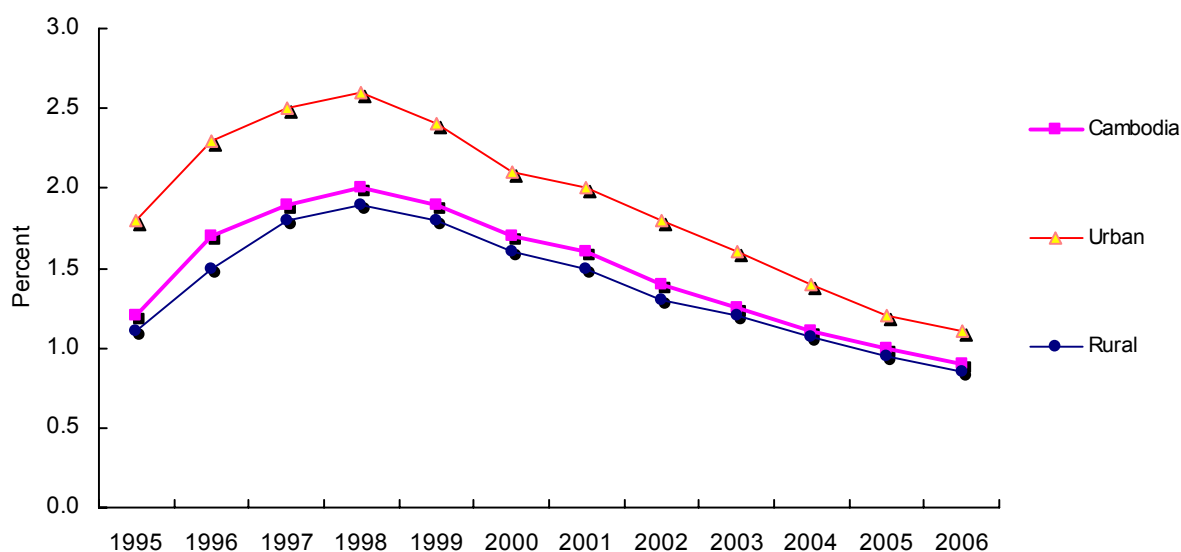
per cent) compared to their in-school peers (78.8 per cent). About 43 per cent of the respondents aged 11-18 said that the best way to avoid using drugs was to avoid making friends with drug users. Some 37.1 per cent suggested that young people should not try drugs, and 28.1 per cent proposed that they should stay away from drug users. Clearly there are some major discrepancies in the research in this area.

6.2.3 Youth and HIV and AIDS

Cambodia has made significant inroads in its efforts to prevent and fight HIV and AIDS in recent years. Based on its periodic HIV Sentinel Surveillance (HSS) from 1995 to 2006, NCHADS reported in 2007 that the prevalence of HIV among the adult population (aged 15-49) had gradually decreased from 1.9 per cent in 1995 to 0.9 per cent in 2006, after peaking at 3.3 per cent in 1998. HIV prevalence is higher in urban than rural areas (Figure 6.3). The NCHADS estimate is higher than the 2005 CDHS estimate of 0.6 per cent, which NCHADS attributes to the fact that the 2005 CDHS covered only formal households and excluded non-household women at high risk of HIV infection. The Asian Epidemic Model developed by NCHADS in 2007 predicted that the prevalence of HIV in adults aged 15-49 is expected to decline from 0.9 per cent in 2006 and to stabilize at 0.6 per cent after 2010.

Although HIV prevalence among Cambodian adults has declined remarkably, issues relating to specific population groups must still be considered. Groups at high risk of HIV infection are female sex workers (FSW), men who have sex with men (MSM) and intravenous drug users (IDU). Data on the prevalence of HIV among these groups gathered by HSS 2006 and NGOs (on women attending antenatal centres) showed that HIV prevalence among the FSWs stood at 12.6 per cent, down from 21.4 per cent in 2003 (NAA 2008). The National AIDS Authority (2008) notes that 7.2 per cent of this proportion consists of people younger than 25. The prevalence of STIs among MSM was 9.7 per cent in Phnom Penh and 7.4 per cent in the provinces (UNICEF 2008a). Consistent condom use by this group is apparently low and many MSM have multiple sexual partners, including females. Stigma and discrimination result in many MSM being unable or unwilling to access health services, including voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) and prevention services, particularly young MSM (UNESCO 2008, cited in UNICEF 2008a). The 2003 KHANA study on MSM in Phnom Penh, Battambang and Siem Reap supports this observation, finding that condom use by MSM was low and inconsistent, and that their knowledge of safe sex practices and HIV and AIDS was uneven, placing many young men at risk of HIV infection, as well as the young women who have sex with them.

Figure 6-3. Trends in HIV prevalence among population aged 15-49, 1995-2006



Source: National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD (NCHADS)

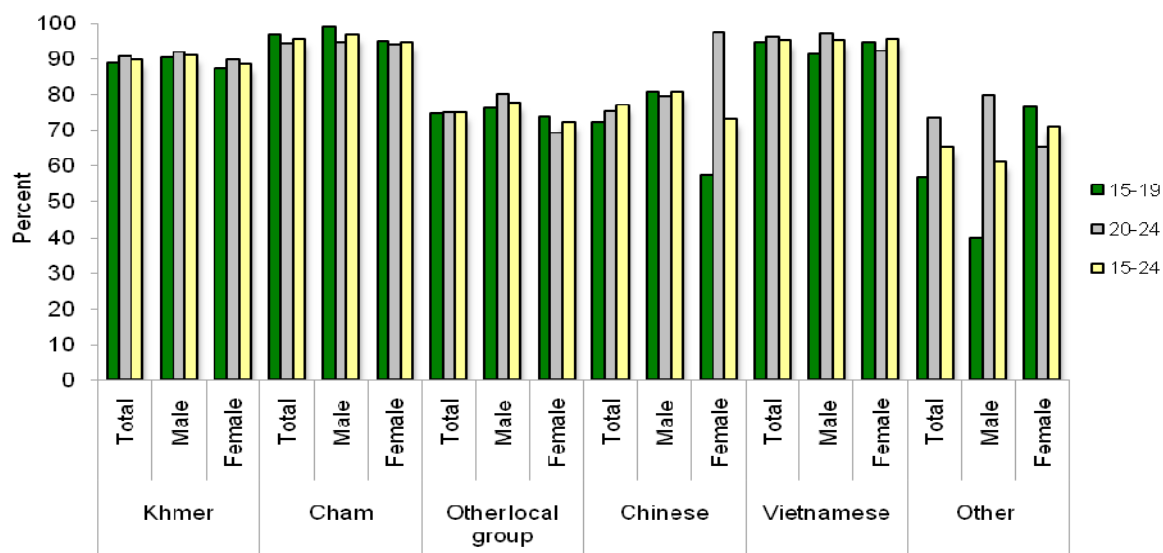
HIV prevalence rates among pregnant women aged 15-24 attending antenatal clinics has remained fairly stable between 2003 and 2006; at an estimated 0.36 per cent and 0.41 per cent, respectively (HSS 3003 and 2006). Recent research has found that approximately 43 per cent of new infections are occurring in married women aged 15-49. Most are believed to have been infected by their husbands (NAA, 2008). HIV prevalence rates for youth are not available in HSS 1995-2006 or CDHS 2000. However, the 2005 CDHS gives an estimate of 0.2 per cent for youths aged 15-24. Figures for females and males in this age cohort were 0.3 per cent and 0.1 per cent, respectively.

Youth awareness of HIV and AIDS

Knowledge of HIV and AIDS among Cambodian people is high. According to the 2004 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (CSES), about 90 per cent of Cambodians have heard of HIV and AIDS. The same survey estimated that knowledge of HIV among youths aged 15-24 was also high, ranging from 88 per cent to 98 per cent across all areas of the country. CDHS 2005 revealed similar results (98.3 per cent of men and 98.7 per cent of women aged 15-24 have heard of HIV). The 2006 RHIYA Cambodia Endline Survey, covering 2,056 young people aged 10-24 across its seven target provinces, showed similar findings, with almost 100 per cent of both young males and young females saying that they have heard about HIV and AIDS.

However, the same cannot be said of young people belonging to Cambodia's local ethnic groups. These groups comprise of upland ethnic minority and indigenous people, the majority of whom live in remote rural or mountainous regions. Figure 6-4 shows that, the proportion of young males and females from 'other' local ethnic groups who have heard of HIV and AIDS is comparatively lower than those of other ethnicities in the same age cohort (CSES 2004). Poverty also limits awareness of the impact of HIV and AIDS. For example, most homeless or street youths, young migrants seeking jobs and young female sex workers face risk of infection due to their limited access to information, or the relationships they may establish to satisfy their need for intimacy and a feeling of belonging, or for food or protection (Mith Samlanh-Friends 2002).

