

Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025
Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP
CAMBODIA

1. Context for EU action gender equality and women’s empowerment in the country

Cambodia has a strong policy framework related to Gender Equality. It is guaranteed in Article 45 of Cambodia’s Constitution, which prohibits all forms of discrimination against women and promoted in key policies such as the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity, and Efficiency Phase IV; the National Strategic Development Plan NSDP 2019 - 2023; Neary Rattanak V (2019 – 2023); and the third National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2019-2023. Cambodia also is a State Party to the Convention on the Elimination of all form of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) since 1992 and ratified its optional protocol in 2010.

Over the past years Cambodia has made some progress in closing the gender gap in terms of political, economic, health, and education measures, including increase women’s participation in public life, gender parity in enrolment in primary and lower secondary levels of education¹ as well as improvement in maternal health care. Women have a high rate of participation in the formal labour force, although the vulnerable employment rate (own-account and unpaid family labour) is high for both men and (disproportionately high) for women.

Despite progress and achievements in promoting gender equality in policies and programmes in the development of Cambodia, many challenges remain. Data on Cambodia identify a number of cross-cutting issues and significant gaps across sectors that are the roots of development challenges for women and girls.

One of the main challenge relates to deeply embedded rigid gender norms that position men and boys as superior over women and girls. The traditional gender stereotype and the code of conduct of Cambodian women, known as “Chhaby Srey” have been taking the major parts in setting up the different attitudes and roles toward men and women in all aspect of society by promoting values of the need for careful vigilance regarding women’s societal, family and marital duties and obligations and setting out the ways Cambodian girls and women should behave. The code for men –“Chbab Bros”- in contrary promotes values of hardworking, courageousness, leadership among Cambodian boys and men and reserves the decision-making roles and authorities for them in both domestic and public spheres. To a considerable degree, those traditional gender norms still prevail and are at the root of many development challenges and a limitation to women’s economic opportunities and independence. According to a UN national survey, 92% of females and 82% of males believe that a women’s most important role is to take care of the house and home.

Women constitute about 52% of the economically active population of which approximately 45% are self-employed, primarily in the informal sector, and their businesses are highly concentrated in the wholesale and retail trade; and the services sector. The disproportionate burden on household and

¹ In education, nowadays, the problem is the opposite: more boys than girls drop-out of school and overall perform less well than their female counterparts, including at upper secondary levels. In Bachelor and Associate degrees, also, female students are slightly more than male ones, while the gender index is biased towards men from the Master degrees onwards and also in the TVET sector. Due to the constant gender imbalance towards boys in primary education, the approach is shifting from “girls’ education” to a more comprehensive gender equity approach to education.

childcare responsibilities remain as the main obstacles for women to pursue their careers in the formal employment sector. Research has shown that Cambodian women are carrying out around 91.3% of unpaid care responsibilities in the home, compared to just 8.7% for men.

Between 97-99% of all MSMEs are micro-establishments and two-thirds (64.7%) of all micro-businesses are managed and owned by women. Women also largely remain in the informal sector, with only an estimated 1.7% of women's businesses being registered, compared to 6.6% for men; 70% of women businesses are home-based and they are often self-employed. Women make up just over half of the agricultural labour force and produce an estimated 70% of the country's food; but they only account 24% of household agricultural holding managers, 12% of agricultural extension officers and 10% of agricultural extension services beneficiaries.

Despite very high levels of participation in the labour force, the share of women's vulnerable employment—the sum of own-account workers and unpaid contributing family workers —remains high. Women often take up low skills jobs for example in the garment industry and dominate in domestic work, home-based work, street vending and smallholder farming. According to the World Bank's data, 57% of total female employment are in vulnerable employment. Women are also more at risk when to come to labour migration and remain susceptible to become victims of human trafficking within the country and abroad.

Women remain under-represented in the leadership position in both the public and private sector. Despite overall good intentions to increase female representation, the number of women elected to the National Assembly during the last elections in the 2018 declined from 25 to 18%. Women make up about 16% of the government senior position from Under Secretary of State to Deputy Prime Minister (as of February 2020) and only 4% of governor positions and even if overall the percentage of women representation in Capital, Provincial, Municipality, District/Khan levels has increased from 4 in 2007 to 20% in 2019.

