



Asia-Pacific Regional Youth Call to Action 2024



Cambodia

Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Eradicating Poverty in Times of Multiple Crises: The Effective Delivery of Sustainable, Resilient and Innovative Solutions in Asia and the Pacific with Young People at the Forefront

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

During the era of the coronavirus, nations worldwide found themselves at a crossroads, having to deal with the challenge of safeguarding their citizens while navigating the complexities of global tourism. Many countries, including Cambodia, urged caution, advising tourists to postpone their travel temporarily to curb the spread of the virus. This period underscored the critical need for tough measures to protect local populations from the contagion's effects.

Amidst this tumultuous backdrop, Cambodia stood firm in its commitment to combat poverty in all its manifestations, aligning with the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is “End poverty in all its forms everywhere.”

In this pursuit, Cambodia recognises the imperative of engaging diverse stakeholders and harnessing the transformative power of human rights-based initiatives. A rigorous analysis reveals the complicated tapestry of vulnerabilities within society, drawing upon population statistics to discern trends and identify marginalised groups. By uncovering unquantifiable patterns of exclusion and challenging structural inequalities, Cambodia endeavours to pave the way for a more just and equitable future, where the bane of poverty is overcome through collective action and steadfast commitment to human dignity.





The percentage of the population in Cambodia who are assumed to be economically dependent on others due to their age is known as the age-dependency ratio. The dependency load decreased but stayed high between 2008 and 2019, with rural areas having the highest rates (69.9 per 100) and urban areas having the lowest (51.2 per 100). Higher ratios can have an influence on financial stability and indicate that working people are under more financial stress.

With the percentage of households living below the revised national poverty rate at 17.8% in 2019–20 and 22.8% in rural areas, pandemic-related income and demand shocks are likely to have contributed to an increase in poverty as well as a decline in household food security and nutrition. Food affordability has been worsened by the conflict in Ukraine, which has raised the price of food, fuel, and fertiliser globally. The global food crisis is predicted to result in the following outcomes, in that order: households will find it difficult to obtain food as a result of persistent food inflation; local food production and availability will decrease as a result of increases in the cost of fuel and fertiliser for agriculture, exacerbating the problems with food access encountered in the first wave.

For early gains to be maintained, funding for children's health and development must continue after the first 1,000 days. There is a dearth of information regarding the nutritional health of school-age children. What little information there is indicates that children between the ages of 5 and 19 are susceptible to malnutrition, which can cause stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight, and obesity. The fast spread of processed foods high in fat, sugar, and salt affects diet quality and children's future risk of obesity, contributing to the triple burden of malnutrition, which includes micronutrient deficiencies, even if underweight children are still more common than overweight ones. School health and nutrition programmes, such as school feeding, healthy diets, and WASH behaviour modification interventions, can be implemented at a reasonable cost in schools.

Early in 2022, the price of conventional gasoline and diesel increased dramatically, by 67% and 45%, respectively, over the same period in 2021. This could have a negative impact on local food production, fuel-run farms, and food expenses because of the rising cost of transportation. The price of agricultural fertilisers, which Cambodia primarily imports from its neighbours, has climbed significantly on a global scale. Dry-season paddy benefited from the milder weather during the 2021–2022 dry season, and yields are anticipated to be greater than the previous year. The average yield of dry-season paddy in May 2022 was 4.6 metric tons per hectare, which was somewhat more than the average of 4.5 metric tons per hectare in 2021. But compared to the same period in 2021, the cultivated area for wet-season paddy was smaller because of planting activities, which will negatively impact food security.

Pervasive abuses of human rights, gender inequality, violence against women, gender-based violence, and workplace harassment are considered to be clinical problems of epidemic proportions and global public health issues. These problems have made it difficult for women and girls to live violence-free lives, exercise SRHR, and access social, educational, and economic resources. Social conventions and beliefs that limit the rights and advantages of women while elevating the status and authority of men continue to be common. There have been reports of increased violence against women and children worldwide during the pandemic. Following the lockdown in March 2021, there were seven times as many calls to violence hotlines in Cambodia as there were prior to November 2020. While they looked for information and assistance, there aren't many trustworthy, step-by-step, and support-coordination online resources and methods.

The Adolescent and Youth Situation Analysis in Cambodia revealed that 17% of youth experienced verbal abuse at work, with 50% experiencing it multiple times. No reported physical or sexual abuse. Sexual harassment is also prevalent, with 28.6% of female garment factory workers experiencing it. Public spaces and public transportation are common



sites for harassment. There is no clear legal definition of sexual harassment, and victims often resort to police reports.

Cambodia is highly vulnerable to climate change, with its population relying on subsistence farming and low-skilled jobs. Changes in agricultural land use since 2013 have led to increased use of chemical fertilisers, reduced forest land, and industrial crops. This has led to potential effects on food production, food security, and nutrition, as well as reduced access to wild food and non-timber forest products.