Figure 6-4. Percentage of youths who have heard of HIV and AIDS, by gender and ethnicity



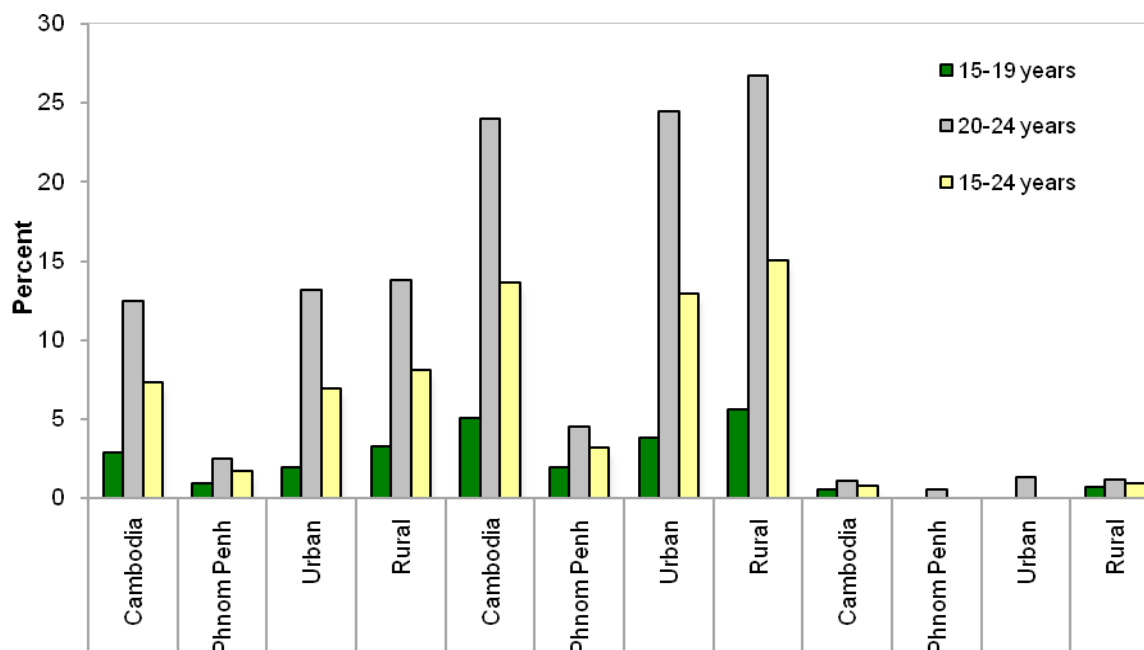
Source: CSES 2004 datasets

6.2.4 Tobacco Use

Smoking is a risk factor associated with serious diseases, and it is recognised as the single most preventable cause of death in the general population. According to CSES 2004, smoking is more prevalent among young men than young women, and across ages. Overall, 7.3 per cent of Cambodian

youths aged 15-24 were current smokers (13.6 per cent males and 0.8 per cent female). A higher proportion of rural youths (8.1 per cent) smoke cigarettes than urban youths (6.9 per cent) or youths in Phnom Penh (1.7 per cent). More significantly, male youths in rural areas (15.1 per cent) smoked cigarettes more than their urban counterparts (12.9 per cent) or young males in Phnom Penh (3.2 per cent). Female youths in rural areas (0.8 per cent) also smoked more than those in other urban areas or in Phnom Penh, where almost no smoking was noted (Figure 6-5).

Figure 6-5. Proportion of Cambodian youths who are current smokers, by age and region



Source: CSES 2004 datasets

Among adolescents aged 15-19 years, 2.9 per cent of males and females reported having smoked a cigarette. Of these, 5.1 per cent of the males and 0.6 per cent of the females indicated they smoke on a daily basis. By strata, the proportion of smokers among 15-19 year-old adolescents in rural areas was found to be higher (3.3 per cent) than in urban areas (2 per cent) or Phnom Penh (0.9 per cent). Some 5.6 per cent of males in rural areas said they had smoked compared to 3.8 per cent of males in urban areas and to 2 per cent in Phnom Penh. While 0.7 per cent of females in rural areas were smokers, almost no females in urban areas or Phnom Penh smoked.

Clearly, smoking increases with age. A large proportion of those aged 20-24 were smokers. Figure 6-5 shows that 12.5 per cent of 20-24 year-olds are smokers, although not shown on the graph, there is a significant difference between the proportion of males and females smoking (24 per cent and 1.1 per cent, respectively). By region, the largest percentage of smokers were rural males (26.7 per cent), followed by urban males (24.5 per cent) and Phnom Penh males (4.5 per cent). Among females aged 20-24, 1.2 per cent and 1.3 per cent of rural and urban areas smoke, respectively.

The MoEYS YRBS in 2004 revealed prevailing trends in tobacco use among youths aged 11-18. Nationwide, about 5 per cent (9.2 per cent males and 1.3 per cent females) in this age group have tried smoking, and more than half reported smoking on a daily basis. Out-of-school youths are more likely to smoke than in-school youths (9.2 per cent, compared with 0.6 per cent). On average, most started smoking when they were 15 years old.

6.2.5 Alcohol Consumption

The 2004 YRBS also focused on youth consumption of alcohol, drinking behaviour and the home environment. Its findings revealed that 14.2 per cent of young people (20.9 per cent males and 7.4 per cent females) aged 11-18 reported having drunk alcohol. Among youths consuming alcohol, out-of-school youths (15.9 per cent) were more likely to have had a drink than their in-school peers (12.1 per cent). Half of the youths, most of whom were out-of-school, had had at least one drink in the previous 30 days. Young people on average, started to consume alcohol when they were 12 years old.

FGD findings for this study showed that new lifestyles and exposure to new environments are the most likely links to behavioural change and alcohol consumption tendencies in young people. It is also believed that peer pressure and the influence of their seniors contribute to the increased number of young people who started to drink early. Some 15-18 year-old male FGD participants, for example, started using alcohol at 15, apparently because they saw their brothers or friends drinking. Many said that alcohol consumption was a pathway to increased popularity and a good time. This behaviour is also apparently shaped by family factors (e.g. domestic violence, family members seen using alcohol or drugs) and the excessive availability of income in wealthier families (Mith Samlanh-Friends 2002). Youths report that alcohol-related violence is not uncommon, especially during special ceremonies.

6.2.6 Consumption of Illicit Drugs

In August 2008, NACD released a report on Illicit Drug Data and Routine Surveillance Systems in Cambodia for 2007, which stated that the production, sale and use of drugs has become more complex and widespread. It estimated that while the number of illicit drug users nationwide has declined, drug abuse has spread from big cities to remote areas (Lour Ramin 2008). The drugs most commonly available were methamphetamine, heroin, narcotic and hallucinogenic plants, and glue. Most drug users were unemployed, commercial sex workers, workers in labour-intensive industries (construction workers, garment factory workers and truck/taxi drivers), and street children. The illicit drug use problem remains predominantly a youth issue, with more than 80 per cent of known illicit drug users aged below 26 (NACD 2007).

The NACD report stated that there were 5,797 illicit drug users; a decline of nearly 1,000 compared to the previous year. It also reported that 1,719 drug users were admitted to government-run treatment centres, an increase over 2006 of 57.7 per cent. Four-fifths of these involved methamphetamine abuse. Two-thirds (66.7 per cent) were aged between 16 and 25, and most were either students or unemployed. The majority of illicit drug users were among farmers and labourers (37.8 per cent), followed by street children (16.8 per cent) and students (15.4 per cent).

Similarly, the 2004 YRBS indicated that the prevalence of drug abuse among Cambodian adolescents aged 11-18 was 0.9 per cent (1.6 per cent male and 0.3 per cent female). Some 2.2 per cent of urban youths and 0.5 per cent of rural youths were reportedly involved in drug abuse. On average, most drug users started at 12 years of age. Among those who have used drugs, 95 per cent reported having used them in the previous 12 months (MoEYS 2004).

In one FGD for this study, 6 of the 10 participants were HIV-positive, having been infected due to needle sharing. Some said that young people take drugs because of a challenge from peers, while others indicated that they simply wanted to try it for themselves. They knew that drug use causes health problems and can result in users becoming social outcasts, but stated that they cannot stop using them. One young man said that one of his friends had died because of drug abuse.

Young people use drugs because of a lack of encouragement in the home. Our parents complain and scold us all the time when we don't want to seek jobs to do or they say we are lazy... we think that drugs can make us feel relaxed or can reduce stress and forget

sadness. In reality, we don't want to use it, but because we work hard we use drugs because it gives us more energy, and we don't feel hungry... – FGD, street youth, aged 15-24

6.2.7 Other Causes of Ill Health and Death (Accidents, Injuries and Suicide)

Family-based violence is anecdotally reported to be a main cause of injury among the young. A combination of factors such as family struggles over money, unemployment, gambling, alcohol abuse and parenting practices mean that young people can be subjected to physical injuries and mental health problems (UNICEF 2008b, EveryChild-Cambodia 2008).

In general, in our village where some young adolescents live in poor households or have parents using alcohol, they live with fear; they become depressed and feel sad; lose concentration in school and sometimes run away from home because the father beats them very often or complains so much... FGD males and females

Also of concern are forms of abuse that impact on the physical and mental health of young people, such as rape and indecent assault,²⁵ acid attacks, and the emerging phenomena of gang and youth violence. Mol statistics for the first half of 2007 reveal, for instance, that of 165 rapes reported, 53 were of girls younger than 15, 10 were of girls aged 15-17, and 41 were of 18-year-olds (Woods 2007).

Job and traffic-related accidents are other sources of injury, disability and death. One report (NIS/NIPH 2008) suggests that injury might be the leading cause of death among those aged 15-17. The same report suggests that suicides among the same age group may also be a leading cause of death. Regarding work-related injury, one young construction worker noted:

Working in a construction site is very difficult...some workers fall from the high building and die or are seriously injured. The company does not pay anything on this and we have to pay for it on our own or borrow some money from our friends or relatives. All day, we do not have enough food to eat, but are required to work hard...unlike other skilled labourers especially Vietnamese who are always better than us in income and who work easier.– FGD with youth construction workers, Phnom Penh

6.3 Policy and Programming Implications

Secondary data and field findings from this study reveal increases in knowledge among young Cambodians of sexual and reproductive health, HIV and other related risks that cause ill health. HIV prevalence among those aged 15-49 has decreased significantly in recent years, and very low prevalence rates have been estimated for young people aged 15-24. There have been improvements in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, cigarette smoking, and alcohol and drug abuse, although these promising developments seem to apply less to marginalized and out of school youth, who remain among the highest-risk and most vulnerable of groups.

