



ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2020 CAMBODIA



March 2021





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ACRONYMS

ARV	Antiretroviral
BEEP	Basic Education Equivalency Programme
CARD	Council for Agricultural and Rural Development
CSDG	Cambodia Sustainable Development Goal
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EmONC	Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIVST	HIV Self-testing
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Questioning
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NCHADS	National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs
PLHIV	People Living with HIV/AIDS
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SERF	Socio-Economic Response Framework
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
MAFF	People with Disabilities
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWORD

2020 brought humanity challenges of historic proportions.

For the United Nations (UN), the COVID-19 pandemic crisis is an opportunity for transformation, but the path forward will not always be easy.

As a UN system, we drew inspiration from leadership of the World Health Organization in supporting the Royal Government of Cambodia's successful efforts to contain transmission of the COVID-19 virus, while at the same time preparing local health systems for a larger community outbreak.

Despite its achievements, Cambodia was not immune to the ways the virus has ravaged the global economy. The UN supported the government to mitigate the devastating socio-economic impacts of the pandemic with evidence-informed policy options and programme solutions to protect the poorest and most vulnerable. Together, we helped scale up social assistance, potentially building the foundations for universal access to social protection. Transformative policies in social protection, seemingly unthinkable before the crisis, have suddenly become a possibility.

While COVID-19 is a crisis, it also presents a chance to do things differently. Few things trigger action better than close proximity to acute and imminent danger. Following the UN Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights, the UN has used the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to build sustainable and inclusive recovery, with human rights at the core, ensuring that no one is left behind. Women and girls are particularly affected by the pandemic, working in the hardest-hit sectors. They are more vulnerable to losing their jobs, and many face the parallel pandemic of violence at home. This is why we have been advocating for a gender-transformative recovery.

Having seen the great need for data for better policymaking and service delivery to improve lives and protect the planet, the UN in Cambodia has embarked on a journey to enhance the national statistical infrastructure and our own data ecosystem. The data ecosystem helps track results towards the Sustainable Development Goals more effectively, better understand and anticipate emerging risks, generate new mission-driven responses, and nurture innovation and learning.

Looking ahead, in 2021 the UN commits to optimizing the transformations created by the health and the socio-economic response, and to ensuring human rights are front and centre in efforts to build forward better from the COVID-19 crisis. The Sustainable Development Goals remain our roadmap. Good health, no poverty, decent work, quality education, strong and accountable institutions and a shared responsibility to protect and promote human rights are the foundations for building an inclusive, sustainable and equitable future.

The results outlined in this report are thanks to the collective efforts of the UN family and partners. Pandemic recovery requires foresight, new attitudes and partnerships across "business unusual" stakeholders. We will collaborate, convene and leverage capabilities, knowledge and innovations to deliver the ambition required in a post-COVID future.

This is our commitment to the Cambodian people.



Pauline Tamesis

United Nations Resident Coordinator in Cambodia





UN COUNTRY TEAM

Resident UN Agencies



Non-resident UN Agencies



UN HABITAT

Key Government Counterparts

1. APSARA National Authority
2. Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD)
3. Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC)
4. Cambodian Human Rights Committee (CHRC)
5. Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA)
6. Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW)
7. Disability Action Council (DAC)
8. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)
9. Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)
10. Ministry of Environment (MoE)
11. Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS)
12. Ministry of Health (MoH)
13. Ministry of Interior (MoI)
14. Ministry of Justice (MoJ)
15. Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation (MISTI)
16. Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training (MoLVT)
17. Ministry of Land Management Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC)
18. Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME)
19. Ministry of Planning (MoP)
20. Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT)
21. Ministry of Rural Development (MRD)
22. Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY)
23. Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)
24. Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MoWRAM)
25. National AIDS Authority (NAA)
26. National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD)
27. National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM)
28. National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs (NCHADS)
29. National Council for Sustainable Development (NCSD)
30. National Social Protection Council (NSPC)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the UN system mobilized and re-purposed its development portfolio to support the government's efforts to save lives and stop transmission of the virus; mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the poorest and most vulnerable Cambodians; and to recover better. While the United Nations Development System reform came into effect in 2019, the COVID-19 crisis sped up its implementation, making the case for a more coherent and joint UN response. The reform allowed the Resident Coordinator to galvanize the whole UN Country Team (UNCT) to respond to the immediate and long-term impacts of the pandemic and accelerate actions towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by better tailoring and harmonizing UN country-level activities to meet urgent national priorities, drawing on expertise from resident and non-resident UN agencies, and capitalizing on joint programme implementation. More concretely:



The UNCT coalesced behind the World Health Organization (WHO) leadership of the health response, leading the critical support to the Ministry of Health in the development and implementation of the Cambodia Master Action Plan on COVID-19



Under the overall leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator, the UNCT jointly supported the socio-economic response and recovery efforts, working closely with the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF), line ministries, sub-national administrations, and other partners,



To build back better to a more inclusive and sustainable society, the UNCT initiated the development of a common human rights response strategy, in line with the Secretary General's Call to Action for Human Rights.

Collective efforts towards the COVID-19 pandemic – Health Response

Under the technical lead of WHO, the Cambodia Master Plan for COVID-19 responds to the immediate crisis and prepares for future health emergencies. The Royal

Government of Cambodia's (RGC) implementation of the plan significantly contained transmission and protected the Cambodian people from COVID-19. As of 31 December 2020, there were fewer than 500 COVID-19 cases and no deaths; 80 percent were imported and were contained via port-of-entry measures.

The UNCT, primarily WHO and UNICEF, worked closely with the RGC to build local preparedness, and develop and implement the COVID-19 National Deployment and Vaccination Plan and associated costings. They also worked to strengthen risk communication and community engagement at the national and sub-national levels. Some 10 million people out of a population of 16 million have been reached by these communication materials. These interventions provided the general population, particularly the most marginalized women and children, with timely and reliable information on COVID-19 risks and preventive actions to better protect themselves and others.

By focusing on Cambodians most vulnerable to the pandemic, the UNCT anticipated the need to address the health and protection of returning migrants, and successfully competed in the first UN Recover Better Fund call for proposals. IOM, WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA implemented a joint programme to protect migrant communities in three target provinces. It delivered a comprehensive assistance package of multi-sectoral interventions to **322,809 returning migrants** and host communities throughout the mobility continuum. The programme also strengthened coordination at sub-national and national levels, involving government and civil society actors in COVID-19 prevention and socio-economic recovery efforts. Interventions resulted in increased knowledge, information and utilization of essential health and mental health and psychosocial support services, as well as increased resilience of migrants and communities through newly created income-generating opportunities.

Collective efforts towards the COVID-19 pandemic – Socio Economic Response Framework (SERF)

UNCT quickly mobilized collective capacities to measure

and better understand the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable groups, and key sectors of the economy in Cambodia. **UN-led analyses provided timely information and policy options to government and development partners**, particularly on priority emergency fiscal measures to protect the poor. Even prior to the formulation of the UN SERF, UNCT formulated a comprehensive social protection policy options paper that facilitated the direction for the government's immediate response to the pandemic. Consequently, the **UN SERF influenced key policies of the government for resilient recovery**. The draft government Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan integrates approaches, policies and strategies that focus on the most vulnerable people, the scale up of social protection programmes and universal health coverage, as well as green and climate-resilient industries to drive inclusive and sustainable recovery.

The UN Cooperation Framework was re-purposed and new resources for health, socio-economic response and recovery were mobilized. Of the **US\$ 87.99 million** estimated SERF resources required, **US\$ 60.39 million** was re-purposed from United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and **US\$ 26 million** in new funding was mobilized, including **US\$ 1.7 million** raised from the UN Recover Better Fund.

To enable pipeline development and to incentivize joint efforts, the Resident Coordinator's office set up a prototype catalytic fund of **US\$ 100,000** to support thematic analysis, data and ideas generation, and impact assessments. The pipeline fund enabled joint exploration and the design of solutions. Three grants were awarded: Health Infrastructure Assessment in the Context of COVID-19 (UNOPS & WHO); Industry 4.0 Readiness of the Cambodia Garment Sector (UNIDO & ILO); and Preventing Crisis through Data (OHCHR & UNFPA). These pipeline ideas will be the basis of joint programme proposals in 2021.

Creating Space for Improving Human Rights and Ensuring the Leave No One Behind Principle

To fulfil the Secretary General's Call to Action and ensure that human rights are part of the COVID-19 response, the UN initiated the development of a **human rights response strategy**, with a two-pronged approach: dedicated attention to protecting and promoting civic

space (political and civil rights); and the integration of human rights in UN system-wide action on building back better and accelerating progress towards the SDGs. The strategy and action plan are to be finalized in 2021, but engagement with senior policy makers and partners is ongoing. This included a year-end dialogue with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs on the pandemic response and human rights.

Support to SDG Implementation

Cambodia Sustainable Development Goal (CSDG) Framework Monitoring:


Under the UNDAF Accelerator on Data, the UN prioritized strengthening data, statistical architecture and capabilities across line ministries, particularly the Ministry of Planning. Support focused on building data exchange platforms and the national census and surveys. As a result, data exchange platforms (called CAMSTAT) with line ministries have been established and launched. The data from the national census and the report of the Cambodia Inter-censal Agriculture Survey 2019 were released in December, with UN support. The UN initiated efforts to build an internal data ecosystem to facilitate sharing of data, analysis and visualization within the UNCT as part of the Common Country Analysis process. The data ecosystem focuses on anticipating vulnerability and risks. In the context of COVID-19, the UN supported the government to review targets of the CSDG Framework.

Financing SDGs: Through the Joint SDG Fund and the South-South Partnership Fund, UNCT leveraged **US\$ 3 million** to create an SDG financing portfolio. This portfolio established stronger UN engagement with the MEF through two joint programmes: the **Integrated National Financing Framework**; and the **Joint Credit Guarantee for Women Entrepreneurs**. These joint programmes aim to expand the creation of fiscal space and provide policy options for SDG financing.

The second development finance assessment, to be completed imminently, is crucial to help the RGC map and project the flow of financial resources available for financing the medium - and long-term development needs of the country. The UN also strengthened government capacity to regain monetary policy management via **the issuance of Khmer Riel bonds** and to establish the Credit Guarantee Corporation of Cambodia. This will support micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), especially women-owned MSMEs, to generate job opportunities for the growing labour force, including low-skilled workers.


KEY HIGHLIGHTS

❖ The UN provided significant technical and direct support to the evolution of the social protection programme and public financing. A dramatic increase in coverage was witnessed through the introduction of the new national COVID-19 Cash Transfer Programme for Poor Pregnant Women and Children aged 0-2 years. This covers all eligible ID Poor households (over **670,000**/more than **2.5 million individuals**) This is an increase in coverage from roughly **70,000 households in February 2020** to **169,246 by the end of 2020**. The programme provided a top-up to routine cash transfer programmes, reaching an estimated:

 **188,665**
children aged
0-5 years

 **1,974**
households of
People Living with
HIV (PLHIV)

 **60,307**
People with
Disabilities


 around
342,670 elderly

❖ The UN provided nutritious meals through on-site school feeding to **249,730 pre-primary and primary school children** until mid-March 2020. Due to COVID19, the UN provided Take-Home Rations to support the households of over **89,500 students** from IDPoor households participating in the school feeding programme and **2,143 volunteer school cooks** in **1,113 primary schools**.


❖ The UN supported reopening schools through the distribution of basic hygiene supplies to all the schools in the country, benefitting **3.2 million students**, as well as the Back to School Healthy and Safe campaign that reached over **10 million people**.

❖ The UN supported the delivery of continuous learning programmes and improved hygiene in schools, resulting in:


 **1,350,000** children in pre-school and primary education were supported with distance/home-based learning

 **3.9** million people, including **500,000** poor household members, students, teachers and school support staff being reached with water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies.

The UN worked closely with the RGC supporting the Leave No One Behind principle. Consequently:

 The disability allowance programme coverage has increased to reach over **16,000 people with disabilities** compared to some **11,000** in 2019. The base has now been set to scale-up coverage in 2021/2022 through the roll-out of the national disability identification process.

 **3,235 indigenous families** received communal land titles from the government, covering **33,899** hectares of land. Following UN support to the mediation between affected indigenous community representatives, business actors and an independent mediator since 2017, over **500 hectares of land**, including sacred forest, spirit forests, cemeteries and reserve land located in economic land concessions managed by the company have been returned to indigenous communities.

 **81,900 workers** (majority women) and migrant workers had their complaints resolved through grievance mechanisms in 2020, with the support of the UN.



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CHAPTER 1: KEY DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Cambodia has not been spared from the global outbreak of COVID-19 that began in December 2019. The first infected case in Cambodia was identified on 27 January 2020 as an imported case from China. By the end of March 2021, Cambodia experienced three local community transmissions but they were largely well contained. As of 30 March 2021, there were a total of 2,378 cases with 1,176 recoveries and 11 deaths. Strict containment measures have been taken since the first wave of COVID-19 cases in mid-March 2020, including the closure of educational institutions and entertainment establishments (e.g., KTV, night clubs and massage parlours) for much of 2020. However, the country has never been placed under a complete nor partial lockdown.



Garment exports dropped by

↓ **6.4** percent | year-on-year to about **US\$ 7.46** billion.



506 (out of 1,087)

factories temporarily experienced a partial or full suspension of operations from 2 to 8 weeks, affecting **323,674 workers**. This represents **34 percent** of the sector's total employment – predominantly women and girls.



International tourist arrivals dropped by

↓ **80** percent. | Tourism receipts lost an estimated **US\$ 4 billion**, which is approximately **15** percent of GDP.



1,356

↓ **factories and enterprises** were closed, affecting **108,825 out of 1,370,315 workers**.



The construction sector declined by

↓ **2.4** percent year-on-year.



Imports of construction materials declined by

↓ **18.2** percent year-on-year.



↓ The economy was projected to drop by **11** percentage points, from **7.1** percent in 2019 to negative **3.3** percent in 2020.



↑ The poverty rate was estimated to increase significantly, from less than **10 percent** before COVID-19 to **17.6** percent in the absence of interventions.

While the COVID-19 crisis has affected the whole population, analytical evidence shows that some groups have been affected far more than others. **The loss of income was evident across different strata of households, especially the poor and near-poor.** The impact was exacerbated by a mass return of migrant workers from Thailand and neighbouring countries due to the pandemic. By the end of 2020, over 120,000 migrant workers had returned from abroad. The survey reported that over 74 percent of these returned migrant workers had been regularly sending money home, with 57 percent sending between US\$ 101 and US\$ 300 per month.¹

Some segments of the population were disproportionately affected by the pandemic and were more at risk, due to their livelihood characteristics and living conditions. These included poor people, women and girls (including pregnant women), children, the elderly, people with disabilities, PLHIV and key populations (the homeless and people living in informal settlements, indigenous people and minorities, the LGBTIQ community, workers in the informal sector and migrant returnees). Those in frontline positions, such as health care workers and social workers were also at risk.