Cambodia's efforts toward achieving the SDGs, notably SDG16 with its three targets, haven't fully translated into action at the national and local levels. This gap in implementation has led to incomplete national data and prioritisation of certain governance and human rights issues over others. Economic and social rights have been particularly affected by challenges such as political will, corruption, and limited resources.

However, despite these obstacles, Cambodia has made noteworthy strides towards the 2030 Agenda. The country has undergone significant transformations, shifting from agriculture to industry and embracing a digital economy. Efforts to support vulnerable groups have been evident, alongside the establishment of a robust child protection system and advancements in promoting gender equality. These achievements signal Cambodia's commitment to progress despite the hurdles it faces in fully realising the SDGs.

OUR KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

SDG 1: No Poverty

- Financial support should be provided by the government and stakeholders to citizens for investing in education.
- Address gender disparities in poverty by creating policies and programmes to increase women's access to employment opportunities and reduce their burden of unpaid family work.
- Implement targeted financial assistance, promote gender equality in employment, enhance

vocational training for young migrants, and strengthen labour protections and social safety nets to address socio-economic challenges and issues in Cambodia.

- Ensure equitable distribution of PoorID to those in need and enhance accessibility of public services and benefits for marginalised populations.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

- Identify and address disparities in public health between rural and urban areas, focusing on reducing childhood wasting while sustaining gains in reducing childhood stunting.
- Promote food security by implementing measures to mitigate the impact of food price increases, such as subsidies or support programmes, and providing education on nutritionally balanced meal options despite economic constraints.
- Enhance women's education on maternal and child care with the collaboration of WHO and Health Center across Cambodia to raise awareness, emphasising the importance of breastfeeding for infants and nutritional providence for children during the first 1000 days.
- Promote varied and nutritious diets across Cambodia to combat malnutrition, promoting increased consumption of micronutrient-rich foods such as beans, nuts, dairy, eggs, and vitamin-A/iron-rich fruits and vegetables.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

- Ensure gender equality in societal participation for women in Cambodia, both within and outside the home and in all spheres including politics, social and economic.
- Address the heightened vulnerability of women with disabilities to violence and sexual abuse by implementing targeted support programs and protective measures.
- Establish clear legal definitions and mechanisms to address all forms of harassment, including sexual harassment, with accessible platforms to learn and for reporting and recourse.
- Promote workplace gender equality by closing the gender pay gap and fostering environments free from discrimination and bias.

SDG 13: Climate Action

- Strengthen Cambodia's efforts and commitment to climate action by enhancing governance and coordination within the Forestry and Land Use sector to reduce historical emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.
- Implement measures in the agricultural sector to mitigate carbon emissions, including adopting methane-reducing practices and promoting the use of organic fertilisers and biogas capture technology.
- Introduce new green initiatives in the industry sector to reduce emissions through the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies and the implementation of green industrial programs.
- Preserve Cambodia's rich biodiversity and ecosystems by balancing economic growth with sustainable resource management practices and realising Circular Economy.
- Encourage private sector investment in climate action, emphasising diversification beyond renewable energy into areas such as energy efficiency and nature-based solutions to attract high-quality investments and promote green growth.
- Promote green job creation, invest in green skills training and incentivise green initiatives and companies to accelerate Cambodia's transition to a low-carbon economy through policies that provide tax incentives, grants, and subsidies for businesses adopting environmentally sustainable practices.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

- Strengthen the effectiveness, accountability, and transparency of local councils, primary schools, and health centres with constant decentralisation reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and improvements in public service delivery.
- Prioritise sustained efforts to enhance public sector productivity, efficiency, and accountability, aligning with Cambodia's long-term development vision.
- Intensify the fight against corruption through comprehensive anti-corruption measures, including enforcement of existing laws, implementation of transparent procurement processes, and promotion of ethical standards across all sectors.
- Address social, economic, and political exclusion to foster peace and security by promoting inclusivity, reducing inequalities, and building trust in public institutions, thereby mitigating tensions and conflicts and strengthening the social fabric.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- Foster an enabling environment for the private sector and other stakeholders by enhancing local entrepreneurship, productivity, and competitiveness through supportive policies, streamlined regulations, and targeted investment in technology development and innovation.
- Encourage domestic private investments to stimulate job creation, boost exports, and drive GDP growth, thereby contributing to Cambodia's economic development.
- Promote multi-stakeholder partnerships between the public sector, private actors, and civil society to address governance risks, enhance transparency in political processes, and accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) attainment, leveraging pooled financial resources, knowledge, and expertise for collective impact.

The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum in Bangkok on February 15-17, 2024. The Cambodia drafting team was led by Tann Seavsing and Ut Chantarapeach. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.