Emerging lifestyles and the influence of the environment seem to be closely linked to young people's attitudes towards tobacco use and alcohol consumption, particularly among young men aged 20-24.. Compared with those living in urban areas, young males and females in rural and remote areas show significantly higher rates of smoking and drinking. A related and emerging concern is the consumption of illicit drugs, found to be prevalent in two thirds of young people aged 16-25, particularly street children and students. Field findings for this study also included the use of drugs by young people who migrate for work at the border, in order to cope with the heavy work and manage their hunger.

²⁵ Indecent assault as cited in Woods study (2007) is based on the definition in the UNTAC Criminal Code, Article 42, and refers to sexually offending another person of either sex by touching, caressing or any other sexual act not involving penetration.

A comprehensive set of policies and programmes should focus on these current health issues affecting youth. There is particular need to target specific population groups, based on their ethnicity, geographical location, and the needs of both single and married young people. Programmes should be instituted that guarantee full access to health information and services, and should include training for livelihoods and life skills, freedom from violence, and connections to supportive youth networks. Drug users will need specific attention, as care should be taken that they are not treated as criminals. As the Prime Minister has said, *“illicit drug users should be victims who need to receive care; while criminals who produce, traffic, and use drugs must be heavily punished according to the law”*. It will be necessary, therefore, to promote universal awareness of the harm caused by illicit drugs, tobacco use and alcohol consumption, especially among young people.

To arrive at policies that better address young people’s health status, it will be necessary for the Government and NGOs to develop advocacy, awareness-raising and health education programmes for youth, their households and communities. These programmes need to respond to the differing needs of young males and females, setting out very specific priority actions and projects. Government and non-government agencies should work together, based on existing local authority levels and community-based networks, and build effective collaboration with religious and local ethnic leaders, schools, medical practitioners, social service counsellors and families. They should engage young people in community discussions on development and encourage them to be active in decision-making within their communities.

Specific recommendations include:

- Continue and expand comprehensive health education by targeting both in- and out-of-school youths, with a wide range of geographical coverage. This should be provided consistently to all Cambodian youths from an early age. More importantly, health-related issues concerning youth must be included in Commune/Sangkat development plans and should be considered as a priority.
- Increase comprehensive access to accurate information on sexual and reproductive health, the impacts of smoking and alcohol and drug abuse, through mass media or outreach programmes, including a telephone hotline and Internet sites designed for youths.
- Improve health services through expanded youth counselling services and youth networks to ensure that at local level, especially in the communes, there are social or medical counsellors and social volunteer workers. In addition, provide health services to respond to unwanted pregnancies and abortions among young people, whose sexual activity is often unplanned.
- Develop and/or support programmes that will reduce the incidence of fatal and non-fatal injury among youth, with particular focus on mitigating suicides and road traffic accidents.

6.4 Research Gaps

This chapter shows the need for several areas of research. Among the key concerns needing additional investigation are:

- Links between unwanted pregnancy among 15-24 year-olds and the incidence of abortion, particularly the reasons for the absence of a trained provider for abortions.
- Contraceptive knowledge and use among unmarried youth, particularly the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups.
- The situation of youths in geographically isolated communities such as the mountain regions, particularly in terms of: access to healthcare information and services; knowledge of HIV and AIDS and infectious diseases; incidence of alcohol consumption, smoking and illicit drug use, etc.
- The most at-risk youth populations, such as street children and out-of-school youth, including youth migrating from rural to urban areas and across borders.

A final area that should be researched is HIV and AIDS prevalence among young people, disaggregated according to the 15-19 and 20-24 age groups. Current knowledge of this issue focuses mainly on NCHADS sentinel groups, including women attending antenatal centres, with broad reference to those aged below 25. Improved knowledge of this issue will help to inform decisions on policies and programmes to prevent and, as appropriate, reduce HIV and AIDS rates among youth.

CHAPTER 7 – YOUTH AND VULNERABILITY

Changes brought about by globalization affect Cambodian young people in a number of ways, compromising their human rights and creating many risks and vulnerabilities on one hand while opening opportunities for their advancement as individuals and as a group on the other. Regional integration, advanced use of technology, the increasing global demand for skilled labour, and changing living standards have made both negative and positive impacts on young people. Youths are the most affected sector of society when it comes to coping with rapid economic growth and social change. Inadequate vocational skills among youth reduce their employability, increase the probability of their leaving school early, and contribute to the growing number of under-trained youths, marginalizing them and undermining their entrepreneurial competitiveness (Brewer 2004). That young Cambodians lack life and livelihood skills to cope with the challenges of globalization is seen as a major source of youth vulnerability.

Other issues associated with poverty, poor living conditions, poor nutrition, and ill health compound the vulnerability of youth. Poor children live in conditions of particular vulnerability. Their future is often compromised by shocks and stresses that hit their households when they are at a young age. Lack of adequate nutrition in their early years impairs their physical and mental development for the rest of their life. The lack of education and training, which are essential components of measures to address the challenges faced by poor children, is linked to increased vulnerability among youth. A low level of formal school education – brought about by parents withdrawing adolescents and youths from school, which is a typical (but unsustainable) coping mechanism – has severe consequences for future youth employment opportunities in a rapidly changing labour market (Gallina and Masina 2002).

Although Cambodia has emerged from a period of internal conflict, it is still marked by a “culture of violence” directed primarily at women in the form of domestic violence, trafficking of women and rape (Ing Kantha, 2006). Unemployment, a lack of access to information, substance abuse, and parental neglect are among the problems confronting youth. Those with disabilities face even greater competition from young unemployed school-leavers when searching for jobs, often resulting in negative attitudes and mistaken assumptions on the part of employers about their work capacity.

This chapter explores the situation of Cambodia’s vulnerable youth in relation to their environment, which largely part contributes to their vulnerability. It also presents the key elements and gaps that can serve as a basis for recommendations of how to address weaknesses and strengthen good practices in responding to the problems of vulnerable youth. Based on this situation analysis, the study also identifies opportunities for improving the process of awareness raising and advocacy on youth and vulnerability. Key issues discussed in this section are: the current laws, policies and programmes that respond to the unfavourable conditions of youths; the enabling environment and support available from international organizations; and the engagement of NGOs. The last section of this chapter discusses issues including the impact of poverty, education, migration, violence and abuse, and other related concerns arising from the effects of rapid social change.

7.1 National Policies and Programmes in Response to Young People’s Vulnerability

The Constitution of the Kingdom Cambodia is the highest law of the state. It delineates the rights and obligations of every Khmer citizen to life, personal freedom, and security (Article 32) and guarantees that there shall be no physical abuse against any individual (Article 38). It also guarantees the rights of children as stipulated in the CRC, particularly the right to life, education, protection during wartime, protection from economic or sexual exploitation, and protection from acts that are injurious to their educational opportunities, health, and welfare (Article 48).

The Law on Marriage and Family is a fundamental guideline that ensures the protection of children and youth as this is aligned with Articles 5 and 18 of the CRC, which “provides a framework for the relationship between the child, his or her parents and family, and the State” (Hodgkin and Newell 2002).

The law is "to regulate and protect the marriage and family, to ensure equality of the spouses in marriage and family, to strengthen the responsibility of the parents in raising up and taking care of their children, and to promote the moral and educational development of children to become good citizen imbued with a sense of responsibility for the nation and society, and the love of work" (Art. 1). In a similar way to Articles 19 and 20 of the CRC, the law provides for the reporting of violence. It states that the People's Court can revoke parental authority if a "State organisation, the mass organisation, the authorities attached to the people's court or any relatives of the parents" commits a fault (Art. 20). It further states that "parental power shall be revoked and transferred to any organisation or relative by blood, from parent who is at fault as follows: the parents fail to educate their child; the parents use improper power in violation of the child rights or forcing him to commit crimes or acts against society; the parents treat badly their children; or the parents behave against the moral standards which have a bad influence over their children" (RGC 1989). A 'fault' relates to violating a child's rights, or otherwise abusing a child (Art. 119).

The 2005 Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of the Victim also protects children and youths. It gives local authorities the responsibility to intervene in cases of domestic violence and allows for the issuance of protection orders required by the courts to enable them to take the most appropriate measures for victims. 'Victims' can be spouses, dependent children or any other person living under one roof. The Law also provides a range of penalties in respect to acts of domestic violence, which are considered criminal offences that are punishable under the Penal Law (Art. 35). It provides a legal mechanism to preserve harmony within households in line with the nation's good customs and traditions and in accordance with the Constitution (Art. 45). The Law incorporates CEDAW, which was ratified and signed by the Government in 1992. CEDAW, as a convention that protects women, is also embodied in the MoWA Five-Year Strategic Plan (Neary Rattanak II). MoWA is an integral part of the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010, with responsibility for mainstreaming gender concerns into the plans and programmes of line ministries. Four key elements have been set out in MoWA's Plan: education; health; empowerment of women in the economic sector; and legal protection, particularly for children and women.