The COVID-19 pandemic had repercussions on social development and increased the risk of reversing progress over the past years. **Affordable and quality health care remains far from being universally accessible.** Although public health expenditure has constantly increased in the past years, it remains relatively low by global standards as a share of GDP and total health expenditure. The combined effects of COVID-19, including rising demand for health response and the negative socio-economic impacts, have further amplified vulnerabilities and risks to the current healthcare system, and ultimately to people's wellbeing.

Together with household income shocks, **learning disruptions caused by school closures** for most of 2020 increased school dropout and triggered poor academic performance for many children. These children are mostly from poor and vulnerable households, and live in rural areas. The pandemic has exacerbated inequality,

especially for girls, as they bear the burden of household chores and domestic care. Many children come from poor households and find it difficult to access online and digital learning programmes. As a result, **human development in 2020 was projected to drop by a significant order of magnitude**, approximately equal to the progress of the last four years.

The loss of income and job opportunities, combined with deteriorating progress in various social dimensions, **may erode social cohesion and trust in public institutions, and result in increasing risk of social and political variability.** There has been growing demand for government support in terms of protecting people's livelihoods, wellbeing and rights. While the current crisis has affected every facet of society and the economy, various population groups have been hardest hit. Noticeably, the crisis generated differentiated gendered impacts, which saw women and girls bearing most of the brunt. Individuals and households who were already struggling before the crisis (existing poor and vulnerable groups, plus those clustering around the poverty line) have been severely impacted by the pandemic. But the crisis has also affected groups not traditionally considered as most vulnerable, such as workers in the garment and tourism sectors, the majority of whom are women and girls. The risks stemming from the devastating socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 could be reinforced by ongoing concerns around deterioration in civic and democratic spaces, and the uncertainty of political reconciliation in the country.

The government's response to COVID-19, including **various economic policy measures and the cash transfer programme for poor and vulnerable households, has been very helpful** in addressing the basic needs of the people and protecting them from falling deeper into poverty. This has also helped mitigate health, social and economic repercussions of the pandemic, and address to some extent people's discontent. The response also largely gave priority attention to women workers and employees as well as to poor and vulnerable groups.² However, gender-responsive socio-economic recovery policies and

1 IOM (2020). Cambodia Returning Migrants Survey. Accessed on 4 January, 2021: <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/cambodia-returning-migrants-survey-2020>.

2 HE Minister Ing Kantha Phavi, ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit "Women's Role in Building a Cohesive, Dynamic, Sustainable and Inclusive ASEAN Community in a Post-COVID World" (Phnom Penh, Video Conference 12th November 2020).

actions are needed to bring the country back onto the path of inclusive, sustainable, equitable recovery and actualizing the CSDGs in 2030.

While Cambodia's efforts in controlling the COVID-19 pandemic and mitigating the socio-economic impacts were commendable, protecting human rights and ensuring participation in public life remain increasingly challenging. A significant **number of new legislations have been adopted and initiated**, such as the Law on the Management of the Nation in a State of Emergency, and draft laws on cybercrimes and public order, in an effort to tackle the pandemic and maintain public order.

These developments raise concerns over a lack of wider public consultations and the negative implications on human rights and fundamental freedoms in practice, as highlighted in the UN Secretary-General's annual report to the Human Rights Council³. The Secretary General highlighted concerns about CSOs, whose activities faced interference or intimidation by authorities and restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. His concerns were also related to the arrests and convictions of individuals for COVID-19 public comments and social media.

In addition, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia expressed concerns about

the arrest and mass trial of over **140 individuals** associated with the former Cambodia National Rescue Party and other pending trials in which the opposition leader are the defendants. After the United Nations raised concerns the Government reaffirmed that human rights and the commitment to upholding the rule of law and maintenance of peace, stability and public order are priorities as guaranteed by the Cambodia's Constitution.

The current crisis can be turned into an opportunity to make a structural transformation to Cambodia's socio-economic development model. This could hold the country to its long-term visions of realizing the CSDGs in 2030, and high-income country status in 2050. The COVID-19 response and socio-economic recovery policies can address inequality, narrow vulnerability gaps, and increase resilience to ensure that Cambodia can achieve inclusive, equitable, sustainable recovery and prosperity. To this end, the UN will focus in 2021 and in the remaining period of the cooperation framework, on key strategic priorities, including strengthening pandemic health response and vaccination, elevating human capital development, green growth, and the digital economy underpinned by an overarching commitment to gender-transformative recovery from the pandemic.

3 UN Secretary-General's annual report on human rights in Cambodia presented at the Human Rights Council on 5 October 2020, available at: <http://cambodia.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Ohchr-report/SG's%20report%20on%20Cambodia%20-%202022%20Pager-V2.pdf>





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CHAPTER 2: UN DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



Outcome 1 - Expanding Social Opportunity



By 2023, women and men in Cambodia, in particular the marginalized and vulnerable, have their basic needs addressed equitably as they benefit from and utilize expanded quality social services and social protection in a more resilient, fairer and sustainable society.

❖ Key Results of the UN Contribution towards Expanding Social Opportunity



Intermediate Outcome 1.1: Quality Services and Basic Rights of Vulnerable People

Women and men, in particular marginalized and vulnerable populations, increasingly seek quality services and the realization of their basic rights, including during emergencies.

The UN provided extensive technical, financial and operational support to the government, in particular the Ministry of Health in the health response to COVID-19 through the development and implementation of the COVID-19 Master Plan. This entailed supporting COVID-19 pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions, including preparedness of local health systems, capacity strengthening of front line social workers, the procurement of personal protective equipment, surveillance, risk communication and various public health measures. As a result, virus transmission was successfully contained and large-scale community transmission was prevented in 2020.

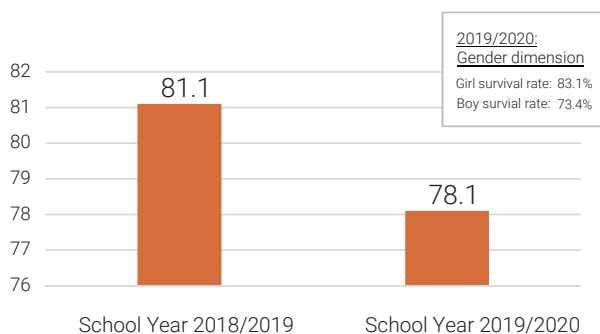
The UN worked closely with relevant line ministries and partners to ensure the continuation of essential social and health services during the pandemic, including education; sexual, reproductive and maternal health, gender-based violence (GBV); malaria elimination; measles control; routine immunization services and maternal and child health services.

This was buttressed with various assessments that the UN led or coordinated to help comprehend the health, social and economic risks and the effects of COVID-19 to help inform government policy. The UN's results achieved during the year are:

- More than **2,400 rapid response team members** from national level to the health centre level were trained.
- Nearly **480,000 items** of personal protective equipment were procured.
- A total of **US\$ 1,797,754** worth of personal protective equipment and laboratory equipment was procured on the request of the World Bank to support the Ministry of Health. All procurement was completed, with **66.5 percent** of the procured items already delivered, and the remaining items expected in early 2021.
- More than **166,000 copies of public communication materials** were produced and disseminated in schools, pagodas, detention centres, work places, border entry points and communities across the country.
- At least **10 million Cambodian** people, including those hard-to-reach and returning migrants, have been reached through online and offline platforms that are disability sensitive and are also in languages of ethnic groups. They contain timely and reliable information on COVID-19 risks and preventive actions so people can better protect themselves and others.
- **189,460 people** accessed essential (non-COVID-19 related) health services through vaccination programmes.
- **593,986 people (264,623 female)** benefitted from mental health and psychosocial support services.
- **108,612 children (55,392 girls)** aged 6-59 months were screened for severe acute malnutrition in health facilities, of which **5,842 (2,880 girls)** were treated.

- **120,448 children** under 5 and **361,000 pregnant women** benefitted from essential services integrating COVID-19 precautionary measures in the north-eastern provinces of Cambodia.
- **1,350,000 children** in pre-school and primary education were supported with distance/home-based learning
- **249,730** pre-school and primary school children and **4,653 cooks** received nutritious meals through on site school feeding programs via **take-home ration program (THR)**.
- More than **89,500 students** from IDPoor households and **2,143 volunteer school cooks** in **1,113** primary schools benefitted from the school feeding programme, Take-Home Rations.
- **4,559 indigenous pre- and primary school students** (2,226 girls) received learning materials to support continuous learning; **294 preschool radio episodes** and **468 primary radio episodes** were developed in

Primary and Secondary Education Survival Rates



three indigenous languages.

- **116 multilingual education preschool teachers** helped **2,258 children** (1,143 girls) and **219** multilingual education primary school teachers helped **4,735 children** (2,353 girls) to complete their first semester, before and during COVID-19 related school closures and the commencement of distance learning programmes.
- **3,430 students** (1,475 girls and 1,955 boys) from **80 primary schools** in seven remote provinces enrolled in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) accelerated learning programme to catch up after COVID-19 related learning loss.
- More than **3 million** Cambodian people were reached during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 through social media platforms with eight key messages on Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health and GBV.
- **83,054 adolescents and youths** (55,016 female) received health services at health facilities in eight provinces.
- **175,799 parents/caregivers** (60,994 female) and **22,466 children** (13,129 girls) were reached with key messages and counselling on mental health and psychosocial support; **8,543 parents/caregivers** (5,055 female) were provided with maternal care, GBV information and psychological support.
- **10,804 hygiene kits, 6,550 dignity kits, 48,287 cooked meals and 21,557 dried food items** were distributed to returning migrants to address immediate needs, due to large influx of migrant returnees. **86,252 returning migrants** (37,996 female) were screened for COVID-19 symptoms at Ports of Entry.
- **The Safe School Operation Handbook** in the context of COVID-19 for school management teams and teachers was developed and distributed to all schools in the country to support the MoEYS safe school re-opening campaign.
- As part of UN support to flood response, **1,548 first aid kits** were provided to **817 primary schools across 17 provinces**; **26,203 textbooks** for primary education grades were distributed to flood affected schools in three provinces; and **1,000 dignity kits** were provided to vulnerable women.
- The amount of emergency obstetric and neonatal care (EmONC) coverage in eight north-eastern provinces keeps increasing, in line with the Improvement Plan. The number of comprehensive EmONC facilities (provincial and district referral hospitals) was maintained at eight, which is in line with the Improvement Plan for 2020, while the basic EmONC facilities increased from **10 facilities** in 2018 to **13 facilities** in 2020, based on the 2019/2020 EmONC Review Report.
- National data indicated that there was no significant HIV prevention service disruption – **45,078** female entertainment workers; **25,180** men who have sex with men; **5,452** transgender people; and **867** people

who inject drugs were reached through differentiated modalities, including virtual outreach. Among those reached, **47 percent** of people who inject drugs, **72 percent** of female entertainment workers, 88 percent of transgender people and **91 percent** of men who have sex with men were tested for HIV; **1,008** key populations were confirmed as HIV positive, and over **99 percent** of those confirmed as HIV positive were enrolled in care and were on treatment.

- The HIV Funding Request Application for 2021-2023, with a full country envelope amount of approximately **US\$ 41.5 million** was approved by the Global Fund. The additional interventions proposed under the Prioritized Above Allocation Request, with a total amount of **US\$ 15.4 million**, were also fully recommended. The RGC committed **US\$ 19.7 million** of its domestic resources for the 2021-2023 allocation period. It committed **US\$ 11 million** for antiretroviral medicines (ARVs) for the 2021-2023 period, representing **66 percent** of the committed government co-financing for the upcoming grant.

Intermediate Outcome 1.2: Public and Private Services and Expanded Coverage

Public and private sectors provide quality services and expanded coverage for marginalized and vulnerable populations in line with international standards and norms, including during emergencies.

The UN provided technical advice to the development of policy implementation strategies for key reform priorities and upgrading national systems and tools, such as an impact assessment of the primary school-based management training programmes, the Human Resource Management Information System Master Plan, teacher career pathway implementation guidelines, and costed school-based mentoring options, to promote a nationwide school-based mentoring system for all education levels. The Teacher Career Pathway framework and guidelines for teachers, school directors and education specialists were developed to support professional growth. The new Mid-Term Plan Teacher Qualification Upgrade was implemented to ensure alignment with the new Country Programme Document and Teacher Career Pathway systems.

A new early grade learning school-based mentoring

system was developed to ensure that teachers' learning continues on their return to the classroom. To help teachers better track student attendance and performance, the Student Tracking System was revised and is being piloted in **132 schools** in Pouk district.

Regarding the health education curriculum, textbooks and teacher guides for Grades 2, 5, 8 and 11 were developed, including comprehensive sexuality education for Grades 5, 8 and 11. Regional teacher training centres, teacher education colleges and provincial teacher training centres were supported to roll out remote teaching and e-learning.

The UN supported the strengthening of school infrastructure, including **426 hand-washing stations**, 54 fuel-efficient stoves, five water tanks and three model kitchens and eating shelters for schools involved in school meal programmes. This ensured a safe cooking and food serving environment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Support continued to ensure services for survivors of violence against women, with 110 GBV working group members who are frontline service providers in three provinces of Siem Reap, Kampong Speu and Sihanoukville improving their knowledge and skills in minimum service standards, basic counselling, referral and case management. As a result, 205 GBV cases received information on services, psychosocial support, legal information and referrals.

With support from the UN, the following strategic plans, guidelines, operational standards and other instruments were developed:

- **The National Guideline on Ensuring the Continuity of Essential Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health Services**, including family planning and GBV during COVID-19, was developed and virtually disseminated to all provinces, targeting midwives.
- **The National Guideline for Health Sector Response to Violence against Women** was developed, aiming to ensure comprehensive and cohesive connections between different layers of the health system to address GBV and violence against women.
- **The National Strategic Plan for Control and Elimination of Neglected Tropical Diseases in Cambodia (2021-2025)** was developed.

- **The National Strategy on Disaster Risk Management for Health 2020-2024**, integrating the **Minimum Initial Service Package**, was developed. The service package curriculum and training package were adapted to be used by health providers.
- The new **Strategic Plan for HIV and STI Prevention and Control in the Health Sector 2021-2025** was developed.
- **The Strategic Plan to End TB in Cambodia 2021-2030** was implemented, and Global Fund TB and HIV funding for 2021-2023 was secured.
- Documents in support of viral hepatitis interventions included the National Strategic Plan for Viral Hepatitis B and C Infection Control in Cambodia 2020-2024, the National Treatment Guidelines for HBV and HCV, and the Annual Operational Plan 2020-2021.
- Minimum standards of operation to enhance quality control in private-sector health facilities were developed. To address vulnerabilities, options to expand financial health protection for health services in the context of COVID-19 were developed for review.