Various forms of GBV, including rape, domestic violence (DV), and intimate partner violence (IPV), affect many men, women, boys, and girls in Cambodia, but reporting rates are low, and access to services and justice for survivors are serious constraints. Thirty percent of women aged between 15-64 have experienced some form of physical, sexual or psychological violence. Domestic violence is the most common type of violence against women in Cambodia. The subject has recently gained in relevance due to the current context of the pandemic, which has caused a rise in domestic violence cases in Cambodia, with reports mentioning 1 in 5 women being affected.

Women are still underrepresented within the justice system, leading to a male-dominated environment marked by low levels of gender-sensitivity, stigma and discriminatory practices. Significant efforts have, however, been made by government institutions, including women's mechanisms, in order to increase poor women's access to legal aid, including in rural areas, notably through the provision of free lawyers and counselling. However, formal justice mechanisms are still underused by women, due to a lack of access (in some cases physical: women with disabilities) to information about these free services or misconceptions about their own rights and freedoms, adverse social norms and stigma affecting victims of GBV, as well as a lack of financial independence from perpetrators of violence.

The CLIP has been prepared in consultations with the European Partners and agreed by the Head of Cooperation.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The joint European response provides a framework for European partners to better coordinate their interventions and strengthen their political dialogue with the Cambodian authorities, and allows the mobilization of a wide variety of tools and cooperation modalities in order to support the Kingdom of Cambodia in the achievement of its national gender objectives.

The joint European response in the field of gender in Cambodia (2021-2025) is aligned both with the Gender Action Plan III (GAPIII) of the European Union and with the Royal Government of Cambodia Plan for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Cambodia - Neary Rattanak V (2019 – 2023).

The *overall objective* for the CLIP is: Based on a common understanding and vision of issues relating to gender in Cambodia, and in line with GAP III, the European partners undertake to work better together in order to contribute, through the human rights approach, to gender equality and women empowerment.

The selected *areas of engagement* and *specific thematic objectives* are in line with the areas of engagement of the GAP III and selected to fit the context of Cambodia and the priorities of the European Partners and are as follow:

1. Strengthening economic and social rights and empowering girls and women
 - Increased access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work, including women's transition to the formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems
 - Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy
 - Reduction in gender disparities in enrolment, progression and retention at all levels of education and lifelong learning for women, men, girls and boys
 - Cambodian households have improved access to safe water and sanitation facilities, especially at rural level
 - Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, have improved nutrition levels
2. Advancing equal participation and leadership
 - Women and girls, in all their diversity, have improved access to justice to safeguard their civil and political rights
 - Women's organisations, other CSOs and women human rights defenders working for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights work more freely and are better protected by law
 - Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours promoting equal participation and leadership fostered at community and individual levels – through civic education, media, education and culture at all levels
3. Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation

- Strategies and agreements on climate mitigation, adaptation, disaster risk reduction and sustainable management of natural resources and biodiversity are more gender-responsive, at local, national, regional and international level
- Women and men in all their diversity, increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities and alternative livelihoods in the green economy and the circular economy

The European Partners will work together to address these objectives through the following actions, especially in selected areas identified under the joint programming and the EU MIP:

- Support the work of women's organisations, other Civil Society Organisations, and women human rights defenders working for gender equality and women empowerment
- Support the RGC's efforts, potentially in collaboration with EuroCham, with regard to easing access to finance, tax regulations and registration for Cambodian women entrepreneurs. Advocate for a simplification of rules for the registration of new enterprises, as well ensuring clear and gender-sensitive communication about the procedures and existing tax incentives for registration.
- Contribute to a Cambodian skilled work force, and strengthen its TVET and traineeship educational offer in close partnership with the private sector with a focus on women empowerment, taking into account the green and digital revolution, as well as financial literacy.
- Continue supporting the Government education sector reforms in promoting equity and quality of education and lifelong learning for girls and boys/female and male students, including via non-formal education for working- and out-of-school youth and women (in particular in the garment factories).
- Promote a more gender sensitive and gender responsive social protection system enabling both women and men access to more effective, efficient, accountable and sustainable social protection.
- Strengthen gender expertise of the gender focal points and all the staff of the European partners through capacity building and training.