Other legal guidelines that define the rights of Cambodian children and youth are:

- The 2007 Education Law
- The 1998 Labour Law, particularly Article 177; states that those younger than 18-years-old should not work in hazardous labour [Article 177(2)]. For those 12- to 15-years-old engaged in light work, [Article 177(4) and Article 179 they must not undertake work that affects mental and physical development; or which interrupts regular school attendance, or prevents participation in guidance programmes/vocational training.
- The 2007 Law on the Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation
- The 2006 Policy on Alternative Care for Children
- The 2002 Guidelines on the Establishment of the Commune/Sangkat Committees for Women & Children
- *Prakas* (ministerial guidelines) on Minimum Standards of Residential Care for Children

Cambodia has also ratified several international conventions and optional protocols relevant to child rights, namely:

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1992)
- ILO Convention 138 on the Minimum Age for Workers (1973)
- ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2006)
- The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (2001)
- The Optional Protocol on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 2001)

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (1992)
- The Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000)
- The Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1957)

7.2 The Situation of Youth as a Vulnerable Population Group

This section mainly discusses the situation of youths aged 15-24, but also explores the conditions of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC)²⁶ as defined by MoSAVY (MoSAVY, 2006). It uses the definition of an 'orphan' made by the National Multi-Sectoral Orphans and Vulnerable Children Task Force (2008), as a child below the age of 18 who has lost one or both parents. Thus, youth vulnerability in this section is viewed against the challenges of poverty, physical weaknesses (children with a disability, orphans and abandoned children), violence and abuse, and migration.

7.2.1 Youth Vulnerability and the Challenges of Poverty

Poverty is a multi-dimensional issue that engenders risk and vulnerability, not least among young people from poor households. In a study on Managing Risk and Vulnerability in Cambodia, the World Bank (2006) found a complex set of factors leading to this situation. The majority of young people aged 15-24 live in rural areas. They constitute 26 per cent of the country's total population, of which about 35 per cent live below the poverty line (MoP 2006). Because their livelihoods are mostly dependent on rain-fed agriculture, these youths often experience food insecurity. Moreover, they lack vocational skills and the opportunity to access vocational training. Hence, the majority are unemployed or underemployed for most of the year. With little access to land, these youths receive limited education and economic opportunities (World Bank 2006; Fitzgerald and So 2007). Consequently, they decide to move to cities in the hope of employment and a more exciting life, causing a massive urban drift.

Social exclusion and poverty both contribute to vulnerability in youth. Young people are those most affected by family shocks, such as death or the chronic illness of the household head, the loss of the family's assets or financial debt. The biggest challenge facing young people at risk is the lack of opportunity for paid or productive employment. Unemployment is not evenly spread, and the situation of vulnerable groups varies according to different conditions and circumstances (Brewer, 2004). Unemployed young people are affected by a lot of serious social issues, such as getting drawn into gangs, alcohol consumption and drug abuse. However, it was found that unemployment among youth falls when education is improved. Hence, it is very important to take into account increasing opportunities at all levels of the educational ladder to reduce youth vulnerability. Young people less cared for by their families, those growing up in poor households, those who are early school leavers or do not attend school, and some of those from ethnic communities in remote areas, have been found to be disproportionately at risk of social exclusion. There are also particular times when young people are most vulnerable, such as when they leave home, their families or school (Brewer, 2004). Figure 7-1 summarizes the implications of poverty on youth well being.

Figure 7-1. Key drivers of poverty and their implications for youth

²⁶ Children exposed to one or more of the vulnerability situations have been categorised into: children in need of special protection; and children at risk (which includes: orphans; abandoned children; children infected or affected by HIV); abused children (whether sexually, physically or emotionally); street children; children in conflict with the law; child victims of exploitation (whether sexual or through harmful labour); children with disabilities; children addicted to drugs; and children whose basic physical needs are not being met."

Key drivers of chronic poverty	Examples of implications for youth
<p><i>Severe and/or repeated shocks</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ill-health and injury - Environmental shocks and natural disasters - Market and economic collapse - Violence and conflict - Breakdown of law and order <p>PLUS</p> <p><i>Few private or collective assets to fall back on</i> (Limited physical, financial, social or human capital, highly susceptible to shocks)</p> <p>PLUS</p> <p><i>Ineffective institutional support</i> (e.g. lack of effective social protection, public information, basic services, conflict prevention and resolution)</p> <p>PLUS</p> <p><i>Poverty occurring at certain points in an individual or household's life</i> (e.g. childhood, old age, youth and young households).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people are often in the early stages of physical and financial asset accumulation, and as such, they may find it particularly difficult to weather and bounce back from a shock. • Young couples may deplete their assets or reduce their own consumption to ensure that their young children are healthy and educated. • Even in labour markets with social insurance mechanisms in operation, young people generally have not built up the time or contributions to benefit. • When young people are is forced to leave school before achieving a secondary, tertiary or vocational qualification, there are reduced returns to, or a complete loss of the significant long-term investment in education, time and resources made by the young people and their families. It becomes more difficult to find productive work and rebuild assets.
LIKELY TO TRAP PEOPLE IN POVERTY	

Source: Adopted from Moore (2006)

Young couples entering marriage, especially young married women and couples living in rural and remote areas, were found to be at high risk because they have to face issues of landlessness and land atomisation (Fitzgerald and So 2007), as well as financial shortfall in their new families, illnesses among family members, and limited skills. Most young married couples are expected to participate in the family's agriculture-based production, which is often not profitable. Young married women begin to be burdened with increased household responsibility, and with problems related to the poor health and nutrition that they have experienced in their adolescent years, which are compounded by early child bearing that follows early marriage and, an inadequate food supply and limited income. These factors account for young married women having difficult pregnancies and the high risk of maternal and child mortality and morbidity (Moore 2007), and also explain why young married women are more vulnerable than unmarried women in the same age group.

Young people in the village either married or unmarried, who cannot find enough money to support their family and who lack jobs to do in the village especially after growing paddy rice or sometimes after harvest, move out of the village to Phnom Penh or Kampong Som. Some go to Neak Loeung (in Prey Veng). People in this village mostly depend on rice-fields and crops so that in general, young people leave the village to find jobs such as selling newspapers, working for private households, or becoming construction workers, garment workers or motodop drivers... – FGD parents' group, Sangker Village, Svay Rieng Commune

Rural households often accumulate long-term debts due to their inability to repay them. Unpaid interest soars from month to month for long periods, such as from one to two years, bringing extreme hardship to families. The first family members to suffer from this situation are youths, since parents usually pull them out of school and send them to work with moneylenders to reduce the family debt, or to work in

other families to earn additional income. Issues related to their deployment into such work (child trafficking, violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse at the hands of employers) can arise and increase their vulnerability.

Most young people in rural areas who live in large households are more likely to be poor and vulnerable than those living in smaller households. The World Bank (2006) characterized poor and vulnerable households as those having many small children but lacking in adult wage earners. A high proportion of children and adolescents implies a high dependency ratio, which generally has a depressing effect on per capita income. In rural areas, where most of the poor are located, the dependency ratio rises to 89.6 per cent compared with 69.1 per cent in urban areas. A dependency ratio also changes according to the number of elderly or disabled people unable to work (World Bank 2006).

7.2.2 Youth Vulnerability and Physical and Mental Health Challenges

Street or homeless youth are considered the most vulnerable group in Cambodia, and are categorized into three types: primary homeless or roofless; secondary homeless (staying in any form of temporary accommodation, with no secure housing elsewhere); and tertiary homeless (long-term occupants of single rooms in private boarding houses) (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1992). Young homeless people are particularly at risk of a wide range of physical and mental health problems, a lack of access to basic needs such as food and clothing, and a multitude of dangers, including sexual exploitation and violence. Youth can also face problems stemming from overcrowded, unsafe, unhygienic housing, as well as insecure tenure or family difficulty in paying rent. Unsatisfactory housing conditions can contribute to poor health, family violence and poor education outcomes (Boese and Scutella, 2006). Mith Samlanh-Friends (2001) suggested that there were 1,200 children living on the streets of Phnom Penh and that the number appears to rise by 20 per cent each year, due in part to rural-urban migration. A large number of children (between 10,000 and 20,000, half of them girls) work on the streets to earn money through shoe shining, begging or prostitution.

Ethnic minority youths are considered the most vulnerable. Young people who are socially disadvantaged, who live in rural and remote areas, or who are of ethnic origin suffer very poor health, mostly due to alcohol abuse and smoking (Boese and Scutella 2006). The 2004 MoEYS Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) attests that 45 per cent of young people in Ratanakiri and 40.9 per cent in Mondulakiri use alcohol. In comparison, an average of 12 per cent of youths in other provinces consume alcohol. The proportion of youths consuming tobacco was found to be highest in Ratanakiri (34 per cent). The proportion of young women aged 15-19 who have begun bearing children was greatest in Mondulakiri/Ratanakiri (21.8 per cent), followed by Otdar Meanchey (15.4 per cent), while Preah Vihear/Stueng Treng and Kratie (13.4 per cent and 12.9 per cent, respectively) show the lowest incidence. These provinces are categorized as remote, where most of the ethnic youth reside (CDHS, 2005).

Physical and mental disability increase youth vulnerability. A leading cause of permanent disability among young people in Cambodia is road traffic accidents, particularly among males (NIS/NIPH 2008). The highest prevalence of motorcycle traffic accidents, in particular, is found among 15 to 17 year-olds. The NIS/NIPH survey (2008) also identified suicide as a leading cause of death in this age group, reflecting the mental health of young people. FGD findings for this study suggest that the poor mental health situation of youth stems from: violence in the home: a perceived lack of caring from the family: feelings of isolation upon migrating for work: and, in the case of migrants, the relationships they may develop to satisfy their need for friendship or in exchange for food or protection. Where violence in the home is present young people aged 15-19 reported fearing for their lives (MoWA 2005). The voices of the young people who participated in the FDGs lend credence to these observations.

Other factors contributing to youth vulnerability are the chronic illness of parents and parents living with HIV or AIDS. Vulnerability to HIV is high, since it can be transmitted by parents to their children, The death of parents can place the onus of responsibility on adolescents and/or young adults, compounding

their problems. Studies show that risk perception of HIV is low – especially among the 10-15 year olds, which is less than half of those in the 16-24 age cohort and about 60-70% of the 25-49 age group.