 **Intermediate Outcome 1.3: Social Services and Social Protection**

Public and private sectors sustainably increase and diversify domestic resources for social services and social protection, especially for marginalized and most vulnerable populations.

- The UN provided **significant technical and direct support to the evolution of the social protection programme and public financing**. In the COVID-19 context, the UN contributed to an effective response to gender-focused humanitarian demands, such as the Cash Transfer Programme for Poor Pregnant Women and Children aged 0-2 years. A dramatic increase in coverage was witnessed through the programme's introduction, which covers all eligible IDPoor households (over 670,000). Coverage increased from roughly **70,000 households** in February 2020, to over **169,246** by the end of 2020.

The programme provided a top up to routine cash transfer programmes, reaching **188,665 children** aged 0-5 years; **60,307 people with disabilities**; **1,974 households of people living with HIV (PLHIV)**; and **342,670 elderly people**.

- **169,246 pregnant women and children** benefited from the Cash Transfer Programme for Poor Pregnant Women and Children.
- **358,070 students** from Grades 1-12 benefited from the education scholarship programme, including food scholarships.
- **16,000 people with disabilities** were registered under the disability allowance scheme. The basis has also now been set to scale up for coverage in 2021/2022 through the roll out of the national disability identification process.

As a result of modernizing the national social security fund, 22 client-facing processes were re-designed, facilitating registration, contribution and receipt of social security benefits.

In the area of public finance and governance, important synergies were made in support of public financial management and decentralization and de-concentration reform at sub-national administration level. This included the development of planning and budgeting tools, budget transparency, and brokering relationships with the Ministry of Interior, in charge of sub-national administration, and the MEF to increase budget allocations for social services. With contributions from the UN's capacity building support, the budget allocations for social services (as a share of total budget) increased:

from **1.82** percent in 2019 to **2.4** percent in 2020 | in seven targeted provincial/capital administrations

from an average of **5.4** percent in 2018 to **5.9** percent in 2019 | of total commune/sangkat budgets.

COVID-19 support through take-home rations: The story of a school cook



Uncle Aum Nang, 62, has been a cook for the UN/MoEYS school-feeding programme in Trapeang Arak Primary School in Kampong Thom province for four years now.

The school suspension in mid-March unexpectedly interrupted the job he loves. While he does not have to get up early to prepare breakfast for the children anymore, he feels that something is missing.

“Schools are very quiet compared to before. I miss the sound of the kids playing in the school compound; I miss the cooking and the vegetable preparation,” said Uncle Nang, as he showed off his kitchen facilities and school garden.

Since the closure of schools, Uncle Nang has also lost a part of his livelihood. His regular incentive of 30 to 40 kilograms of rice each month from the community to compensate for his volunteer time, and his \$10.25 monthly salary from the commune council has also stopped.

After providing an initial take-home ration to scholarship students and their families in March, the UN and MoEYS realized that they neglected to support school cooks, who, although not direct beneficiaries, are the backbone of the school meals programme and are often poor themselves. The June distribution was improved to include all 2,109 school cooks from 1,113 primary schools in 10 provinces participating in the school meals programme.

Holding an IDPoor registration card, Uncle Nang and his family received two rations of 30 kilograms of rice and 2 litres of vegetable oil as a way to help ends meet in the absence of other income.

“I want to thank the donors who also thought of us. Besides cooking for the school, I also cook for Buddhist festivals and wedding ceremonies. COVID-19 means that not many people are getting married nor initiating any festivals. This has all impacted me, and these rations will help my family for a while,” said Uncle Nang as he pointed to the two rice bags and the oil bottles he received.

“But I want nothing more than to see schools re-open and to resume cooking for the kids,” he said. Uncle Nang is ready to get back to school and continue his contribution to school meals as soon as possible.

From crisis to breakthrough: Supporting Cambodia to reach a social protection milestone



Cambodia's economic pain is undeniable: the UN estimates poverty will double in 2020. That is why the new COVID-19 cash transfer scheme, which the UNCT and the government worked on together, is crucial.

Just three months after its first COVID-19 case, the RGC rolled out its ground-breaking **"COVID-19 Cash Transfer Programme for IDPoor Households."** This was Cambodia's first nationwide programme providing direct financial support to the full range of its most vulnerable citizens, a true game-changer for social protection development. The UNCT had laid the groundwork through many years of working with the government to develop social protection systems, all of which were based on the IDPoor scheme for registering low-income families. This played a pivotal role in this significant achievement.

The UN system and the government worked together with remarkable swiftness, from the go-ahead in April to roll out in June. A legal framework was deployed, the scheme's design was implemented, and a cost analysis was conducted to support budget allocation. The upgrading of existing management information systems, training of provincial, district and commune staff in the new system, and a nationwide information campaign was enabled through a broad-based partnership with Save the Children, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the UN. This coalition enabled the procurement and distribution of tablets and increased registration of IDPoor families, with almost 700,000 families now enrolled in the programme and receiving benefits. Generous support from the European Union (EU) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) was crucial to the achievement of these results.

" We really needed this support," said Loent Yong Phin, 23, a mother from Battambang province. Her family's income declined disastrously when her husband's construction work dried up due to COVID-19, which is why she registered to be listed as IDPoor.

" I'm still paying back a loan from when I got bad typhoid. This money means I can repay and afford food. We've never had help like this before, it's so reassuring."

As the programme was developed, it was also extended to provide additional support to individuals with greater needs, including children under 5, those over 60, and people living with HIV or disabilities.

Lieb Sophean, a 37-year-old community worker in Battambang, has worked late every day since the programme launched, ensuring everyone eligible for cash transfers is registered and paid. **" Most people in our commune lost their jobs, so the programme is a lifeline for them and their children,"** Sophean said. Sophean feels lucky to be able to help her neighbours. **" For as long as they're queueing up, I'll be here doing my job,"** she said, pointing at the long line of villagers patiently waiting to enrol.

As a result of this effort the government officially announced that 700,000 poor households, which comprise approximately 2.8 million people, will have access to the cash transfer programme. This was the first time that the RGC could quickly scale up the social protection system to support poor households based on the IDPoor system and achieve remarkable results within a short timeframe. This is making a significant difference to poor and vulnerable households.



Outcome 2 - Expanding Economic Opportunity



By 2023, women and men in Cambodia, in particular those marginalized and vulnerable, benefit from expanded opportunities for decent work and technological innovations; and participate in a growing, more productive and competitive economy, that is also fairer and environmentally sustainable.



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❖ Key Results of the UN Contribution towards Expanding Economic Opportunities

Intermediate Outcome 2.1: Decent Work

More women and men have decent work, both in waged and self-employment, are protected by labour standards, and have higher skills in a progressively formalizing labour market, and high levels of employment are maintained.

Through the United for Youth Employment UN Joint Programme and Promoting Decent Youth Employment in Cambodia, the UN contributed to significant improvements in employment policy making, information and opportunities for young women and men during the pandemic.

- The UN supported access to information for youth, so that they have an opportunity to develop skills demanded by the market and their future work. Some **500,000 young people** were reached through

social media coverage of Cambodia's First National Dialogue to increase awareness on the future of work and skills needed in the emerging digital economy. At least 633 youths were actively engaged in dialogues, entrepreneurship sessions and employability workshops offered by the National Dialogue, and **1,508 job seekers** dropped off their CVs at the virtual career fair.

- Young people were able to access re-skilling and up-skilling through technical skills development, and the incubation of promising young entrepreneurs' businesses, through UN support. This resulted in **350 young people** (51 percent women) enrolling in the **Accountancy Technician Qualification** programme to meet the need for qualified accountants in businesses and private sector development in Cambodia. The programme aims to provide a basic accounting skills upgrading platform for young jobseekers, as well as those already in employment and wanting to move up the ladder.

- **44,000 young people** were reached through the National Employment Agency website and Facebook Live during a career fair conducted by the National Employment Agency, with the participation of 36 companies seeking applicants for **5,522 jobs**.
 - The Basic Education Equivalency Programme (BEEP) expanded in 2020. In response to COVID-19, the BEEP platform was also customized and opened to the public, targeting lower secondary school students. Some 122 additional exercise-teaching videos for six main subjects (Khmer, English, Mathematics Level 1 and Mathematics Level 2, Physics and Chemistry) were produced and broadcast live on the official social media platforms of MoEYS and BEEP, while **29,123 students accessed the BEEP online platform** (excluding views on the MoEYS social media platforms).
 - Eight new BEEP learning centres were established in partnership with MoEYS and the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. Currently, total enrolment is **644 learners** (38 percent female) across **21 learning centres in 12 provinces** (Phnom Penh, Siem Reap, Takeo, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Koh Kong, Ratanakiri, Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kandal and Tboung Khmum).
 - Literacy is key to promoting decent work, particularly for marginalized workers. In 2020, under the Factory Literacy Programme, the UN partnered with MoEYS and nine garment factories in Phnom Penh, Kandal, Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Cham and Svay Rieng to implement literacy classes for a total of **277 workers** (95 percent female). MoEYS contracted and trained 13 facilitators from the factories to implement the programme. As of December 2020, 266 learners (96 percent female) had graduated.
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and with the Fisheries Administration to enhance capacity to implement food safety. As a result of the collaboration: 1) the Action Plan for Inspection and Control of Quality and Safety of Fishery Products was approved; 2) the national fishery quality infrastructure system was strengthened through developing a pool of food safety trainers and food safety inspectors; and 3) 75 Fisheries Administration officers and cantonment officers were trained, which included fish inspectors.
- The Council of Ministers endorsed **Cambodia's National Cassava Policy**. The policy will boost and diversify growth and exports in the coming year. The growth of the cassava sector can help secure jobs and income for rural communities for generations to come, as cassava has properties that makes it especially resilient to the impacts of climate change.
 - **650 smallholder farmers** (20 percent women) were trained on agronomic practices to raise their productivity in cassava production. While the return on investment for all farmers has not been measured, two demonstration farms achieved a 138 percent increase in their yield, with additional investment in fertilizer and the adoption of sustainable agronomic practices. Cassava prices also increased, achieving a return of **US\$ 2,288 per hectare**.
 - The UN worked closely with three private companies to expand their exports to new international markets, including India, the EU and the United States. Cassava associations representing private sector organizations and individual farmers initiated dialogues on a direct export route for cassava with the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, through the UN and with Ministry of Commerce coordination. As a result of this advocacy work over the past three years, **US\$ 150 million** was invested by the government in 2020 to construct a national road to connect the inland cassava producing region near the Tonle Sap Lake with Cambodia's ports along the southern coastal corridor. The road will be completed in the next four years to provide a strategic gateway for export to global markets and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Intermediate Outcome 2.2: Economic Productivity, Competitiveness and Innovation

Public institutions, businesses and entrepreneurs drive improved economic productivity and competitiveness, greater innovation and adoption of new technology, and resilience to shocks.

- In 2020, the UN worked closely with the Ministry of
- **The Green Industrial Award Guideline** was developed

and will be adopted in 2021. The results of piloting the Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies methodologies in 15 factories confirmed that there is a possibility to reduce the **148,000 tCO₂/Cycle, equal to 49.33 percent of the outcome target of the 300,000 tCO₂/Cycle.**

- In cooperation with Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation and the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), as well as business associations, gender policy gap and a training needs assessments were conducted. The assessments identified areas for further improvement to enhance gender equality and women's economic empowerment in a green industry. The action plan was developed and is ready to be implemented in 2021.
- The monitoring and evaluation system of the **Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025** was developed and contributed to the successful roll out of the policy. This system will inform the mid-term review of the policy in 2021.
- The policy assessment regarding economic empowerment for women in a green industry was completed. The Cambodia country report is being finalized following consultations with relevant stakeholders in November. It is expected that the dissemination will take place in March 2021.

Intermediate Outcome 2.3: Economic Inclusion of Vulnerable People

Social norms, laws, policies and institutions promote economic inclusion, especially of women, people with disabilities, women and men living in remote areas and the extreme poor.

Along with support to the health response, the UN supported the RGC to mitigate the devastating socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to build back better. This was done by providing technical assistance in the form of economic modelling and policy analysis to the government, doing baseline, social and economic impact assessments to identify policy options to reduce the socio-economic impact, and adapting policies to meet the needs of the most vulnerable. This contributed to and shaped the government's stimulus

packages to support the most vulnerable people through social protection programmes.

As a result, the RGC moved quickly to implement a set of policy measures and a stimulus package of around **4.3 percent of GDP** (approximately **US\$ 1,124 million**). Part of the stimulus package provided immediate support to the informal sector and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that have been impacted heavily by the pandemic, including: 1) cash for work (**US\$ 100 million**); 2) wage subsidies to workers in the garment and tourism sectors (**US\$ 64 million**); and 3) support to SMEs (**US\$ 600 million**).

The RGC has measures in place to address GBV during the pandemic. These 1) integrate violence prevention and response into COVID-19 response plans; 2) provide options for women to report abuse or seek help without alerting perpetrators; and 3) raise awareness through advocacy and campaigns, with messages targeting both women and men.

Under the leadership of the Cambodia Mine Action Authority, the clearance of Cambodia's mine-affected land is now linked more closely to the release of land that supports livelihood development. Some **28,979 vulnerable people** (48 percent women) living and engaging in agriculture in the most land mine-affected provinces gained access to mine-free land as a result of the UN-supported mine clearance programme. This enabled **access to the safe use of 11.41 km² of land for community and livelihood development.**

A government mechanism – the Disability Action Council – was established to coordinate the Government's work in the disabilities sector and oversee the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. With support from the UN, **75 disabled people's organizations** were included into the national and provincial disability action councils. These councils have connected to more people with disabilities to address their specific needs and advance disability rights across Cambodia, including through engagement in the policy development process.

Cambodia's first tuk-tuk vehicle that enables people with disabilities to drive was prototyped, successfully tested and handed over to the Phnom Penh Centre for Independent Living through a partnership between the UN and the Agile Development Group.

Leading the way in solar green energy: Thida's journey



Thida is optimistic about the engagement and representation of women in the renewable energy sector. She was the first woman in 10 Asian countries to be awarded a New Energy Leader award by the Asian Development Bank in 2018.

In 2004, Thida started working for a private solar company. She gradually became very interested in the field and fell in love with her work. "I saw the benefits that solar energy can offer; help local people in saving time and budget and having electricity for their children," Thida said.

Thida ran the Renewable Energy Development Association from 2008 until 2013. The association was converted into a company called Solar Green Energy Cambodia (SOGE). This is a home-based manufacturer of solar systems. Buyers can purchase a system on credit, if they cannot cover the full amount of upfront costs, while rental contracts are also available. Thida is very ambitious with her business. **"We want to combine renewable energy with modern technology to support the agriculture sector in Cambodia."**

Thida's company focuses on client satisfaction and after-sales service. The key piece of advice she has for other women is that, **"... doing business with honesty and responsibility (good service after sales) made our company successful to date"**.