The partners will explore options for synergies and joint implementation/co-financing. They will also work together with UN to ensure joint analysis and actions whenever most appropriate.

The civil society will be consulted in the programming process, in the implementation of the JES and in development of concrete actions. Collaboration with civil society organisations will be promoted in the different thematic actions under the priorities envisaged by the CLIP.

3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

During 2021-2025, the EU will aim to fund at least one action under the MIP that will have gender equality as principal objective (OECD marker G2).

The EU will also use its thematic instruments including thematic instrument for Civil Society Organisations and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights to implement priorities of the CLIP. Specific support to women's organisations by the EU and the EU Member States will be envisaged in line with the Human Rights and Democracy Strategy. The EU will use part of the allocation for civil society under the new CSO instrument to target women's organisations. In

addition, in any Call for Proposals launched by the EU, gender equality will always be one of the key objectives to be considered.

These actions implemented through CSOs will provide complementary support to reach the objectives of the bilateral cooperation and will allow to address the areas that may be more challenging to tackle with bilateral instruments including the work on gender norms and support to women's rights defenders.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

Gender equality will be an integral part of the political and policy dialogue and an important part of the implementation of the Gender Action Plan in Cambodia. It will include the following actions:

- a) Meeting of the EU Ambassador and Ambassadors of the EU Member States based in Cambodia with authorities to discuss identified issues related to gender equality and women empowerment. The meeting dialogue should take place once a year with a first discussion aimed at the end of 2022, circumstances permitting.
- b) Discussion on gender during the EU-Cambodia Joint Committee that takes place every two years.
- c) Inclusion of gender related messages in EU policy dialogues with line Ministries including with the Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and Ministry of Education (and others depending on the need) as well as Social Protection institutions.
- d) Ensuring that Structured Dialogue under the CSO Roadmap takes into account women's organisations and gender is one of the topic for discussion in the national and provincial dialogues.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

Indicate if possible the strategic communication/high level events on gender equality foreseen during the period 2021-2025 by the EU or in cooperation with EU MS.

The implementation of the Gender Action Plan of the European partners will be accompanied by communication and public diplomacy strategies in order to disseminate messages about gender equality and women empowerment and highlight the main activities of the European partners.

Communication: The communication contract of the EU Delegation will provide an opportunity to expand communication on gender equality and women empowerment as part of the rights based approach of the communication strategy. Important days such as Women's Day and 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence will be marked on an annual basis. The EU and the European partners through its communication strategy will also promote civic education on gender equality and diversity.

Outreach: public diplomacy efforts will also focus on regular and structured outreach and exchanges with civil society organisations, community based networks, labour activists, human rights defender, youth and women's organisations. These exchanges will have specific focus on gender and women empowerment. Discussion on challenges related to gender equality will also be part of the Structured Dialogue with civil society in the framework of the CSO Roadmap both at national and provincial levels. Women's organisations specifically will be included in discussions on EU programming and MIP implementation as well as in the framework of the Joint European Strategy.

Advocacy: the EU Delegation and European partners will continue to promote the adoption of joint messaging and agreed lines to take on specific gender equality issues (in particular women empowerment), to be raised in contacts with the authorities. They will continue disseminating official positions related to gender equality such as statements, council conclusions, joint communications and press releases.

The Strategic dialogue with the UN will serve also as a platform to promote collaboration in gender equality amongst different sectors and will help in monitoring the developments, gathering information, joint analysis, producing joint messaging and organising joint events, meetings and campaigns that will promote gender equality.

The EU Delegation and European partners will promote engagement with the press around specific subjects or policies, op-eds, press briefings, field visits for cooperation programs and publication of press releases on specific subjects related to gender equality and women empowerment.

6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

The EU Delegation has a specific Technical Assistance Project which started on 1 February 2021 and is planned for 12 months. The project aims to assist the EUD in further mainstreaming gender equality in EU Programming and Programme/Project implementation, and in ensuring that synergies are established across sectors for higher impact and better results as well as to raise the capacity of EUD staff to integrate a gender perspective in the different stages of the project cycle, and related communication and visibility milestones.