When parents have chronic illnesses or die, children and youths not only lose parental love and support, but they can also face the problems of: losing access their basic rights; barriers to school attendance; losing access to health facilities; and losing their job security. According to the 2005 CDHS, 9 per cent of children under 18 have lost their father or mother, while 0.7 per cent have lost both parents. The proportion of children who have lost their father or mother or both increases significantly with age – 12 per cent for 10-14 year-olds, and 16 per cent for 15-17 year-olds. The growing number of people living with HIV poses a serious challenge: approximately 55,000 children (10.9 per cent of all orphans) were orphaned by AIDS-related illnesses in 2001, while the World Bank estimated that by 2005, 20.7 per cent of orphans in Cambodia would have lost parents due to the same cause (World Bank 2006).

7.2.3 Youth Vulnerability and the Challenges of Violence and Abuse

It is estimated that young Cambodians are more likely to experience violence and abuse than any other age group (MoWA 2008). Previous studies (Fitzgerald and So 2007; Ballard 2007; Keane 2006) note that family circumstances, community environment, and a wider 'world effect' (e.g. cross-cultural influence and ICT) are common factors that position Cambodian youth in vulnerable situations where they may experience domestic violence or other forms of abuse. Financial struggles within the family, the mental illness of parents, alcoholism, and gambling among members of the household are the main causes of violence within the household.

FGD participants, especially young females, believe that violence occurs more in poor households in rural and urban areas as a consequence of alcohol consumption. They further stated that those who suffer most from domestic violence are children and youths, who may live with fear, become depressed, start to misbehave, lose concentration at school, drop out of school or run away from home. In some cases, wives or daughters run away, too, returning to their parents' or grandparents' homes to seek help, and sometimes commit acts of violence.

Fitzgerald and So (2007) found domestic violence to be a cause of downward mobility for poor families, due to the costs related to damage to property, treatment of physical injuries and loss of productivity. Moreover, domestic violence has been found to strongly affect children within the family, particularly youths who lack the encouragement to pursue their studies or lose the opportunity to attend school, due to the stress they experience. When youths become very upset and depressed about the violence in their homes, they may leave home or look for another place to stay. Because of their harsh family environment and lost hopes for the future, young people who have grown up with violence at home may consequently lose compassion and become criminals and gang members (Jourdan, 2008). FGD participants agree:

Young people who live in households with frequent domestic violence achieve poor study results in school and are often not present in class... they look sad, don't like to talk... they like to sit at the back of the class. Sometimes, they leave school without completing their exams... – FGD, 15-18 year old males' group, Phnom Penh

Sexual abuse exacerbates youth vulnerability. Rape can be devastating for young women as they confront stigma and shame, given the high value placed by Cambodian culture on a woman's virginity (MoWA 2005). According to ADHOC (2005), rape cases have recently become brutal and are more often fatal. Victims include sex workers, garment workers and those working in beer promotion and *karaoke* establishments (MoWA 2008).²⁷ Perpetrators include young urban men, male university students, members of the police and gang members who engage in *bauk* or gang rape. Under- or non-reporting is common due to a host of factors, specifically the shame and stigma associated with rape,

²⁷ In a 2006 study, ILO found the average age of beer promotion girls to be 22.7 years.

distrust of the judicial system, the cost of pursuing a prosecution, unofficial ‘compensation’ settlements between perpetrators and victims, and fears of retaliation from the perpetrator (LICADHO 2006).

The media are believed to have a key influence on Cambodian youth, particularly in promoting consumerism and violence (Mysliwiec 2005). Increased exposure of youths to wrongful behaviour such as violence and sexual misconduct is becoming common, and has allegedly led to increased involvement of young males aged 15-18 years in gang rapes and violent attacks on women. Focus group participants said that such incidents can take place in the village or in the commune during a special event such as a wedding or a traditional ceremony in the pagoda, at which youths are allowed to participate in drinking and merry making.

Links can also be found between youths’ predisposition toward crime and gangs and rapid technological changes, particularly in urban areas. Increased access to information technology (ICT) has apparently contributed to this trend. While advances in the use of ICT have made the acquisition of knowledge and skills available to youth, the wrongful use of ICT appears to have heightened their vulnerability to committing sexual abuse. Easy access to pornographic films, mobile phones and Internet connections have increased their exposure to pornography and sexual promiscuity.

Being in conflict with the law exacerbates youth vulnerability. To date, the court and penal system in Cambodia has not adequately provided measures to deal with juvenile cases, owing to a lack of facilities, juvenile courts and specialists in juvenile law. Children and youths who have violated laws or committed serious crimes are often detained with adults, despite legal provision for the separation of untried and convicted youth offenders from adults (CDC 2003). As such, their rights as children/youths are highly compromised. The Youth Rehabilitation Centre is the only alternative for incarcerating juveniles. Those are imprisoned, without any form of legal and social protection, may languish in jail or receive beatings in the hands of the police or adult inmates (EveryChild 2006; Egger 2005). The failure to release juveniles from pre-trial detention is reported to stem from attempts to secure financial benefits from the families of suspects to secure a release (Aekje et al 2006). Table 7-1 shows the number of children in conflict with the law nationwide.

Table 7-1. Children in conflict with the law (CICL), in prison and on pre-trial detention

Year	Total # of CICL on Prison in 24 provinces/ municipalities			Total # of CICL on Pre-trial Detention in 24 provinces/ municipalities			
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Proportion of total # of children in prison
2005 (end)	569	16	585	206	7	213	36%
2006 (end)	575	13	588	132	2	134	23%
2007 (end)	651	12	663	170	4	174	26%

Source: Ministry of Interior Prison Department

7.2.4 Youth Vulnerability and the Challenges of Migration

Factors contributing to youth migration include: financial crisis in the family; a lack of livelihood resources and skills; and a lack of vocational training at school (or a lack of opportunity to go to school) (Chan and So 1999). Traditionally, young men are encouraged to find paid work, which usually requires migration, while women are discouraged from doing so. In recent years, however, it has become more common for women to migrate to find work, although their options are primarily limited to the garment and sex industries. Surveys of women in these industries have estimated that more than 250,000 women have migrated from their villages in search of paid employment over recent years (MoWA 2004). Young migrants are more vulnerable than permanent residents as they face more changing and different situations for which they may be unprepared (Shaohua 2005). FGD findings showed that young people who leave the village for employment in the city generally do not have a plan. They leave

decisions up by a leader (guide) who may have experience of migration; on the whole, these young people are not prepared for the requirements of the labour market.

Cambodians aged 15-25 make up a disproportionately large number of those who migrated in the five years before the 2004 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (Maltoni 2007). Comprising an estimated 30 per cent of migrant population, rural-to-urban mobility in this age group is shaped by a range of push and pull factors, including loss of land or loss of access to other livelihood resources, a desire to seek a better life, and the presence of family members in likely employment areas. Urban females in the 15-19 age group are more likely to migrate than their male counterparts (Table 7-2), although fewer in the 20-29 age group do so, due perhaps to childbearing and housework demands.

Table 7-2. Percentage of migrants by age group

	Cambodia		Urban		Rural	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
All Ages	11.52	9.27	23.66	21.38	8.09	7.05
15-19	12.63	12.48	25.76	28.45	9.93	9.04
20-24	24.20	17.05	43.12	37.78	20.06	12.90
25-29	23.44	14.13	40.31	30.70	19.60	10.73

Source: Maltoni 2007 based on CSES 2004

FGD participants indicated that young people who move from rural areas to look for jobs in the cities face a lot of difficulties upon arrival. Parents and young people aged 19-24 reported that migrant youths can end up using drugs, being manipulated by criminal gangs, or adopting negative social attitudes.

FGD findings also showed that young rural-urban migrants generally do not have a plan as to what they will do when they arrive. They may be at the mercy of an older leader (or guide) who may take advantage of them or place them in harmful situations. Being far from their parents and new to urban life, these youths have no choice but to obey their employers, regardless of the health hazards in their working environment.

Other young people head to Thailand where the evidence is that young migrant workers can make more money. Unfortunately, they also face serious difficulties (Fitzgerald and So 2007; Ballard 2007; Chan and So 1999). For example, construction workers returning to Cambodia have not been able to receive the full amount of money that was due them; rather, they tend to receive only 15 days of wages for 20 days of work. Besides being exploited by employers or supervisors, young migrants are often drawn into the use of drugs out of loneliness or, in some cases, are forced by employers or supervisors to use drugs to increase their stamina and productivity (Chan and So 1999).

...sometimes employers put drugs in the workers' drinking water, especially cart pullers. When the workers become addicted, they have to buy the drugs themselves. The price of one pill could cost between 70 and 140 Baht and varies according to the quality.

Young migrant workers also face serious difficulties when working near international borders. Fitzgerald and So (2007) found that many young migrants had negative past experiences related to the legal aspects of cross-border migration. FGD participants attested to this, and stated that the costs of travel and securing employment were often unaffordable. Some young migrant workers were also cheated or lost money when they returned to Cambodia. A number also faced the risk of arrest and losing most of their savings if the police caught them, especially if they crossed the border illegally.

I used to go to Thailand and I had a very hard time.... I worked for 15 days but the patron paid me for only 8 days, promising to pay the rest later. But I am still waiting to be paid. I was so disappointed with his bad behaviour. I don't know what to do and I couldn't find anyone to help me...