Behind Thida's success is a lot of hardship, as she had very little finance in the beginning. **"I had little money when I started this business with my husband,"** she said. **"Our approach started off with just selling our ideas to customers and if they ordered, we had to borrow money with high interest rates in order to start developing the products for our clients."** There are many other barriers that hinder Thida and other women from participating and working in the green industry.

"I believe that more women are interested in this renewable energy sector just like myself, but they have limited knowledge and interest in doing proper research on it," said Thida.

Due to COVID-19, her company's sales have dropped about 70 percent, but this has not demotivated her. During this time, Thida has been working hard trying to adjust her company's internal management.

"I see this time as an opportunity. I take this opportunity to provide more training to my employees while sales are down. I strengthened our R&D activities and developed and tested new products."

There are currently increasing opportunities in this sector and in green industry. New technology and greening the environment are key business concepts. Thida has a vision for women and green industry in Cambodia. **"I want to see more women engaged and represented in technology and green industry. I want to raise more awareness about ecological issues in Cambodia, to help other people engage in more sustainable behaviour, and increase knowledge and R&D together in renewable energy,"** said Thida.

Although solar energy systems have been available in Cambodia for some time, people are reluctant to trust them.

"I want women to think that green industry is not just the responsibility of men, but it is for everyone."

Thida said she used to experience limited exposure, networking and advice from others. But these days there are more opportunities to support women who want to take part in green industry. **"All we need is commitment, responsibility and honesty."**

Thida requested the government and donors to continue supporting women's empowerment in green industry, creating a more enabling environment and opportunities for women.

Thida joined the UN programme, **'Economic Empowerment for Women in Green Industry'**. Through this programme, she received a series of trainings on gender mainstreaming in green industries.



Outcome 3 - Promoting Sustainable Living



By 2023, women and men in Cambodia, in particular the marginalized and vulnerable, live in a safer, healthier, more secure and ecologically balanced environment with improved livelihoods, and are resilient to natural and climate change related trends and shocks.



❖ Key Results of the UN Contribution towards Promoting Sustainable Living

Intermediate Outcome 3.1: Increased Resilience and Access to Resources

Women and men, in particular the vulnerable and marginalized, are empowered to equitably access, responsibly use and benefit from resilient basic services, land and natural resources, with an increased resilience to cope with disasters/shocks and other risks.

- The UN worked with its partners MAFF, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Secretariat of the National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development and MEF on a set of integrated interventions to enable poor smallholders to take advantage of market opportunities and to increase resilience to climate and other shocks. As

a result, **670,000 smallholder households** were reached in 2020.

- **500 hectares of land** located in economic land concessions and managed by companies have been returned to indigenous communities, including sacred forests, spirit forests, cemeteries and reserve land.
- A guidance booklet on integrating food security and nutrition into Commune Development Plan/ Commune Investment Programme processes was endorsed and rolled out in four provinces, with support from the UN, in close collaboration with the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development (CARD).
- **3.9 million people**, including **500,000 poor household**

members, students, teachers and school support staff were reached with WASH supplies.

- Innovative subsidy and payment-by-installment modalities were used to reduce additional economic barriers to WASH service provision due to the economic impacts of COVID-19, reaching over **12,000 poor household members**.
- Water treatment material was provided to private piped water operators serving over **200,000** people affected by floods. More than **145,000** people live in new open-defecation free areas as a result of UN support.
- An additional **47 small-scale, climate-smart water infrastructure projects** were completed in 2020 through co-financing, with commune/sangkat funds amounting to **US\$ 896,415** from sub-national authorities. This increased the number of schemes supported to **94**, benefitting 15,685 households (over 60 percent women) through increasing agricultural income by **29.2 percent** annually, and directly irrigating **11,899 hectares of rice paddies**.
- The UN made important contributions to increasing climate-smart and resilient infrastructure in 2020. Through UN support, an additional **US\$ 4.4 million** in government investment in infrastructure went through climate-change screening for five road projects and one irrigation pond, increasing cumulative investments by **11.7 percent** from last year. Climate change was further included in the budget circular for Cambodia in 2020 through UN support to the MEF. This circular provides guidance to all line ministries to include climate change investment and programmes in their annual budget submissions systematically.



Intermediate Outcome 3.2: Innovation, Information and Technologies for Sustainability

Relevant public and private sector actors use innovation, information and technologies to contribute to sustainable production and living, environmental protection and conservation.

- **The Disaster Risk Reduction Framework** (2019-2030) and **National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction** (2019-2023), which establishes

nationwide institutional arrangements and key actions for ongoing disaster preparedness was endorsed.

- **The Cambodia Disaster Loss and Damage Information System**, known as **CAMDI** was updated for improved data accuracy and relevance. CAMDI supports improved analysis of disaster loss and impact trends.
- **212,000** people in disaster-affected areas received evacuation warning messages during major floods in 2020 through the Early Warning System (EWS1294), which was rolled out and activated nationwide.
- More than **674,146 poor and vulnerable households** have been registered in the IDPoor system as part of supporting the Ministry of Planning for IDPoor registration, the national targeting system on poor household identification, for social assistance. With UN support, the national framework for **Shock Responsive Social Protection** was drafted. This aims to benefit around **700,000 poor and vulnerable households**. Innovative methods of engagement include the use of digital technology which was crucial to enable the rapid expansion and identification of eligible households.
- **200 hectares of forest** were restored in community forestry and protected areas in an effort to improve climate change adaptation and the livelihoods of rural poor people.
- Supporting infrastructure was built, with the aim of supplying year-round clean water to households for domestic consumption and use for home gardening and chicken raising (**100** beneficiary households received unconditional cash transfers of **US\$ 60** per household and **US\$ 100** each as seed capital for saving groups).
- The Ministry of Environment has finalized **the Action and Investment Plan (AIP) of REDD+** which steers the implementation of mitigation actions in the natural environment including forest and the agriculture sector – as part of the Nationally Determined Contribution. The ministry has also developed a **National Forest Monitoring System** to support the implementation of REDD+ projects and facilitate forest cover monitoring.

- The Ministry of Environment in collaboration with relevant partners including International and Local NGOs, and private sector have conducted reforestation and afforestation in different protected areas across the country leading to the successful rescue and increment of thousands of species in those areas. Subsequently, **20 hectares** of degraded forest in the Protected Area Management Zone in Phnom Kulen were restored and **40,000 native species** in a flooded forest were replanted to contribute to biodiversity.
- In partnership with MAFF and CARD, the UN completed the '**Rapid Assessment of COVID-19 Impacts on Agriculture and Food Security in Cambodia: Policy Response**'. This offered immediate, medium- and long-term policy responses for the sector. As a result, **US\$ 1 million** was raised to restore livelihoods and enhance resilience for over **2,000 households in rural populations** most affected by COVID-19 in Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey provinces.
- The Ministry of Environment was able to implement the **OzonAction Compliance Assistance Programme-Montreal Protocol** through policy, technical and knowledge support from the UN. As a result, since 2015, Cambodia has cumulatively reduced the import of HCFC equivalent to 807.4 Gg CO2 equivalent.
- The Ministry of Environment, in collaboration with relevant partners, was supported to address illegal activities such as land encroachment through arrests, transitional fines or court processes. As a result, **174** cases were recorded, of which **145** cases were sent to court and 29 cases received transitional penalties/ fines.
- Development of **e-extension, tele-based services** and virtual market place solutions for agricultural value chains. E-extension and tele-based services are being provided through the ASPIRE programme. A virtual market place solution is being developed through the Chamka app, which was rolled out in Q3 2020. It includes modules for farmer and buyer/supplier registration, farmer information and extension services (both online products and calling out of the app for tele-extension).
- The UN provided technical assistance to Biogas Technology and Information Center to conduct **15 feasibility studies** for biogas technology investment project at farms and factory. Consequently, **8 feasible projects** were selected for demonstration.



Intermediate Outcome 3.3: Partnership for Sustainability

Relevant public institutions consultatively develop, adopt, appropriately resource and implement, without discrimination, in partnership and coordination with the private sector and civil society, legal, policy, regulatory and planning frameworks related to sustainable production and living, compliant with relevant international standards and conventions.

- The UN worked closely with the National Committee for Disaster Management to support flood-prone communities to mitigate the impact of disasters through designing and building six safe evacuation centres in Pursat, Kampong Chhnang and Kampong Thom provinces. All are under construction and expected to be completed by Quarter 1 of 2021.
- Continued support helped strengthen national capacity in emergency preparedness for transboundary animal diseases, by developing biosecurity and bio safety standard operating procedures, and including animal health in the Pandemic Preparedness Plan. The UN initiated and supported the assessment tool for laboratories and AMR surveillance systems training for several government laboratories (NAHPRI, Fisheries Administration and the Royal University of Agriculture) as part of efforts to strengthen the evidence base focus area in the country.
- Restoration, conservation and sustainable development work at the three World Heritage sites in Cambodia was made possible with UN assistance to the government. This is to protect their value, in line with recommendations of International Coordination Committee meetings. Given this situation, **20 project sites** at Angkor were monitored and many new remarkable discoveries were made, such as a wooden structure in the northern pond of Angkor Wat, an ancient structure at Lolei temple in the Roluos area, and a monument structure in the middle of Srah Srang.

- To harmonize the surrounding environment and the cultural landscape, thousands of trees have been replanted in **Angkor Park**, surrounding moats of Angkor Thom and Angkor Wat have been rehabilitated, and a parvis is being created to welcome visitors near Angkor Wat. To avoid adverse impacts on the Terrace of Elephants and the Royal Palace, a new path was introduced, while construction of a **23 km** bicycle path began in the forest. This is to encourage visitors to use environmentally friendly transport.
- The UN provided support to finalize the drafting of a **Payment for Ecosystem Services Roadmap** for the next 10 years, which acts as a stepping stone towards developing a national strategy for payment for ecosystem services.
- Technical support to the RGC allowed for the development and adoption of the **Agriculture Development Policy 2021-2030** and its Agriculture Sector Master Plan 2030. The National E-Agriculture Strategy and the Second National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2019-2023 aimed at addressing stunting, underweight, and wasting (which are still unacceptably high) and the increase in overweight and obesity among children were developed, and the draft National Fisheries Law amendment was finalized. Gender and youth are mainstreamed in the National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition as cross-cutting issues and incorporated into the monitoring and evaluation plan for joint priority actions.
- With UN assistance, CARD was able to develop a **Policy Response Analysis for Agriculture and Food Systems in the Context of COVID-19 for Cambodia**. It provided support to the Technical Working Group on Social Protection and Food Security and Nutrition to prepare a Statement on Food Security and Nutrition during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This affirmed Cambodia's priority for maternal, infant and young child nutrition. The latter document resulted in additional funding contributions from the WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific and other donors to support awareness raising around strengthening food systems for healthy diets. This targeted youth at the provincial level. The UN also supported CARD in Empowering Youth for Food Systems Improvement and Healthy Diets, taking advantage of these activities to promote gender equality and raise the profile of maternal, infant and young child nutrition.
- The UN supported MAFF to contribute to the updated Nationally Determined Contribution 2020, particularly for the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses sector, by identifying, prioritizing, and including nine mitigation and **14 adaptation priority actions** in the current updated Nationally Determined Contribution. The UN strengthened the capacity of MoWA staff on Gender and the Nationally Determined Contribution. **Guidance tools for integrating gender into renewable energy policies were developed and translated into Khmer.**
- The RGC drafted the country's first National Circular Economy Strategy and Action Plan, with UN support. This will guide the country's transition away from a linear model that contributes to high levels of waste and environmental degradation.
- The UN provided technical assistance to strengthen institutional mechanisms to coordinate the **Tonle Sap Biosphere Reserve** to promoting conservation and sustainable development. Active advocacy has been done to promote awareness about the Reserve, and its functions, including at the national and sub-national levels. Scientific links have been established to develop national capacities for integrated sound science-based sustainable development of the Reserve, and to promote a green-recovery from COVID-19.

Communities counter climate change, ensuring livelihoods with forest and landscape restoration

By 7 o'clock in the morning, lunch boxes, water, axes or hooked knives, which will be useful for a day in the forest, are ready. Ms Lay Koeuk and her husband begin to herd their 20 cattle, walking towards a nearby forest. Carrying a bag of food on their shoulders, the couple walks about 4 km to reach a forest and then up to an area where soft and green grass is available for their cattle. After that, they continue into the forest for about 6 or 7 km in search for forest resources, which they can sell. They use this income to buy fish, meat and other basic necessities to support their livelihood. Around 7pm Ms Lay finishes preparing dinner for her family of three. This is how Ms Koeuk, 40, describes a day in her life, after rice cultivation, one of her main tasks of the year, is over.



Ms Koeuk said that her family, as many others, strongly relies on forest resources for food like nuts, fruit, resin, mushrooms, aromatic herbs or medicinal plants, and for fuelwood and fibres to build fences or make small handicrafts. These families cherish a unique traditional knowledge of the properties of forest products. They need to enter the forest almost every day to collect different forest resources, which are diverse, depending on the season.

“ This month, I collect a kind of grass - I do not know its name, but this is for medicine. I can sell it for 5,500 riel (US\$ 1.10) per gram. Middlemen come to our villages to collect this grass from us every day. From April to May, for example, many villagers go to collect mushrooms that could be sold for US\$ 10 per kilogram, ” Ms Koeuk said.

Ms Koeuk's family owns a large plot of land for rice farming. During the harvest season, she can sell surplus, allowing her to generate between 3 million and 4 million riel (US\$ 730 to US\$ 975) per year. This entire amount goes into her savings account. The money will be reserved for two major endeavours: building a home and covering the education costs of her child.

“ I am building a bigger home. It is not yet completed, because I cannot afford to get the construction done in one go. I have to do it step by step. Money generated from rice farming is also kept for the education of my daughter. She is studying hard, she really likes it. So, I discussed with my husband and we agreed that we will support our child until she obtains higher education, ” said Ms Koeuk.

The forest that Ms Koeuk referred to is known as Prey Pur Mekbuon (in Khmer language, “prey” means “forest”). It is located in Preah Vihear province, and was legally registered as a Community Forest in 2020. Hundreds of households in this community rely on this forest, as their livelihood depends on both farming and forest resources.

“ We have been trying to protect this forest since 2000, but it is very difficult. People's inadequate understanding of the significance of forests and the lack of clear boundaries for the forest and farming land makes it hard to successfully manage this forest, ” said Mr Chheng Uy, Kulen Chheung Commune Chief. He has been preserving the forest for a decade. ***“ Things have significantly changed, thanks to support from the GEF-funded Life and Nature Project, combined with their good coordination with all relevant stakeholders, including the Forestry Administration Office, the Provincial Department of Environment, local authorities, and communities, ”*** Mr Uy continued. “It was challenging work, but this project had the right approach by involving all relevant stakeholders to fix the boundaries of this Community Forest, which is now 582 hectares in size. Today, our Community Forest is legally registered. So we have a clear boundary and a well working patrol system making it easy to manage.”



Outcome 4 - Strengthening Participation and Accountability



By 2023, women and men, including those underrepresented, marginalized and vulnerable, benefit from more transparent and accountable legislative and governance frameworks that ensure meaningful and informed participation in economic and social development and political processes.



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❖ Key Results of the UN Contribution towards Strengthening Participation and Accountability



Intermediate Outcome 4.1: Human Rights for All

Women and men, including those underrepresented, marginalized and vulnerable, enjoy their human right to participate, directly and through representative organizations, in public and civic affairs through collaborative democratic decision-making processes, and to monitor public programmes, seek accountability from democratic institutions, and access functional grievance mechanisms.

Cambodia continues to rank low globally and regionally on freedom of expression. In October 2020, in his annual report to the Human Rights Council, the Secretary-

General raised concerns over the shrinking civic space and called upon the government to fully restore the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly and the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs.

Through UN cooperation, **technical guidance from an international human rights perspective was provided to the Cambodian Human Rights Committee on the draft Law on the Establishment of a National Human Rights Institution.** In 2019, Cambodia voluntarily accepted recommendations to establish this body at the Human Rights Council. The Government pledged to ensure that the body will be established in accordance with the Paris Principles, which ensure independence, competence and mandates to effectively exercise its functions to promote and protect human rights in the country. The

draft law is expected to be elaborated and finalized by 2022, before being handed to the Council of Ministers.

With UN support, the **Government finalized the Access to Information Law**. This is expected to be enacted in the first half of 2021. The process included organizing consultative forums involving **1,200 rights holders**, including women, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and ethnic and religious minorities. UN support on this produced a new law-making process that integrated rights-holders' involvement by establishing platforms that enabled direct inputs and ensured transparency in the process. On a related note, **the UN also collaborated with journalists and the Government to amend the Press Law**.

On the duty-bearers' side, MoWA's capacity to develop national policies and research gender equality, and to coordinate across ministries was enhanced. The **National Policy on Gender Equality** was developed with many consultations with stakeholders under the facilitation and coordination of MoWA in 2021. The draft policy outlines that ministries are accountable for ensuring women's leadership and decision-making authority in plans and policies. As a result, the Ministry of Justice has **38 percent**; the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation have **36 percent**, and the Ministry of Tourism has **35 percent of women** in decision-making positions, surpassing the target of **33 percent set by the UN**.

The **National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2019-2023 was endorsed**. The plan prioritized prevention and response for vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ people, women migrant workers, women with disability and ethnic minority women.

Some **20,000 people** were reached through radio spots and social media live streams on human rights and the social inclusion of women and young people with disabilities. The UN engaged in the **16 Days of Activism on Gender-based Violence**, which focused on preventing violence against women during COVID-19. The contents were posted on MoWA's website and reached **164,000 people**.

The government developed a more inclusive

and transparent service by piloting a solid waste management initiative at the sub-national level. Through UN engagement with target districts and municipalities, **75 percent** of councillors and officials used a participatory approach to design the solid waste management services, resulting in **60.7 percent** of communities engaging in decision-making processes. The UN is exploring introducing this in six additional provinces.

UN engagement with the Ministry of Planning resulted in the inclusion of people living with HIV, key populations and people with disability in the IDPoor identification process. As a result, **2,542 PLHIV households obtained IDPoor cards and were able access an emergency cash transfer programme**.

The UN advanced its ongoing work with media start-ups to promote campaigns that target COVID-19 misinformation, social stigma, discrimination and GBV. Through these campaigns with media start-ups and young social media influencers, over **1 million** people across Cambodia received fact-based messaging to counter misinformation and promote social cohesion, solidarity and youth wellbeing.

Intermediate Outcome 4.2: Public Institution Functioning

Public institutions at national and sub-national levels, including an independent judiciary, effectively function in a more transparent, accessible, responsive and gender-sensitive manner.

The capacity of CSOs on human rights monitoring and reporting, including to UN human rights mechanisms, was enhanced through the UN's protection-related measures and efforts. **Through UN coordination with the authorities, CSOs were able to monitor trials of high-profile cases throughout 2020**, with strict compliance to COVID-19 preventative measures.

Following the Secretary-General's recommendation to the Human Rights Council in October 2020 for Cambodia to move towards using alternatives to detention, **the UN in Cambodia continued to engage with the government to introduce non-custodial measures and alternatives to detention**. In the context of COVID-19 prevention efforts, the UN supported the dissemination of relevant

human rights guidelines and access to testing for people deprived of liberty. Direct UN engagement and advocacy with the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Interior contributed to reducing the prison population, through the Ministries' measures to addressing case backlogs and alternative to detention by using judicial supervision for pre-trial detainees.

In 2020, the government was able to strengthen its legal, policy and organizational framework for child protection, specifically in creating standard operating procedures for delivering child protection services, and developing **the National Child Protection Strategic Sector Plan**.

The UN also supported the Ministry of Justice, the Cambodia National Police and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation to implement the Juvenile Justice Law. **Child-friendly justice guidelines** were developed, and social agents were assigned and trained in all provinces with support from the UN. As a result, **17 percent of girls and boys (269 children of whom 30 were girls)** in conflict with the law received alternative measures, as opposed to a custodial sentence.

Approximately **300 service providers** in the provinces of Siem Reap, Battambang and Banteay Meanchey had their capacity to provide mental health and psychosocial support and GBV risk mitigation enhanced.

The UN supported the government to develop the **Gender and Climate Change Strategic Plan (2019-2023)**. This integrated gender aspects into the climate change action plan. The capacity and expertise of MoWA's gender and climate change committee to integrate gender and climate change at organizational levels, and in applying a gender lens to analysis, policy formulation, planning and reporting was also strengthened. Furthermore, to enhance gender statistics and in-depth research on the impact of climate change on women, girls and other vulnerable groups⁴, the gender statistic guideline on climate change is being developed under the support of the United Nations.

The UN further supported the advancement of gender equality policies across government institutions by engaging with MoWA. This included the endorsement by

MoWA of the **Neary Rattanak V Strategic Plan (2019-2023)**, which includes specific provisions for vulnerable groups, including LGBTIQ people, people with disabilities, religious minorities, and indigenous women and girls.

Progress was made in adolescent and youth development, with enhanced capacity of the government to formulate and implement the **National Action Plan on Cambodian Youth Development**. MoEYS and the National Youth Development Council's capacity to lead and coordinate its implementation was enhanced.

With UN support, the 2020 Action Plan for the implementation of the **Labour Migration Policy for Cambodia (2019-2023)** was adopted. The policy, which is gender-responsive, aims to address national priorities on labour migration governance, while realizing the rights of migrant workers.

The UN continued to advocate for the representation and inclusion of vulnerable populations in legislative and governance frameworks in 2020. Based on the Disability Action Council's engagement, the government further aligned the National Disability Law with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The draft amendment will go through executive and legislative review in 2021. As a result of UN interventions, an inter-ministerial Prakas granted people with disabilities access to driving licenses.



Intermediate Outcome 4.3: Implementation and Monitoring of Laws and Standards

Laws and policies meet international norms and standards, and are effectively implemented and monitored, addressing the rights of the most vulnerable and providing opportunities and secure democratic space for women and men to exercise political rights, freedom of expression, association and assembly.

The UN continued to monitor trials against human rights defenders, opposition party members, and political activists, and engage with the government to ensure that its laws are in line with international human rights standards.

A human rights analysis of the Draft Law on Public Order was provided to the Ministry of Interior to ensure that the law complies with Cambodia's international human

4 MoWA, Neary Rattanak V, (Phnom Penh, 2019-2023). <https://www.mowa.gov.kh/en/neary-rattanak-v-2019-2023-en>

rights norms and standards, and that discriminatory provisions against women and people with disabilities are revised. The analysis was shared with the ministry, suggesting changes to be made prior to its adoption to harmonize the draft law with international human rights standards. The UN also provided recommendations to the Ministry of Interior on the amendments to the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations, the Law on the Management of the Nation in a State of Emergency, and the draft Law on Cybercrime, to ensure their compliance with international human rights norms and standards.

A platform for various stakeholders, including diplomatic missions and media organizations, allowed these stakeholders to discuss and push forward a media related reform agenda and to address challenges related to freedom of expression, media development, freedom of information, press freedom, and the media's role in promoting peace, democracy and sustainable development in Cambodia.

Evidence-based monitoring, evaluation and reporting on progress related to achieving the SDGs in 2020 was continued. As a result, the **first annual progress report on the National Strategic Development Plan and CSDGs** was developed.

The Ministry of Planning released the **final result of the general population census 2019**. This included data from the national level down to commune level. The census report serves as the primary source of data on the size and spatial distribution of the population and its characteristics, as well as demographic trends. It underpins national data ecosystems, providing population denominators for SDGs national development indicators. For policy makers, the general population census provides an indispensable source of information to identify vulnerable groups for more effective social targeting.

The UN supported the Ministry of Planning to finalize the **Cambodia Agriculture Survey for 2019**, and the 2020 survey was initiated. The survey presented the latest analysis and data on crop production, animal husbandry and fisheries, with the aim of updating the baseline census data for compiling agricultural statistics

to meet the needs of policy makers. It will also report on agricultural and environmental development targets.

In collaboration with CARD and the Royal University of Agriculture a pilot study, **the Multi-Country Study to refine the Minimum Dietary Diversity of Women (MDD-W)** was completed in July 2020.

Access to justice for workers through grievance mechanisms was enhanced. At least **81,767 workers** (of **247** collective labour dispute cases lodged for settlement) including a majority of women and migrant workers, had their complaints resolved in 2020.

LGBTIQ activists were empowered through UN support under the banner of 'LovelsDiversity'. This is a long-term social media campaign to build awareness of the wide range of challenges faced by LGBTIQ people. Initiatives to hold Facebook Live presentations twice per month, with the participation of speakers from CSOs and LGBTIQ alliances, achieved **40,000 views**.

The capacity of community women-led networks was enhanced by the UN, empowering **52 female migrant workers** who are facing hardship in the context of COVID-19. Returning migrant workers utilized the networks to stay connected and support one another. They further worked with local authorities to disseminate COVID-19 preventive information and supported the integration of returning workers into the community. They exercised their collective voice to ensure that migrant families meeting the government's criteria for the cash transfer scheme were able to obtain support.

The UN supported the first ever review and documentation of Young Key Populations' access to HIV services. This will be instrumental in informing advocacy efforts for the revision of the HIV Law and other related policies to allow under-age young people to access HIV testing and other HIV and sexual reproductive health services without parent or guardian consent. Efforts to reduce stigma continued through UN support in developing the first national communication strategy and approaches for the Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U) campaign, which will be implemented in the coming years.

“I want to be like my friend and help other indigenous teenagers.”



Around 8.30am, the morning clouds diffuse the daylight and the small indigenous village of Romyol, in O’chum commune, O’chum district is quiet. There are some children gathering for their distance learning during COVID-19, but most of the adults are already out at work.

Sreyda, 16, is the oldest daughter of four children in a Kreung ethnic family. Her mother and stepfather work at a rubber tree farm. Sreyda is in Grade 7 at O’chum lower secondary school. Although the school has been closed for several months, she still has access to her class through self-paced distance learning and an online programme. Sreyda is very good at Khmer literature and she is always the top student in her class.

Social norms put pressure on girls from ethnic communities to marry at a very young age, and consider girls over 18 years as an older woman or an ‘expired girl’. But Sreyda dreams of being a teacher in future. “In the future, I want to be a good teacher and I would like to help many indigenous children, especially my Kreung ethnic community,” she said.

Sreyda participates in community engagement activities organized by the Commune Committee for Women and Children, with support from the local NGO, Save Vulnerable Cambodians, and the UN in Cambodia. She has joined discussions with elderly women in the community and listened to their problems. She learned that they are facing significant health issues due to the consequences of getting married at a young age.

Sreyda’s friend shared her experiences of being a young wife. *“One of my friends had to quit education and was engaged at a young age,” Sreyda said. “She had children at age 14. Now she has been going through many complicated problems, including domestic violence and personal health matters.”*

Sreyda’s biological father tragically died in a car crash. Losing her father was like losing part of her life and her family went through a hard time. Later, her mother married another man.

When Sreyda was 15 years old, her mother, Kanhoy Nourn, and her aunt wanted her to drop out of school and marry her cousin, who is just three years older. Sreyda refused and the arrangement was cancelled, causing the relationship between her mother and her aunt to break down.

She claimed that she was very young and that she wanted to continue her studies. Sreyda used different approaches to convince her mother. She used the lessons and skills she had learned from her friends, as well as an educational video to explain to her mother the negative consequences of early marriage.

The Commune Committee for Women and Children and older women in the community helped Sreyda explain to her mother the benefits of education for girls, and Kanhoy Nourn gradually changed her mind and stopped insisting that Sreyda get married.

Initially it was hard for Sreyda's mother to accept this, as her Kreung ethnic community has been influenced by the culture and social norms of teenage marriage. Kanhoy Nourn admitted that she used to tell her daughter to get married. *"When I saw my daughter grow up and start to go out every day with her friends, I thought that was not good for a girl,"* Nourn said. *"That's why I wanted her to get married as soon as possible."*

Once the mother and daughter understood each other, their relationship started to improve. Nourn knows that her daughter wants to be a teacher in future and she understands the importance of education, having joined a village meeting on child marriage prevention conducted by the commune council and the village chief. Now she not only lets her daughter study at school, she also fully supports her in pursuing her dream.

Local authorities have played a critical role in suppressing child marriage and decreasing the rates of marriage of girls under 15 years old. Mrs. Khahn Sovy, the chief of the O'chum commune explained that awareness raising had been crucial.

"We raised awareness among people within our commune in order to understand the different risks of child marriage," she said. *"This included separating children from their families, taking children out of school, denying them interaction with their peers and participation in community activities."*

One Woman's Fight for Freedom and Equality



One in five women in Cambodia has experienced violence (Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2014) and common forms of GBV, including sexual violence, exploitation, abuse, trafficking and domestic violence against women and young girls. Like many of the other GBV survivors in rural Cambodia, Yon Sek (YS), a 42-year-old mother to two young boys, suffered from domestic violence and abuse from her husband for nearly a decade before escaping. She sought help from a close relative and legal support to divorce. YS had been living with her husband for more than 15 years, and has two sons (13-years-old and 9-years-old).