In a recent study on parenting practices in Battambang (EveryChild-Cambodia 2008), FGD participants noted that vulnerable youths who stay away from home suffer from depression and poor living conditions. They experience feelings of isolation and a lack of family care, and their earnings are too low to meet their expenditure. To augment their income and fulfil their basic needs, some women become prey to sexual exploitation and prostitution, human trafficking and drug abuse. Young men may be recruited into street gangs and drawn into misdemeanours or even serious crime, such as gang rape and theft. It is evident that youths' desperate need to adjust to their new situation and to meet the high cost of living in the city requires them to harden their attitudes and alter their morals, leading them to break the law. This exacerbates the growing phenomenon of children and youth in conflict with the law.

With my 60 USD monthly pay as a beer promotion woman, I cannot shoulder the whole burden of supporting an old mother and three orphan nephews and nieces. Therefore, I have to work sometimes in indirect prostitution, which means risks of HIV. My work also puts me at risk from customers who are aggressive, who sometimes throw dishes at me if I do not agree to take alcohol with them... Khmer-Muslim Young Female, Phnom Penh

7.3 Research Gaps

This study's findings uncover a number of concerns that underpin vulnerability among youth and call for further study. Among the critical areas needing additional investigation are:

- Youth mental health, by gender age and income, including factors that contribute to the incidence of suicidal thoughts and attempts.
- The different forms of disability in young people (physical, mental, social) and how these shape their vulnerability, with particular focus on attributes of ethnicity and educational level, as these compound vulnerability.
- The extent of the positive and negative influences of ICT among youth and how ICT shapes their day-to-day lives, with particular attention to: (i) differences between youths in urban and rural areas; and (ii) appropriate responses to the wrongful use of ICT, including forms of censorship and disseminating media messages on the positive use of ICT.
- An improved understanding of how some of the most vulnerable go on to do well despite poverty and adversity. What protects them from harm?

CHAPTER 8 – YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND RIGHTS

Between the 1970s and 1980s, Cambodia's youths were drawn into the civil war and the political process as citizens, but were then denied their rights to education and health, and the development of their full potential as members of society. State controlled volunteerism involved young people in the Mass Youth Organisation, which mobilized thousands of students to conduct literacy classes throughout the country during school breaks (Mysliwiec 2005). The political stability that began only in the early 1990s gave them the opportunity to participate in the social, political and economic spheres. While young people take part in economic activities that benefit their households and communities, the extent to which their voices are heard and incorporated in decision-making and development processes appears to have been limited.

This chapter focuses on current youth participation and their right to be involve in social and political activities. It examines the national legal framework for youth participation, which could support the formulation of a future National Youth Policy. It takes the view that youth participation can be the engine of growth for the country, if adolescents and young adults are given the opportunity to fully take part in the development process. It also explores the notion and practice of volunteerism among youth, particularly as it relates to their perceptions/attitudes and actual involvement in the improvement of their communities.

8.1 Policies and Programmes Supporting Youth Participation in the Development Process

Several national frameworks and programmes have established the rights and critical role of youth in Cambodia's development process. Article 34 of the Constitution gives Cambodian citizens over 18 of either sex the right to vote, and to stand as candidates for election if they are at least 25. At the same time, Article 31 states that the Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognise and respect human rights as determined in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its concomitant covenants and conventions, the CEDAW Convention on women's rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its National Strategic Development Plan of 2006-2010 also specifies that, with 60 per cent of the population being below 25 years of age, youth shall constitute a critical group in advancing the country's development (NSDP 2005).

The Government's Decentralisation and Deconcentration (D&D) framework opens up opportunities for the participation of youth and marginalized groups. Aligned with the RGC's Rectangular Strategy, this national programme strengthens local governance for development and poverty reduction. It finds support in the Cambodian Organic Law of 2008, which is designed "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". The lowest level of local government is represented by the Commune Council, which is closer to the population and reduces some of the communication and other roadblocks that undermine youth participation.

Spaces for youth participation in governmental programmes are also evident in the widespread effort of the RGC to encourage and support volunteerism (Brown 2008). MoH, for instance, articulates this idea and puts it into effect in its Policy on Community Participation and through its village health volunteers. MoI, too, anticipates volunteerism in the decentralisation programme to be a critical part of the empowerment of communities to demand transparency and accountability from local leaders (See section 8.22 for further discussion on volunteerism). Likewise, MoWA is working with local volunteers through a pilot project to promote the re-institution of norms, such as respect for women, to reduce violence against women.

Alongside these national frameworks and programmes, the UN Country Team (UNCT) initiated discussions in 2006 on the importance of a focus on issues related to Cambodian youths and

adolescents. It recognizes the value of heightened levels of dialogue between young people and the UNCT on the implementation of the work of the UN, the implementation of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2006–2010, support for implementation of the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006–2010, and the attainment of the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals.

UNCT-Cambodia took steps to establish a UN Youth Advisory Panel in 2007 as part of its commitment to young people's empowerment and rights, which include their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives and to express their views and opinions, in accordance with basic human rights principles and the CRC. The Panel will set in place a mechanism for open dialogue and exchange between UNCT-Cambodia and youth groups, to advise the Country Team on strategic opportunities and actions to address adolescent and youth issues across the UN system. Specifically, it will: (i) increase dialogue and knowledge sharing between the UN system and Cambodian youth, based on best practices and lessons learned from youth policies and programmes, (ii) increase young people's understanding of the role of the UN, its comparative advantages and its Cambodian development priorities; and (iii), provide a means for young people to discuss issues with the UNCT, both to build their understanding of development issues, particularly as they relate to young people, and to influence the thinking of the UNCT in its priority setting, strategy and programme development and implementation.

Efforts to make the UN Youth Advisory Panel a reality include holding a preliminary dialogue with several youth-focused NGOs. These NGOs include the Khmer Youth Association (KYA), the Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC), the Youth Resource Development Programme (YRDP), Youth for Peace (YFP), Youth Star Cambodia, the Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA), Khmer Youth and Social Development (KYSD), the People Health Development Association (PHD), the Youth and Child Hope Development Organisation (YCHD), the Khmer Youth Camp for Culture (KYCC), and Support Children and Young People (SCY).

Helping to form a 'mass base' to this initiative are the numerous NGOs that provide programmes and services related to health, education, civic engagement and citizenship. Annex 3-4 in Appendix A lists these NGOs in Cambodia's provinces and municipalities and the range of activities that they facilitate for youth.

8.2 Current Situation

Cambodia's youth – defined in this study to be those aged 15-24 – comprise 26 per cent of the total population in 2004 (MoP 2006). Yet, their voices in the country's national policies and programmes are barely heard even though they have been visible participants in community-oriented activities. Brown (2008), in her study on volunteerism in selected NGOs, found that 32.1 per cent of males and 43.7 per cent of females aged below 25 give part or all of their time to activities that benefit their communities. Mysliwiec (2005) noted a similar pattern, finding that about a third of 215 young respondents to her study had some volunteer experience of community work, NGOs, or in private and public sectors, youth associations or international organizations. In 2002, Wallquist found that there were some 50-60 youth-initiated organizations in the country whose activities ranged from the promotion of good citizenship to bringing about social change.

The lack of recognition of youth needs and perspectives in the Government's policies and programmes appears to stem from several factors, including the hierarchical nature of Cambodian society, which demands respect for elders and authorities and limits possibilities for young people to articulate their views (Yong 2005). Along with this 'age hierarchy' comes a 'knowledge hierarchy' (Brown 2008), whereby leaders and older people think that youths are inexperienced and that they should listen to the more mature and experienced members of the community (Yong 2005). This study's FGD findings confirm these observations as young interviewees expressed their exclusion from or limited involvement in development activities.

Village local authorities never allowed us to participate and express our opinion and ideas in any village meeting... – FGD, 15-19 year old males, Sihanoukville

“Angkar” conducts agricultural trainings in the village. The youth were not allowed to participate in these trainings because the elders believe that they will not absorb what is being taught... – FGD, 15-19 year old females, Ratanakiri

The lack of support and encouragement from parents and communities for youth civic engagement also partly explains the absence of youth needs and perspectives in government policies and programmes. Parents apparently perceive such engagement as political in nature, and therefore entailing risk (KYA 2008). Qualitative information gathered for this study also found that Cambodia’s education system has failed to impart the knowledge and values necessary for the development of skills among young people that would help them build and participate in modern democratic societies, thereby ensuring good governance. As one FDG participant noted:

We realise that the contribution of youth to our community 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 opportunities to express them so we keep them in our minds – FGD, female youth, Siem Reap

There are indications that young people have a sense of civic responsibility, albeit at a fairly basic level (Mysliwiec 2005). Asked what they could do as students to contribute to Cambodia’s development, respondents from Phnom Penh saw their roles as: “doing their best in their studies; sharing knowledge and information from their studies with relatives and ‘others’; being a good citizen; conservation of the environment and of culture, engaging in social works; ‘raising criticisms in order to reform bad practices’; engaging in volunteer work; and going after training opportunities” (Mysliwiec 2005). There is an apparent need for Cambodia’s educational system and other traditional institutions (e.g., family, peer groups, community institutions such as the pagoda) to help instil the value of civic responsibility among young people.

8.2.1 Youth Participation in Decision-Making Development

According to the World Youth Report 2007, providing young people a chance to take part in decision-making helps shape their own development, preparing them for a role in enhancing and strengthening their societies, and subsequently creating a better environment for youth participation. This entails, however, broad, synergistic feedback mechanisms that give youth the space to provide their inputs or that permit a dialogue between young people, their families, local leadership groups and others who can be critical to the positive paths that youth can take for their advancement. Often, however, exclusion is more common.