YS is a pork seller in the village where she lives. She managed to earn a living without any support from her husband. Three years ago, YS could not bear being beaten, cursed and threatened with death by her husband anymore. She filed complaints to the village chief and asked for a divorce from her husband five times. The separation did not go as expected and her husband kept returning. He would ask her for money and beat her if she did not give it to him. YS decided to give her husband anything he asked for if it meant she could end the marriage. But the husband kept coming back, whenever he had spent the money or sold the property he got from her. YS would escape to live with her mother or close relatives, but her husband still found her.

"I dared to give him everything he was demanding as I wanted to get my freedom back, and I wanted to live my life happily. I suffered for a long time," said YS.

Domestic violence against women in Cambodia is common and considered acceptable. It is reinforced by social norms. Over 50 percent of the women who responded to the Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey agreed with at least one reason that justified a man beating his wife (MoWA, 2016).

One day, YS's husband beat her very badly. Nobody in the village wanted to help her, because they considered it a family matter. YS's brother stepped in to help her to escape, file a complaint to the police and find legal support to end the case. A focal person for the commune committee for women and children under MoWA came to visit YS and give her support.

"Now, I am feeling much better and I want to be a village volunteer to support women, particularly in preventing and responding to violence," YS said. "So I can help other women who have suffered like me and are afraid to fight for freedom, and get out of this hell."

"There was a rumour that I needed to have US\$ 5,000 to get a divorce. This word of mouth rumour was powerful and distracted me from getting further help through the legal system. I would like to tell women to check the facts before you believe anything."

During COVID-19, YS was able to get information through social media from her smartphone. Her income has dropped, and her husband now has their older child living with him. The younger child lives with YS.



Outcome 5 - Managing Urbanization



By 2023, all women and men living in urban areas, including those marginalized and vulnerable, enjoy a safer, more secure and healthier life, utilizing quality public and private services, and benefiting from improved urban governance informed by their voice and participation.



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❖ Key Results of the UN Contribution towards Managing Urbanization



Intermediate Outcome 5.1: Protection of Vulnerable Groups in Urban Environments

Marginalized and vulnerable groups in urban environments are empowered and protected in seeking and utilizing quality services.

In response to COVID-19, the UN implemented preventive actions in seven key provinces, including urban hubs such as Siem Reap, Prey Veng, Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kampot and Battambang. Vulnerable groups, especially returning migrants and mobile populations in urban areas and border areas, were reached:

- **22,037** people benefited from awareness-raising activities, **127,113** migrants received information on

COVID-19 preventive measures at port of entry and quarantine centres and **46,541** migrants received sanitation items and information on COVID-19 preventive measures as well as food supplies.

- **7,319 returning migrants** and host community members reported improved access to mental health and psychosocial support, and GBV and maternal care support during the pandemic.
- **6,108 (2,698 female) returning migrants** were referred for essential health services at the ports of entry (POE).
- **175,799 children, parents and caregivers** were reached by awareness raising activities and consultations on mental health and psychosocial support.
- **727 most vulnerable returning migrants** received cash grants for income-generating activities, while **182** most vulnerable returning migrants

gained business opportunities from the UN Joint Programme.

Phnom Penh and the urban provinces of Siem Reap, Battambang, Kandal and Preah Sihanouk received **good coverage of risk communication and community engagement related to COVID-19**.

A campaign was led in the **urban slums of Phnom Penh and five provinces** on COVID-19 and mental health and psychosocial support. A total of **58,374** people were reached, including **26,659** children (**16,487** girls) and **31,615** caregivers (**16,487** female), as well as **100** community facilitators. Two Phnom Penh-wide COVID-19 awareness campaigns were conducted in **105** sangkats. Each campaign involved a full day of outreach, with more than **600** officials visiting at-risk communities.

The UN increased employment opportunities for returning migrant workers by providing training (benefiting **5,089** migrant returnees), key information on labour rights, contracts, employment opportunities for migrant workers and returnees (**450** beneficiaries), technical and scholarship opportunities (**790** beneficiaries), counselling (**1,062** beneficiaries), legal assistance (**258** beneficiaries) and financial literacy training (**950** beneficiaries).

Migrant workers and returnees had access to individualized support services which enhanced their livelihood options. This resulted in system-wide commitment and building the capacity of the government in labour migration, including strengthening referral systems, support for returning migrants, and reintegration.

Returning domestic workers had better access to recognition of prior learning, and 61 former female migrant domestic workers were trained in housekeeping. They acquired core, generic and functional skills in 2020.

Through UN assistance to migrant worker resource centres in Battambang, Kampong Speu, Prey Veng and Kampong Cham, **325** migrant returnees received counselling services on local employment opportunities, contracts, labour rights and migration. As a result, migrant returnees acquired knowledge on their labour rights, and the misconduct of recruitment agencies, including wage deductions, un-paid wages, delayed deployment and contract termination. This allowed

them to log their complaints through complaint receipt mechanisms for compensation and remedy. Migrant returnees understand the importance of their migration plan, and received local employment information.

Key populations were reached with HIV services through innovative and differentiated combinations of prevention approaches. Some **48,572 key populations** (female entertainment workers, men who have sex with men, transgender women and people who inject drugs) were reached with prevention services in the three key provinces of Phnom Penh, Battambang and Siem Reap. Female entertainment workers reached with services in these three provinces accounted for **68** percent of the total national female entertainment workers who were reached with prevention outreach; **53** percent for men who have sex with men; and **63** percent for transgender people. Among those who were reached with prevention services in the three provinces, **74** percent were tested for HIV and **100** percent of confirmed HIV-positive key populations were enrolled in treatment in 2020.

The UN supported **MMD of antiretroviral therapy scale-up efforts**, which resulted in:

- an additional **10,346 PLHIV** were enrolled in MMD over nine months (January to September 2020)
- national MMD coverage increased from **32 percent (n=18,256)** in December 2019 to **49 percent (n=28,602)** in September 2020
- over **80** percent of pregnant women living with HIV received antiretroviral therapy to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

The National Centre for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STDs (NCHADS) of the Ministry of Health was supported to scale up innovative HIV testing and bio-medical prevention approaches. This outcome is demonstrated through the roll out and scale up of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and HIV self-testing (HIVST). By the end of 2020, **628 people** were on PrEP of which **98 percent** accessed PrEP in three key provinces of Phnom Penh, Battambang and Siem Reap. HIVST phased implementation began in Phnom Penh in November 2020 and will be expanding to Battambang and Siem Reap. By the end of December 2020, within two months of the HIVST launch, **288 key populations** had access to HIVST.

In supporting NCHADS, the UN delivered on the procurement of medicines, pharmaceuticals, laboratory and medical equipment, as well as diagnostic and health commodities used in the prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS, STIs, Tuberculosis and Leprosis, for a total of **US\$ 8,698,162**. All NCHADS requests were fulfilled, with all procurement delivered on time and in agreed quantities. There were some minor supplier delays, which allowed NCHADS to provide continued care to those affected.

The Code of Conduct for Cambodian Recruitment Agencies was developed in 2020 to support the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training. It outlines the principles that recruitment agencies must uphold to effectively and ethically manage recruitment, training and deployment for overseas migrant workers. It will play an important role in holding recruitment agencies accountable, thereby protecting and promoting the rights and wellbeing of migrants workers.

The UN adopted differentiated HIV prevention and testing services to ensure that key populations had access to prevention and testing services even against the backdrop of COVID-19. Technical support allowed NCHADS to implement and scale up PrEP in Phnom Penh, Battambang and Siem Reap, among other priority provinces. This included conducting an assessment to identify effective PrEP delivery modalities and demand creation. Standard operating procedures for HIVST phased implementation were adopted in July 2020, and **2,000** HIVST kits were procured by NCHADS.

To mitigate service disruption during COVID-19, the UN provided technical support to develop and finalize standard operating procedures that guided the rapid scale up of MMD and bolstered treatment continuity among people living with HIV.

The first ever Fast Track City Strategic Plan was developed by the National AIDS Authority and the Battambang provincial AIDS committee. This will support the Battambang AIDS response plan, with the vision of ending AIDS and leaving no one behind.

The **Migration Health Policy was finalized** in 2020 and the final endorsement will be done in 2021. This guides national and sub-national stakeholders on providing access to health services for migrants. This policy

allows for better health and wellbeing, but also reduces inequalities among host communities and migrants, including urban mobile populations.



Intermediate Outcome 5.2: Management and Coordination of Urban Services

Urban authorities plan, manage and coordinate regulated quality services to the public in a more participatory manner, responsive to the needs of urban populations, and informed by data, evidence and best practices.

The UN increased disaster preparedness and resilient construction. Climate resilience was adapted in housing design and construction methods in rural settings, particularly targeting a disaster-prone area in Cambodia. A total of **202** households with **1,098** people were supported with core shelters (houses reconstructed for **104** households with **614** people and houses repaired for **98** households with **484** people), while **10,000** people benefited from a wide range of activities related to reinforcement of disaster preparedness (creation of hazard maps, community development support, livelihood assistance, WASH training and skills development training).

Cambodia is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to natural disasters and has suffered repeatedly from floods, storms and strong winds which have caused the loss of lives and destruction of livelihoods. In 2020, Cambodia was affected by flash floods due to heavy rainfall from successive tropical storms in the region. In October 2020, massive flash flooding affected **175,872** households, caused **42** deaths and forced over **14,000** households to evacuate in **19** provinces. The rural poor communities near the Mekong river suffered the destruction of their houses.

In March 2020, to enhance disaster prevention and the management capacity of local authorities, a training workshop on integrating disaster risk reduction elements into local plans was organized. The one-day workshop aimed to guide local stakeholders on how housing-related policies/programmes and disaster risk reduction could be integrated into a commune investment plan. A total of **70** national and sub-national government officials benefited from a series of capacity building opportunities on policy development, disaster

preparedness, and disaster management, and learned how to integrate disaster risk reduction elements into local planning (Commune Investment Plan).

The UN supported capacity-building of the Phnom Penh and Sihanouk administrations to enable them to promote their investment in social services to benefit children. The formulation of the Capital and Sihanouk programmes was informed by a child-focused equity analysis of the situation of children, and by budgeting. Concerned officials from the Ministry of Interior and capital and provincial administrations benefited from capacity development on how to plan, budget, implement, and monitor social services activities and how to mentor peers. Tools and guidelines are in place and oriented to officials, including a menu of options for social services, guidelines on commune/sangkat budget expenditure for social services, and a manual for implementing of social services projects.

As a result, Phnom Penh allocated **85,967 million riel (US\$ 21.49 million)** for **16 projects** in 2021, compared to **80,885 million riel (US\$ 20.2 million)** for **19 projects** in 2020. For Preah Sihanouk province, the budget for social services was **10,900 million riel (US\$ 2,725,000)** for three projects in 2021, compared to **800.35 million riel (US\$ 200,088)** in 2020.

In close consultation with the RGC, the **Creative Cities Network** programme was promoted. This favoured cooperation among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development. Battambang was proposed by the government as the first Cambodian city to join the Creative Cities Network, which will bring visibility to the rich culture of the city. It will benefit tourism and lead to significant socio-economic returns. It will also highlight the way sustainable infrastructure needs to be developed locally. The authorities and the UN are currently working on the nomination file. The result of this initiative is to be integrated into the draft Tourism Development Master Plan in Cambodia.



Intermediate Outcome 5.3: Legal and Policy Frameworks for Urbanization

Relevant institutions develop appropriate and costed legal/policy frameworks to guide urbanization, compliant with international norms and standards, and informed by data, evidence and best practices.

The Urban Ecosystem-based Adaptation toolkit was developed and designed for local and national governments, and other stakeholders in Cambodia seeking to implement urban ecosystem-based adaptation. The toolkit will provide guidance on interventions regarding the inclusion of women and marginalized groups, among others, in the decision-making process, thereby addressing gender and social inclusion issues.

With support from the UN, a learning session on fundamental and sustainable smart cities was conducted in Preah Sihanouk province, and was attended by 37 smart city officials. Of these, five were women from the Ministry of Interior, and the provinces of Preah Sihanouk, Siem Reap and Battambang. These are the cities that are part of the **ASEAN Smart Cities Network**. The sessions led participants to identify priorities for their respective cities. Government officials in charge of smart cities gained overall knowledge and understanding on the basics and fundamentals of a smart city. The training helped frame the thinking of each city on their priorities for the short, medium and longer term. For the Ministry of Interior, the training served as an impetus to propose the establishment of a **national committee on smart cities**.

The government and tripartite constituents created the **Labour Migration Policy 2019-2023**, endorsed by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training in October 2020. The UN played a key role in the design, printing and dissemination of the policy from November to December 2020. The Labour Migration Policy 2019-2023 aims to create safe, profitable and productive migration experiences for all migrant workers,

regardless of age, disability, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, religion, political opinion, membership of trade union or other community group, sexual orientation, legal status, or sector of work. This policy places increased emphasis on migration and development through skills recognition, access and utilization of social protection programmes, support services available to returned migrant workers, and reducing the cost of migration borne by migrant workers.

Through this policy implementation and technical and financial support in 2020, the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training adopted the **Guideline on Dispute Resolution of Migrant Worker Grievances**. This guideline clarifies the clear role, responsibility, accountability and mechanism to facilitate a resolution process and outcome for all migrant workers and employers. During the outbreak of COVID-19, 100 migrant workers benefited from compensation and remedies, and they will continue to benefit from this guideline throughout the course of implementation.

Provincial contingency plans for flooding and droughts were supported and the construction of six safe evacuation centres began in three flood-prone provinces. An enhanced disaster management information system, the **Platform for Real-time Impact and Situation Monitoring (PRISM)**, was developed and launched. PRISM assesses potential risk and forecasts the impact of climate hazards on the most vulnerable communities,

in order to design risk reduction activities and target disaster responses. One national action plan on disaster risk reduction and one national flood preparedness and response plan were developed, and **25** provincial flood and drought contingency plans will be finalized and endorsed.

The APSARA National Authority of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts was supported to create a disaster risk preparedness and management plan at the Angkor UNESCO World Heritage site. The government has created a Khmer language version of the National Strategic Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019-2023, which prioritizes and articulates guidelines, references and the direction for all stakeholders on the implementation of disaster risk reduction in Cambodia over the next five years.

Once the risk preparedness plan at the Angkor World Heritage site is finalized, a heritage disaster risk reduction policy will be launched. This will include an action plan and natural/human-induced hazard analytic map for emergency preparedness and response, as well as resilient recovery actions for the Siem Reap area. The beneficiaries will be more than **100,000** inhabitants within the boundaries of the Angkor World Heritage site. This action will contribute to reviewing and developing the **Cambodian National Strategic Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019-2023**.



Support to Partnerships and Financing the 2030 Agenda

Partnership is an important vehicle in advancing the CSDGs, in line with the National Strategic Development Plan for 2019-2023. At the country level, multi-stakeholder partnerships are forged through individual UN agency programmes and a number of UN joint programmes that focus on bringing academia, civil society, the private sector, municipalities and donor communities in line with government priorities, aligning with the **SERF and UN Cooperation Framework 2019-2023**.

Dedicated dialogues were organized with civil society, academia, government and development partners on the SERF. There were challenges to advancing partnerships in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as new opportunities to generate interest and demand for forging innovative partnerships.

Note: Cambodia is one of the first countries to receive vaccines under the COVAX facility, delivered by UNICEF in close collaboration with WHO.

Increased investment is needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda, with a shift from funding to development financing. The pandemic exacerbated public sector finances, including declining Official Development Assistance. In Cambodia, **US\$ 3** of additional investment is required per person per day to achieve the SDGs, while **5.4** percent of GDP per year could end poverty, by financing cash transfer payments and universal social protection.

Acceleration of joint programme partnerships with emphasis on SDG financing

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, policy discussions on creating fiscal space and a financing strategy for the 2030 Agenda became a priority in Cambodia, with demand increasing under the current outbreak. The UN in Cambodia initiated several policy discussions with the donor community in 2020 at the intersection of human rights and inclusive sustainable development. This was to address the growing challenges of sustainable financing and fiscal creation to advance the 2030 Agenda. This included dialogues with Australia, France,

Japan, the EU and others. The EU-UN consultations focused on Multilateralism for Sustainable Financing under the Leave No One Behind principle. This was to address the emerging financing gap through blended financing options, including impact investments.

Through the Joint SDG Fund and south-south collaboration with South Africa, the UN Cambodia was able to leverage approximately **US\$ 3 million** to create an 'SDG Financing' portfolio, implemented through joint programmes in collaboration with MEF: 1) the Joint Programme on the **Integrated National Financing Framework**, and 2) the Joint Programme on **Credit Guarantee for Women Entrepreneurs**. These joint programmes aimed to improve fiscal space creation utilizing public and private financing options, and to provide evidence-based policy recommendations for sustainable financing to government counterparts.

Groundwork has been done on establishing a dedicated CSDG Fund, a country-level pooled fund, the UNDAF/ Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework financing strategy, and a financing roadmap for the socio-economic response to and recovery from COVID-19.

Transformative partnership: Delivering differently in the new context

Despite containment of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia, the prolonged economic impact highlighted the urgency to address vulnerabilities and existing systemic fragilities with opportunities in expanded partnerships for impact. The development partner community is sharing common values around addressing increased inequalities, recovering from COVID-19 and building long-term green growth solutions, in line with the government agenda. The UN and the EU initiated a **dialogue to address both long-term SDG financing and inclusive sustainable development**, putting human rights at the centre, and ensuring that no one is left behind.

A partnership with the private sector is evolving, to address clean energy, climate change, education, skills building and digital technologies. Among these partners is **Mekong Strategic Partners**, which is engaging in blended financing mechanisms to support the work of

the UN on climate financing, water and sanitation.

UNDP, together with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, initiated policy dialogue with the RGC to produce a **policy framework for bond issuance** in Cambodia. Bond issuance in local currency can be an important mechanism for financing the SDGs, replacing other financing sources, including ODA, which are expected to diminish once graduation from least

developed country status is achieved. This would also strengthen monetary policy, as bonds in local currency are very important to generate a yield curve, providing a benchmark of interest rates for the domestic capital market.

Results of the UN working more and better together

UN Coherence, Effectiveness and Efficiency

Since the start of the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020, the UN system mobilized and re-purposed its development portfolio to support the government's efforts to save lives and stop transmission of the virus. It works to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the poorest and most vulnerable Cambodians; and to recover better. WHO led critical support to the Ministry of Health as the chair of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Combatting COVID-19 in the development and implementation of the Cambodia Master Action Plan on COVID-19. The UNCT worked closely with MEF, line ministries, sub-national governments, and other partners on socio-economic response and recovery efforts, under the over-all leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator.

Collective efforts towards the COVID-19 pandemic – Health Response

Under the technical lead of WHO, the Cambodia Master Plan for COVID-19 responds to the immediate crisis and prepares for future health emergencies. The RGC's implementation of the plan significantly contained transmission and protected the Cambodian people from COVID-19. As of 31 December 2020, there were fewer than **500** COVID-19 cases and no deaths; **80** percent were imported and were contained via point of entry measures.

The UNCT, primarily WHO and UNICEF, worked closely with the RGC to build local preparedness, and to develop and implement the **COVID-19 National Deployment and Vaccination Plan** and the costing of deployment and vaccination. They also worked to strengthen risk

communication and community engagement at the national and sub-national levels. Some **10 million** people out of a population of 16 million have been reached by these communication materials. These interventions provided the general population, particularly the most marginalized women and children, with timely and reliable information on COVID-19 risks and preventive actions to better protect themselves and others.

By focusing on those Cambodians most vulnerable to the pandemic, the UNCT anticipated the need to address the health and protection of returning migrants, and successfully competed in the first UN Recover Better Fund call for proposals. IOM, WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA implemented a joint programme to protect migrant communities in three target provinces. It delivered a comprehensive assistance package of multi-sectoral interventions to **322,809** returning migrants and host communities throughout the mobility continuum. The programme also strengthened coordination at sub-national and national levels, involving government and civil society actors in COVID-19 prevention and socio-economic recovery efforts. Interventions resulted in increased knowledge, information and utilization of essential health and mental health and psychosocial support services, as well as in the increased resilience of migrants and communities through newly created income-generating opportunities.

Collective efforts towards the COVID-19 pandemic – SERF

UNCT quickly mobilized collective capacities to measure and better understand the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable groups, and key sectors of

the economy in Cambodia. UN-led analyses provided timely information and policy options to government and development partners, particularly on priority emergency fiscal measures to protect the poor. Even prior to the formulation of the UN SERF, UNCT formulated a **comprehensive social protection policy options paper** that set the direction for the government's immediate response to the pandemic. Consequently, the UN SERF influenced key policies of the government for resilient recovery. The draft government **Post COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan** integrates approaches, policies and strategies that focus on the most vulnerable people, the scale up of social protection programmes and universal health coverage, as well as green and climate-resilient industries to drive inclusive and sustainable recovery.

SERF Resource Mobilization and Innovation

The UN Cooperation Framework was re-purposed and new resources for health, socio-economic response and recovery were mobilized. Of the **US\$ 87.99 million** estimated SERF resources required, **US\$ 60.39 million** was re-purposed from UNDAF, and **US\$ 26 million** in new funding was mobilized, including **US\$ 1.7 million** raised from the UN Recover Better Fund.

To enable pipeline development and to incentivize joint efforts, the Resident Coordinator's Office set up a prototype catalytic fund of **US\$ 100,000** to support thematic analysis, data and ideas generation, and impact assessments. The pipeline fund enabled joint exploration and the design of solutions. Three grants were awarded: Health Infrastructure Assessment in the Context of COVID-19 (UNOPS & WHO); Industry 4.0 Readiness of the Cambodia Garment Sector (UNIDO & ILO); and Preventing Crisis through Data (OHCHR & UNFPA). These pipeline ideas will be the basis of joint programme proposals in 2021.

Humanitarian Response Forum

The UN, through the Humanitarian Response Forum, a joint UN-CSO coordination mechanism on disaster response and preparedness co-chaired by WFP, mobilized support for the emergency response to flash floods in October. Approximately **100,000** out of **135,000**

households were assisted. The OCHA Regional Office in Bangkok also supported the preparation of humanitarian response plans (**US\$ 9 million**) and helped mobilize resources.

UN support to the prison population affected by the October flash floods brought together not only UN agencies participating in the Humanitarian Response Forum (WFP, UNICEF, WHO, IOM and UN Habitat) but also UNODC, OHCHR, UN Women, UNOPS and UNFPA, together with the Resident Coordinator's Office. The UN provided emergency supplies and equipment, and advocated for reforms to address over-crowding in prisons.

Creating Space for Improving Human Rights and Ensuring the Leave No One Behind Principle

To fulfil the Secretary General's Call to Action⁵ and ensure that human rights are part of the COVID-19 response, the UN in Cambodia initiated the development of a **Human Rights Response Strategy**, with a two-pronged approach: dedicated attention to protecting and promoting civic space (political and civil rights); and the integration of human rights in UN system-wide action on building back better and accelerating progress towards the SDGs.

This Human Rights Response Strategy will help reiterate the Secretary General's Call to Action, which states that "Upholding all rights of all people is in the interests of everyone. Crucially, we cannot pick and choose which rights; the pursuit of all rights is essential to the attainment of any. It would be a mistake to diminish economic, social and cultural rights, as is often done. But it would be equally misguided to think that those rights are sufficient to answer people's yearning for freedom. We need a Call to Action that encompasses the full range of rights."

Support to SDGs Implementation

CSDG Framework Monitoring: Under the UNDAF Accelerator on Data, the UN prioritized strengthening data, statistical architecture and capabilities across line ministries, particularly the Ministry of Planning. Support focused on building data exchange platforms and the national census and surveys. As a result, data exchange

5 See: [The_Highest_Aspiration_A_Call_To_Action_For_Human_Right_English.pdf](#) (un.org)

platforms (called CAMSTAT) with line ministries have been established and launched. The data from the national census and the report of the Cambodia Inter-censal Agriculture Survey 2019 were released in December, with UN support. The UN initiated efforts to build an internal data ecosystem to facilitate sharing of data, analysis and visualization within the UNCT as part of the Common Country Analysis process. The data ecosystem focuses on anticipating vulnerability and risks (including human rights violations). In the context of COVID-19, the UN supported the government to review targets of the CSDG framework.

Financing SDGs: Through the Joint SDG Fund and the South-South Partnership Fund, the UNCT leveraged **US\$ 3 million** to create an SDG financing portfolio. This portfolio established stronger UN engagement with MEF through two joint programmes: the **Integrated National Financing Framework**; and the Joint **Credit Guarantee for Women Entrepreneurs**. These joint programmes aim to expand the creation of fiscal space and provide policy options for sustainable SDG financing.

The second development finance assessment, to be completed soon, is crucial to help the RGC map and project the flow of financial resources available for financing the medium- and long-term development needs of the country. The UN also strengthened government capacity to regain monetary policy management via the **issuance of Khmer Riel bonds** and to establish the Credit Guarantee Corporation of Cambodia. This will support MSMEs, especially women-owned MSMEs, to generate job opportunities for the growing labour force, including low-skilled workers.

Public engagement in the SDGs through UN75 celebrations

The UN75 campaign in Cambodia focused on social media engagement, online dialogues and radio broadcasts to facilitate community dialogue. The mostly digital campaign mitigated health risks due to COVID-19, with eight face-to-community conversations conducted. As a result, the digital campaign on Facebook reached almost **1 million** users and six radio programmes engaged another **2 million** listeners nationwide. Some **2,000** responses from Cambodia were mobilized for the global UN75 survey.

The UN organized a high-level symposium on The Future We Want: The Role of Multilateralism in a Post-

COVID World. This was in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The symposium exchanged views on leadership in times of disruption and discussed actions that the international community should take to enhance global solidarity, international cooperation and systems leadership in mitigating and recovering from the social and economic consequences caused by the pandemic.

Gender

Partnering with local pop celebrity, Laura Mam, her all-women Baramey Sound production company, and the Embassies of Australia, Sweden and the UK, the Swiss Development Cooperation and SMART telecommunications, and MOWA staged an International Women's Day concert celebrating female artists and music. The event reached more than **1 million** viewers through Facebook livestreaming. Leading up to the concert, televised roundtable discussions with women leaders and influencers also expanded the understanding of critical barriers to women's empowerment and gender equality in Cambodia.

The UNCT collaborated with MoWA for the annual campaign, the **16 Days of Activism on Gender-based Violence**. The local theme, 'Think, act and solve together to end violence against women and girls' included activities to increase participation on prevention of GBV and increase multi-sectoral service responses for GBV survivors.

The UNCT, with active engagement of CSOs and the LGBTIQ community, conducted a legal and policy assessment to identify key implementation barriers for LGBTIQ people to access health, HIV and social protection services. The UN continued to support LGBTIQ activists to advocate for inclusive and gender responsive policies and services, contributing to changes in the attitudes of policy makers.

Lessons Learned and Challenges

Crisis creates opportunity

- The COVID-19 response and readiness for COVID-19 vaccines were important entry points for partners to engage more visibly and strategically with the RGC and other partners. This improved health sector coordination at both technical and higher levels. It resulted in the restart of the Technical Working Group-Health, which has not met since the onset of COVID-19, and the establishment of sub-groups to better support the various components of immunization, which did not exist before. These are critical to improving partner health coordination beyond COVID-19 response and vaccines.
- There is an opportunity to increase climate change adaptation in the education sector, initially through the integration of climate change-related indicators in the Education Management Information System, vulnerability assessments and a review of climate change adaptation needs.
- There is increased pressure on sub-national administrations to cater for the delivery of social and social protection services, creating an opportunity for a more comprehensive framework and better inter-ministerial collaboration to develop comprehensive capacity building approaches with the Ministry of Interior.
- By focusing on the most vulnerable populations, the UNCT has been able to leverage support for the health, well-being and safety of people in prisons and correctional centers affected by severe flash floods in 2020 and to address overcrowding in prisons. The UNCT coordinated closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross and other local NGOs, mobilized the Humanitarian Response Forum to include prison populations in the needs assessment, and worked closely with the General Department of Prisons to take swift action in providing urgent humanitarian supplies. To ensure sustainable response and working within RGC's international human rights obligations, the UNCT is stepping up its advocacy with the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Interior to implement additional measures for alternatives to detention. This is with a

view to releasing detainees/prisoners based on their vulnerability, the need for them to be in detention, (especially if they are awaiting trial) and the risk they pose to the community.

Enhancing institutional capacity and coordination to deliver real-time social services

- Within the COVID-19 context, the UN was able to capitalize on long-term solid relationships with national partners to deliver on planned results and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic at sub-national level. Collaboration with development partners intensified and was instrumental in the delivery of the COVID-19 cash transfer programme. A number of challenges had to be addressed during programme implementation, including capacity gaps at commune level to deliver the large-scale social protection programme and gaps in the current poverty identification tool, which prevented the full inclusion of some of the most vulnerable groups in society (e.g. people in institutional households; homeless people and minorities). Despite ongoing technical support by the UN, line ministries still do not have full confidence to engage in budget advocacy with MEF, including advocacy for budget increases for social services at sub-national level.
- Effective inter-ministerial collaboration is key to strengthening social protection and social service delivery. There is already momentum with the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Planning, and momentum can be built with MEF through UN brokering and leveraging.
- The mobilization and allocation of national resources to address barriers that affect access to and utilization of essential maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition services in the most vulnerable areas needs strengthening. This requires stronger cross-sectoral collaboration across ministries, departments and partners for better community engagement and social and behavioural change communication, and more strategic local level partnerships with decentralized government structures and CSOs.