Elders and local authorities think that youths have less experience in development, therefore, their ideas have been ignored ...– Fathers' FGD, Siem Reap

The elders and village chief only call youths to a meeting if there is conflict among young people. The youths are never called on to participate in drafting the village development plan...– FGD, 20-24 year olds, Siem Reap

There are presently no structures that bring youths into discussions of national or local development. Because local leaders do not consult youth on development issues – since their views are not appreciated – youth concerns are not adequately represented and reflected in village (or district and provincial) development priorities and budgets. Youths expressed confidence, however, of their ability to contribute to development. For them, the social environment and conservative beliefs of the local authorities and elders in their communities prevent them from making a contribution. This suggests that

youths have a positive view of their role, implying that a national youth policy – accompanied by institutional mechanisms that support young people’s voluntary engagement – could bring on their more active participation in decision making within and possibly outside their communities.

8.2.2 Youth Participation in Volunteerism

The United Nations defines volunteerism as “actions undertaken out of free choice, not motivated by financial gain, and bringing benefit to the community, volunteer, and society at large” (United Nations General Assembly 2008). In Cambodia, several studies link volunteerism to the creation of social capital and to engendering reciprocity (Brown 2008; Mysliwiec 2005; Dara 2001; Ebihara 1968). This is because volunteerism fosters trust, a basic component to the concept of social capital, as it leads people to cooperate towards their shared goals. In the absence of assets in the 1990s and even today, poor Cambodian people have relied on their relationships, associations and networks to survive on a day-to-day basis, through voluntarily sharing or reciprocating labour, cash, food, information, services and emotional support in times of crisis such as ill health (Rakodi, 2002). These are the key elements of social capital that characterize rural communities – elements that build on trust and that can lead to meaningful participation in community activities and events.

The World Youth Report of 2007 notes that “volunteerism is a clear manifestation of youth participation in society – one that is often altruistic and devoid of immediate selfish interests.” It helps build interpersonal and social skills and strengthens personal potential. For example, promoting volunteerism and expanding opportunities for youth participation in development benefits larger society, and can be part of a strategy to combat social ills such as drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and other deviant behaviour, particularly among youth (United Nations 2007).

This study found that youth conceptions of volunteerism may depend on the benefits or advantages they can derive from it. Youths generally perceive volunteering as work that does not offer a salary. Not everyone thought it was a great idea. One 19-year-old said that: “Voluntary work in the community is a useless waste of time.” Some did not hold a positive view of volunteerism even if they had no experience of it.

On the other hand, ethnic youth in Ratanakiri province said they liked to work as volunteers. They believe their participation can strengthen their understanding and help their community:

I used to work as volunteer with many local NGOs that implement projects in my community and I gained more understanding about development and how to strengthen the community. From this experience I became a successful youth activist and I currently have created a community-based organisation to help the youth in my village... – 23-year-old male, Ratanakiri

Volunteering work among youths seems to be shaped by the availability of support, usually from an NGO. This idea is substantiated by a recent study in which young student respondents expressed willingness to volunteer provided that there was some means of support (Mysliwiec 2005). The same students saw their role to be one of teaching or imparting their knowledge to others. However, none viewed volunteerism in reciprocal terms or stated that they could also learn something from the people and communities they would be working with (Mysliwiec 2005).

There are indications that volunteering is gaining traction in Cambodia’s rural areas. EveryChild-Cambodia (2006) found 84 child- and youth-led clubs and organizations across the country, although some are local divisions or branches of NGOs that facilitate programmes for children and youths (Annex 8-1 in Appendix A). The activities of these associations include leadership training, home-based care (for people living with HIV and AIDS), primary health care, child rights promotion, monitoring child abuse, capacity building for club members, holding literacy classes. In a 2007 CARE survey in Koh Kong, 15-24 year-old interviewees claimed to participate in several associations and activities in their villages, such as savings groups, home-based care-related activities, sports, and a group that works on the environment, sanitation and hygiene.

This suggests that, while some have a negative attitude towards volunteerism (believing that it detracts from income generation), there remains a sense of altruism among many, particularly in rural areas. In terms of the development of social capital, the above accounts also demonstrate that, if the youth of Cambodia can move beyond the traditional concept of 'charitable' voluntary work, volunteerism can become a worthwhile, inclusive form of participation that expresses solidarity, fosters social cohesion and promotes participatory development. Volunteerism, in fact, bridges diverse pathways of participation to promote social, economic and political development. "Helping to do the right thing, and helping people, goes together with promoting a system that is more just and more equitable" (UNV/IAVE/CIVICUS 2008).

8.3 Opportunities for Youth Participation and Analysis

8.3.1 Opportunities for Political Participation

Young Cambodians could also contribute by engaging the State as citizens and as constituents in the electoral process (e.g. in the National Assembly and Commune Council elections). For those aged 18-24, such engagement brings an opportunity to help determine the election of local and national leaders who can represent young people's needs and interests.

Youth political participation is still very low (COMFREL, 2008). The election monitoring organization, COMFREL, notes that students with university-level education still do not pay much attention to voting, stating that they register only because their parents encourage them to or because they are following the example of others. This seems to stem from a lack of encouragement, especially to girls, to engage in politics. Additionally, the Government does not allow political discussions and meetings in schools, because they are seen as neutral areas in which politics has no place (Yong 2005). This poses a constraint on young people gaining a critical political orientation or developing informed opinions.

Where deeper participation in the electoral process is sought, engagement is said to occur through the youth wings of the three main political parties (the Cambodian People's Party, FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party) (Yong 2005). The first youth party, the Khmer Front Party, was formed in 2002. With students and young adults in its constituency, it has organized campaigns and demonstrations and sent petition letters on a number of key issues to high-ranking officials, including the King (Yong 2005).

Young people's political expression has also been evident in media campaigns, the lobbying of political leaders, and taking part in and helping to organize demonstrations and public forums arranged by youth-focused NGOs (Yong 2005). Additionally, youth groups and associations have made conspicuous their commitment to influence the Cambodian society by reaching and working with individuals or groups within their villages, communes, districts or provinces. Support for such political engagement by youth comes from a number of international organizations and donors, including: the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, which conduct training for youth affiliates of the political parties; and Forum Syd and EED, which help pave the way for the greater visibility of young people outside the political parties.

8.4 Policy and Programming Implications

There are positive factors in Cambodia which support opportunities for youth to participate meaningfully in social and political development processes. A key area that could provide a major opportunity for youth participation is the Government's current decentralization and deconcentration effort, which would afford young people a chance to become involved in the local development process. It also brings about opportunities for youth to participate as contractors for local government tenders for public works, such as the construction of roads, local bridges, schools and markets, and will allow them to become organized and be recognised by the local authorities.

However, major hurdles that need to be overcome are those related to the idea that participation and leadership should come with age, knowledge and experience. The tendency to listen to youth and address their needs tends to be (1) limited to specific issues (such as violence and drug use) and only when they emerge as local concerns to elders. Or they tend to be (2) one-time interventions that respond to an immediate visible problem. A rudimentary understanding of the concepts of governance, democracy and the importance of youth participation in development is an added complication for youth and for leaders alike. Local (and national) leaders need to be at the forefront of embracing youth in all development endeavours. Capacity building and learning experiences should therefore include those who can influence and mentor young people to become active participants in their own development. Critical to this would be support to basic social institutions such as the family, the school, and community (pagodas, local leadership groups) that shape young people's perspectives.

The key implications of the findings for policy and programming are:

- a. Current practices and beliefs of local authorities and community leaders hinder youth participation in the development process. Therefore, there is need to instill a better appreciation of the value of youth participation in these influential people. A legal framework such as a national youth policy could pave the way for the involvement of youth, particularly in socio-cultural and political development.
- b. Youth can benefit from participating only if there is strong support from the community. Indigenous peoples in the northern provinces tended to support youth participation in the development process by giving them opportunities for skills training that could improve their earning ability in the future.
- c. Youth participation in volunteerism is limited by their perceptions of volunteering as traditional 'helping' activities, i.e. unpaid work. Those who have accepted a wider concept of volunteerism, which includes civic participation and contributes to social, economic, and political development, have demonstrated increased engagement with and commitment to participation. Ways should be explored to promote a supportive environment for volunteerism, to enhance youth engagement in the participation explored.
- d. Efforts should be made to review ongoing initiatives for youth by NGOs and INGOs. This will help to create understanding of which strategies work in engaging youth in simple community functions or larger activities such as development-oriented events (e.g. promoting personal hygiene and sanitation or advancing a campaign on community latrines).
- e. A safe and supportive environment should be created, with a particular focus on youth leadership programmes, by establishing youth exchange activities, not only overseas but also between and within communities (e.g. among schools, villages, communes and provinces). These will open opportunities for youths to understand their larger society, build relationships and sharpen their knowledge and skills so they can become future leaders of the country.

One important effort towards enabling the involvement of all potential development players would be to build up a strong youth movement. Struggles for democratic reform in many countries have involved youth, who have more modern ideas about governance, and who dare challenge the status quo. There is an absence of venues for developing leadership among youth, such as student governments and rural youth associations. Activities to promote youth as a development agenda should also be strongly advocated. As the World Youth Report 2007 notes:

The effective engagement of youth as equal partners requires recognition of the rights of all young people to participate at all levels of decision-making and to make productive use of their knowledge, perspectives and experience. It is a process from which both youth and non-youth stakeholders benefit. It also represents a situation in which young people are no longer seen as passive recipients of national resources or the root cause of society's problems; instead, they are regarded as vital participants in society who can make an important

contribution to their countries' development and whose involvement must therefore be appropriately nurtured and cultivated.

CHAPTER 9 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Any set of recommendations from this *Situational Analysis of Cambodian Youth* needs to be grounded in the tremendous strides that have occurred in the country over the past 15 years. For example, illiteracy has decreased as participation in primary and secondary education has increased. While Cambodia has a long way to go to make education equally accessible in rural areas and equally available to girls as for boys, it has already made great advances towards achieving that goal. Moreover, while there is need to strengthen health information and service delivery infrastructures, this analysis notes the substantial strides made in reducing HIV prevalence in the country.