Using technology and innovation to leverage the scale

- Investment in system building allows for rapid system adjustments in emergency contexts. This enabled the COVID-19 cash transfer programme to go to scale. Use of innovative IT solutions, including tablets, digitized registration systems and management information systems, was critical for rapid deployment of the new COVID-19 cash transfer programme.
- Use of monitoring tools, such as the KOBO toolbox, enabled data to be gathered quickly to support the implementation and analysis of the nationwide distribution of school cleaning, sanitation and hygiene supplies to all schools nationally. This was to support the safe operation of schools in the COVID-19 context. This experience is a lesson in how technology can be effectively leveraged to reach scale.
- Good progress was made in the area of learning innovation, for example e-learning platforms, in large part due to COVID-19 where a range of inclusive continuous distance learning assets were, and continue to be, developed for the use of teachers and students, and broadcast on a variety of platforms (online, TV, radio and paper-based).
- The COVID-19 pandemic forced the UN to adapt and innovate to implement activities (remotely via

Zoom, phone hotlines) supporting the government in the management of this unprecedented crisis, by adjusting appropriate planned interventions and strategies and evaluating the situation sometimes online.

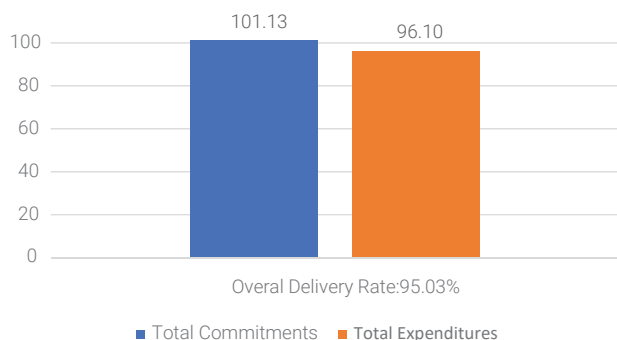
- Although Cambodia has now secured more than 12 months worth of ARV stock, there was a scare of an impending ARV stock-out due to COVID-19 related delays to shipments from India. The oldest treatment site in Phnom Penh, with the largest cohort of PLHIV was re-purposed as a COVID-19 treatment centre. Thus, the ARV treatment site was relocated to the NCHADS clinic. This relocation presented myriad challenges not only to PLHIV, but also to the service providers.

Focusing interventions/services on hard-to-reach populations and engaging them upfront

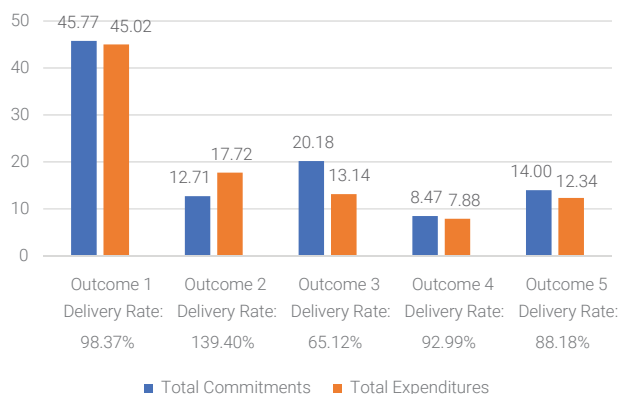
- The challenge was to reach isolated communities, especially migrants on the peripheries of urban centres. One of the lessons learned was including the mobility of the returning migrants and their difficulty accessing quality services in urban areas when they do not have proper documentation. The cost of transport for the journey from the border crossing to quarantine centres was also an issue.

Financial Overview and Resource Mobilization

All Outcomes
Expenditures and Commitments (Million US\$) in 2020



Expenditures and Commitments (Million US\$) by Outcome in 2020



Results SDG Joint Fund



US\$ 2,199,173

UN Joint Programme on Supporting the National Social Protection Policy Framework in Cambodia



US\$ 743,650

UN Joint Programme on Integrated National Financing Framework to Catalyse Blended Finance for Transformative CSDG Achievement



US\$ 100,000

CLEAN – Cambodia Innovative Climate Adaptation & Mitigation Financing Mechanism

Results COVID-19 Response and Recovery Trust Fund



US\$ 1,000,000

Strengthened National Preparedness, Response and Resilience to COVID-19 in Cambodia



US\$ 719,040

Financial Innovations for Supporting SMEs to Promote Growth and Employment (Credit guarantee)





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**CHAPTER 3:
UNCT STRATEGIC
PRIORITIES FOR 2021**

The current crisis can be turned into an opportunity to make a structural transformation to Cambodia's socio-economic development model that can hold the country to its long-term visions of realizing the CSDGs in 2030, and high-income country status in 2050. The COVID-19 response and socio-economic recovery policies can address inequality, narrow vulnerability gaps, and increase resilience to ensure that the country can achieve inclusive, equitable, sustainable recovery and prosperity. To this end, the **UN will focus on key strategic priorities, including strengthening the pandemic health response and vaccination, and elevating human capital development, green growth and the digital economy underpinned by an over-arching commitment to gender-transformative recovery from the pandemic.**

To ensure that Cambodia can recover from the pandemic, the first priority is to focus on **stopping transmission of the virus and saving lives.** Building on the technical leadership of WHO on the health response, efforts will centre on health system strengthening, to prepare for and be able to respond to larger scale outbreaks and future pandemics. The focus will be on protecting and accelerating vaccine deployment to the most vulnerable Cambodians.

Hand-in-hand with the critical health response, the UN will prioritize **human capital development and fulfilment of human rights for all**, while ensuring that no one is left behind in the response and recovery efforts, especially pregnant women with respiratory illnesses to be treated with utmost priority due to increased risk of adverse outcomes, and antenatal, neonatal and maternal health units to be segregated from identified COVID-19 cases ⁶. The UN will continue and renew efforts to upgrade and scale up health and **social protection systems** towards **universal coverage** and **expand other essential services** in education, skills development, nutrition, food security, sexual reproductive health and rights, and prevention of GBV.

Green growth is an imperative for building forward better from the pandemic. Efforts will focus on co-designing transitions towards renewable energy, energy efficiency, climate-resilient infrastructure, and sustainable natural

resource management, with dedicated attention to creating green jobs and skills for women and youth.

Digital transformation is also a critical priority to ensure that Cambodia optimizes the opportunity of pandemic recovery to diversify its economy, and to put in place the infrastructure, enabling policies, capabilities and mind-set for innovation and entrepreneurship to thrive in the 21st century global economy.

To reaffirm the UN's commitment to these strategic priorities, the SERF will be merged with the UN Cooperation Framework 2019-2023, and supported by a partnership and resource mobilization strategy and joint action plan for the remaining planning cycle.

Outcome 1: Expanding Social Opportunity

Health, Nutrition, GBV

- Support the RGC to continue its response to COVID-19, including the country-wide roll out of COVID-19 vaccines, by supporting the planning and coordination, procurement, financing, distribution, M&E and implementation of the vaccination campaign, in addition to continuous support to COVID-19 infection prevention and control/communication and community engagement, + COVID-19 vaccine roll out, with a focus on most vulnerable populations.
- Implement the Malaria Elimination Framework (2021-2025) and combat traditional infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB and hepatitis through existing disease control programmes and the Expanded Programme on Immunization.
- Work with partners to support the RGC to accelerate the use of planned resources under the Cambodia Nutrition Project for preventive nutrition interventions for pregnant women, mothers and children. Continue to support school feeding and scholarship programmes and the scale-up and quality improvement of severe acute malnutrition treatment.
- Work with partners to develop a National Roadmap for the Global Action Plan for the prevention of child

6 UNFPA, Covid-19: A Gender Lens (March 2020).

wasting.

- Continue to strengthen EmONC, family planning, adolescent- and youth-friendly services; midwifery capacity development; the health sector response to violence against women and girls; and continue essential sexual reproductive and maternal health services during COVID-19.
- Support the implementation of essential services for women and girls subject to GBV, and strengthen the capacity of GBV service providers (health, police, justice and social services) at national and sub-national level.
- Support the strengthening of the implementation of the National Action Plan for Early Childhood Development and Care with a focus on the north-eastern provinces through links with and referrals to essential services. Include the engagement of communities and sub-national planning and budgeting, as well as demand for early childhood development services and positive behaviour change for caregivers to adopt nurturing care behaviours.
- Support the roll out of the Migrant Health Policy by developing a strategic plan for implementation. This will ensure that mobile and migrant populations have a greater understanding of targeted infectious disease (HIV/AIDS, TB and COVID-19), prevention strategies and access to health care systems in their communities.

Education

- Support targeted capacity building within the education sector focusing on: (i) policy development (ii) results-based planning; (iii) financing, (iv) personnel development (including teacher development); (v) inclusive education and (vi) gender equitable leadership.
- Support the mid-term review of the Education Strategic Plan and assist in the implementation of key recommendations from the MoEYS Functional Review. Scale up the use of technology to support teaching and learning, and digital education.
- Continue to support MoEYS to further progress key education reforms, including continuous professional development, school-based management, improving school inspections, and inclusive education services

including early childhood education.

- Strengthen school infrastructures and other hygiene packages to enable a safe environment, including provision of scholarship and take-home ration to school children during COVID-19.

Social Protection/Assistance

- Provide technical support to develop a national shock-responsive social protection framework. Provide guidance to further implement the shock-responsive social protection programme through support to On-Demand IDPoor roll out, and the inclusion of PLHIV and key population groups in the scheme. Review the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025, and establish a foundation for the roll out of the Family Package of integrated cash transfer programmes planned in 2022. Revise the existing cash transfer programme to improve its scope and coverage, and formulate an old-age allowance. Strengthen the education scholarship programme, system and tools development, including a management information system for a disability identification mechanism. Review social health insurance, and Phase 2 of the Modernization of the National Social Security Fund. Review and close the gaps in Cambodia's social protection legal architecture, and strengthen operational and M&E capacity through the digitization of social protection in Cambodia.

Outcome 2: Expanding Economic Opportunity

Promote Decent Employment

- Continue to support the RGC to promote decent youth employment. This requires the development of skills and competencies critical for a flexible and agile future workforce, including through the promotion of life-skills, digital literacy, entrepreneurship and structured programmes linking employment and education sectors at all levels of education.

Support to SMEs

- Support SMEs, including the agri-food, fishery and

tourism sectors to enhance their products and services to adapt to new contexts. Expand financing opportunities, and increase the gender focus on micro and small enterprise recovery through digitization, and public service innovation.

- Continue to support the RGC to implement the Industrial Development Policy (IDP) through on going technical assistance to produce quality mid-term review report of IDP, and to adopt the Resource Efficiency Policy and Green Award Guideline. Implement the transfer of environmentally sound technologies methodologies in 20 factories.
- Build post-harvest infrastructure at key points of the agriculture and fisheries value chains.
- Support women’s economic empowerment, such as through credit guarantees for women entrepreneurs.
- Link social protection to programmes promoting livelihoods and skills development. Connect cash transfer systems to technical and vocational education training enrolment. Link IDPoor beneficiaries to training micro-businesses on financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills, through referrals by communes.



Monetary options to increase the fiscal space

- Expand the fiscal space through Khmer Riel bonds. Issuance of government bonds in local currency would help develop the capital market and create a monetary instrument to minimize adverse shocks, by targeting longer-term interest rates and thus the cost of borrowing. This would facilitate the economy to move towards de-dollarization. Support revenue collection through a ‘tax inspectors without borders’ programme.



Outcome 3: Promoting Sustainable Living



Food Security and Nutrition

- Support agriculture value chains and smallholders in rural areas. New opportunities exist for export growth and import substitution (vegetables, fruit and livestock), and an existing market with the potential

to build more modern, productive, inclusive and sustainable agri-food systems.

- Support rural communities’ and smallholders’ access to agricultural inputs and basic assets for production, such as seeds, net-houses and drip irrigation systems.
- Provide financial support to smallholder and producer organizations in agriculture. Include concessional loans for agriculture (including aquaculture), assistance with accessing credit, business planning and market links. This will play a vital role in accelerating agricultural transformation.
- Support cash for work schemes to build small local agricultural infrastructure to improve food production and preserve valuable natural resources.
- Upgrade live-bird markets and slaughtering zones to international standards. While being an immediate source of local employment and improved livelihoods, this will also generate a more effective distribution system of poultry produce, reducing losses while increasing the health and safety for the population.



Energy – Lower Costs and Increase Growth

- Increase electricity coverage in remote areas with Solar Mini-grids.
- Support a new energy unit and model the case for more investment in renewable energy.
- Provide technical assistance to MAFF to update Biogas Policy for 2021-2030 and provide technical and financial support to participating farms and agro-processing factory for installing biogas systems.



Environmental Protection and Climate Change Adaptation

- Enhance the implementation of the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014-2023 and the Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (Updated NDC)
- Enhance more resilient to climate change impacts, and facilitate progress in building a low carbon society in Cambodia.
- Promote the technical and institutional capacity development of adaptation and mitigation in responding to climate change and natural disasters.



Outcome 4: Strengthening Participation and Accountability

- Provide support to duty bearers and rights holders in the recovery from COVID-19, including in technical cooperation.
- Ensure that the human rights of children, women, PLHIV, key populations, CSOs, youth, migrant workers, journalists, people with disabilities, workers and people deprived of liberty are protected.
- Ensure that Cambodia's government upholds its international human rights standards.
- Provide technical support to the government to harmonize laws and practices with these standards.




Outcome 5: Managing Urbanization

- Support the government on Smart Cities.
- Migrant workers/returnees and members of their families have greater access to gender-responsive support services, including access to complaint resolution, a COVID-19 recovery response, employment and local job information, as well as Budget Smart and Save Smart in provinces (Kampong Cham, Prey Veng, Kampot and Battambang).
- Enhance actions to respond to climate change through sustainable waste management in coastal cities in Cambodia.
- Support the technical working group to update the Labour Migration Policy to manage internal migration flow and improve working conditions of urban migrant workers. Include an efficiency mechanism on managing internal rural to urban migration and the working conditions of urban migrant workers in the Labour Migration Policy, regulations and strategic plans.
- Ensure an inclusive and efficient monitoring and reporting mechanism is in place for evidence-based decision-making that allows: (a) the production of data and reports on sustainable urbanization, and (b) the use of city-level data for national integrated planning for sustainable urbanization.
- Support sub-national urban administrations with plans and budgets to address child and adolescent priorities (include mapping and analysis of child-focused data; urban menu of social services; capacity building for social mapping, planning and budgeting for social services; advocacy/consultation).



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