The extent of the interrelation between the problems faced by Cambodian youth is striking. For example, rural poverty diminishes the likelihood of obtaining an education. Uneducated people are more likely to have large families. Moreover, rural poor who migrate to the cities for work are more likely than others to be homeless and unemployed, and thus more likely to turn to criminal behaviour or to seek employment as unskilled labourers in Thailand and Malaysia. Those who remain in rural communities are more likely to live on subsistence farming, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and stress that lead to sexual and physical abuse.

The following recommendations are based on the present Situational Analysis and enhanced at a workshop held in February 2009. These suggestions are presented with the awareness that young people are the hope for the nation. And with the awareness that without aggressive and coordinated set of interventions with government, bilateral organizations and NGOs, the *demographic dividend* that could flow from the rapidly growing number of youth entering both reproductive age and the work force, may well become a national nightmare.

Recommendations

The recommendations 1 – 6 are crosscutting. Specific recommendations under the themes of employment, education, health, rights and responsibilities and social protection are found in the matrix below:

- 1. Provide technical and financial support to accelerate a final draft of The Cambodian National Youth Policy**
Ensure inclusion of youth in decision making and development planning within the policy.
ToR prepared for consultant and timelines developed by end of March 2009
Led by UNRCO with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNV and UNESCO.
- 2. Strengthen Strategic Information about young Cambodians to inform policy and programming in 2010 and beyond.**
Building on MoEYS support, implement a national baseline survey of mainstream Cambodian youth that includes the topics of sexual and reproductive health, education, disability, work, family life, media and IT influence, mental wellbeing, drug and alcohol abuse and selected health risk behaviour.
Led by the UN Adolescent, Youth and HIV Working Group in line with their planning document for 2009
UNCT will host a preliminary workshop to discuss the possibility of a comprehensive national youth survey. Experiences from a range of other Asian youth surveys will be presented and time given to consider and discuss the methodologies, scope of content, challenge of implementation, research partners and opportunities for mobilizing resources.
UNICEF and WHO to provide resources for youth survey experts by end of July 2009.
- 3. Mainstream adolescent and youth needs and rights** into the priority areas of UNCT work for 2009/2010 (through ensuring a deliberate lens on strategy development), into the UNDAF 2009, and into new UN documents/publications including the Democracy and Development safety nets in D and D.

4. **Develop key messages focused on the risks and inequalities** young people face, and advocate for policy protection, improved programming and services, including mobilizing resources for youth-focused and youth-led initiatives.
5. **Mainstream youth** focus on resource allocation and application of a *youth lens* in the poverty reduction process
6. **Require a disaggregation of findings by gender, age and geography** (urban, rural, and remote) in all UN agency documents, monitoring and evaluation methods and grants to other partners). Youth-specific information should, where possible, be further disaggregated to reflect 10-14, 15-19 and 20-24 age groups.

	Education	Health	Employment	Social Protection	Rights and particip
Policy	<p>Develop and enforce pro-poor education policies with a focus on 1) inclusiveness of the most vulnerable and marginalized</p> <p>2) Support cash/kind from public and private institutions to enable the rural poor, especially girls, to continue their studies in secondary and post-secondary education</p> <p>3) Technical and vocational education and training to respond to market demand and long-term national development policy</p>	<p>Advocate for implementation of Cambodia's signature on tobacco and alcohol control</p> <p>Advocate for the decriminalization of drug use to protect the rights of young drug users and prevent spread of HIV</p> <p>Enforce the age of marriage laws</p> <p>Identify targeted interventions for MARA and EVA in the next national HIV strategy 2010-2015 (UNCT led by UNAIDS)</p> <p>Expand health equity funds to cover all operational districts to ensure the poorest have access to free services at the point of delivery.</p>	<p>Review Labour law to demonstrate specific protection for young people, with specific reference to health and safety in the workplace</p> <p>Push for national policy impacting on youth employment including subject areas of labour market, land reforms and agriculture/irrigation</p>	<p>Finalize the draft Juvenile Justice Law.</p>	<p>Mainstream particip young people into the process by including references in UN government document</p> <p>Develop mechanism systems to ensure have a voice and integral and dynamic village/commune, pr and national development planning (UNDP, UNICEF, UNV, UNESCO,)</p> <p>Volunteering developed and int with Youth Policy, Ec Policies and Emp Policies. (UNV, VIOs and NG By end 2009</p>
Program	<p>Mobilize resources for the implementation of the National HIV/SRH education plan across the</p>	<p>Implementation of the TCC</p> <p>Provide training of AYFHS</p>	<p>Enforce labour law and health and safety in the workplace.</p> <p>Scale up social protection</p>	<p>Enforcement of legislation and implement-ation of policies</p>	<p>Establish a number of centres that opportunities for people to participate</p>

	Education	Health	Employment	Social Protection	Rights and particip
	<p>country</p> <p>Mobilize resources to operationalize youth and informal education policy</p> <p>Develop high-quality TV drama to challenge norms, perceptions and behaviors around a myriad of issues.</p> <p>1. importance of secondary school-education and success</p> <p>Implement child-friendly-school policy in all schools</p>	<p>Guidelines to key health settings for MARA including: VCCT sites, sexual and reproductive health centres, including STI clinics and drug rehabilitation services. (UNFPA and WHO to lead implementation seeking funds from HIV sources)</p> <p>Social marketing of available contraception and safe abortion services for young unmarried women and men</p> <p>Targeted media campaigns for young men and especially young women and first time deliveries re the importance of delivering babies in health care setting (Consider opportunity to expand/extend current campaign to reach young sexually active women)</p> <p>Develop programmes with young women and men that facilitate critical thinking and problem-</p>	<p>networks to create better, safer working environments for young people (ILO: Expansion of SFI)</p> <p>Vocational Education: Establish programmes and opportunities for young people to develop work-related skills: including school-based vocational training, special vocational centres, on-the-job training and volunteering (ILO to explore/establish pilot job centres).</p> <p>Entrepreneurial skills development through small grants initiatives (ILO, UNDP and partners)</p> <p>Invest in agricultural development to enable better financial outcomes for youth labour efforts</p> <p>Social security Irrigation initiative</p> <p>Support the rectangular (phase 2) strategic directive</p>	<p>Parenting Education</p> <p>IEC on the rights of youth (including rights to protection) as enshrined in international conventions and national laws, as well as on who has responsibility to fulfill these rights.</p> <p>Develop programmes with young people facilitating critical thinking/problem solving solutions for Commune Council planning. Subjects around vulnerabilities in the village and systems/methods of protecting young people. Include youth in ongoing efforts to develop social safety nets and cash transfers UNDP (with governance) document lessons learnt by 2010</p>	<p>and community lif access opportunities non formal ed leisure and recreation</p> <p>Develop pilot prog to establish youth lea structures at commu provincial level. The take the form of groups, youth com youth/student assoc etc. (UNDP, UNICEF, UN UNFPA, UNV)</p> <p>Capacity building Commune Council and elders to perceptions about rights of young peo benefits of participa community decision and development UNICEF through Koma)</p> <p>Capacity-building of village level to unc their rights and their development of communities. (UNDP, UNICEF, UN UNV, UNFPA</p>

	Education	Health	Employment	Social Protection	Rights and particip
		<p>solving skills, that can act as a precursor to social and community mobilization. Subjects around for example making the environment safer from accidents/drowning/vector diseases (UNDP to support initiatives through D&D and commune planning by end 2009).</p>	<p>of establishing Youth Employment/Vocational Centres in urban areas and selected rural areas</p>		<p>Develop high quality drama to provide mechanism to change perceptions and behaviours around issues including perceptions and experiences of youth. <i>UNCT Community team led by UNIC UNRCO.</i> Consider possibility of proposal/dialogue with donors ASAP</p> <p>Youth extension programmes to enhance sense of international citizenship (UNV, UN</p>
Research	<p>Best and most beneficial practices in health and civic education in schools</p> <p>Review of content and nature of health education programmes in school – link with health</p>	<p>Strategic information on Behaviours and Lifestyles most at risk and extremely vulnerable adolescents for HIV. (The UN Adolescent and Youth HIV Working Group: Draft proposal for PAF funding by end Feb 2009 Data available end 2009</p>	<p>Small medium enterprises and agri business possibilities for job creation and labor market demand (ILO)</p> <p>Attitudes, orientation and experience of work for young people</p>	<p>Examine existing laws and policies regarding child protection and determine need for policy and its content Social security scheme 2004 reviewed and/or barriers to its implementation and the impact a missing scheme has on youth</p>	<p>Document best practices youth participation programme reach implementers and decision makers</p> <p>Rights and participation of most vulnerable youth in politics (covered in MAR Survey)</p>

	Education	Health	Employment	Social Protection	Rights and particip
	Impact of secondary education on the future work and life of young Cambodian people	<p>Explore the underlying determinants of health risk behaviour (<i>National Survey Cambodian Youth</i>) Conduct Global Youth Tobacco Surveys at regular intervals.</p> <p>Better understand the contribution of adolescent and young women to maternal mortality</p> <p>Disabilities in young people (UNICEF to explore)</p>	Availability of agricultural education skills	<p>Review measures for Social Security compile and disseminate identify who has responsibility</p> <p>Review, map, compile and disseminate, current measures for protection from exploitation and abuse, including social protection. Highlight gaps in coverage</p> <p>Mental health status of young people. (National Health Survey)</p> <p>Vulnerabilities created by disabilities (National Health Survey)</p> <p>Impact of forced evictions on youth</p>	

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