

Multiple Facets of Parenting in Cambodia: A Case of Siem Reap

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Abstract

In Cambodia, parents are esteemed as the first and the most important teachers to their children. In taking up their role in the development of their children, parents also shape the development of their nation as these children grow to take on leadership. The traditional Cambodian parent-child relationship was severed by the Khmer Rouge regime, which separated children from parents and forced them to pledge loyalty only to the regime and its philosophy. As Cambodia strives to recover from the resultant damage on traditional family values, globalization is exerting influence on this value system. While parenting has traditionally been a family issue, the 2017-2021 Positive Parenting Strategy made it a policy issue. Raising parenting in Cambodia's policy agenda is in line with the country's obligation to support parenting under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This paper offers insight on everyday reality of parents and children in urban and rural Siem Reap. Using a body of theoretical work on child development and parenting, it examines how parents strive to provide for their children's basic, cognitive, social, and emotional development needs. Also, at the heart of this paper is an assessment of structural and program support afforded to parents and children. This assessment reveals structural and programming gaps which risk the utility of such support mechanisms to parenting. This paper also aims at giving insight to policy makers and development actors on how to better support parents and children in Cambodia.

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1. Why parenting matters: An introduction

Parenting plays a critical role in the formative years of human development. Parents and caregivers enable critical cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development of children. In acknowledging this role, the Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges parents and guardians to act in the best interest of the child, and cautions state parties to support parents and guardians in doing so. The influence of parents and caregivers on overall child development cannot be overstated. They have the power to not only guide children into adulthood but also to determine the character of nations. As children grow to be independent adults and take on national and global leadership, what they learnt and experienced in their formative years largely influences their leadership styles (Avolio, Rotundo, & Walumbwa, 2009; Darling, & Steinberg, 1993; Hughes, 2013). As Prospero (2006, p. xi) asserted in her report on child rearing in Cambodia “the quality of individuals raised by Cambodian families and institutions today shall influence greatly the quality of the citizenry of Cambodia as a developing nation”. The adoption of the national 2017-2021 Positive Parenting Strategy indicates that the government of Cambodia has started to give importance to parenting as a policy issue. Development partners also recognize this important as they financially and technically support local non-government organization to implement positive parenting training programs.

There is a Khmer saying that roughly translates to “A parent is the first teacher, while the teacher in school is the second teacher to a child”. This saying shows the revered position of a parent in society and the influence he or she is expected to have on a child. Even the Cambodian constitution highlights that “mother and father shall have the obligation to take care of their children, to bring them up and educate them in order to become good citizens” (Constitutional Council, Kingdom of Cambodia, 2015, Art. 47). Buddhism, which is practiced by about 95% of Cambodians, also supports these expectations on the role of a parent. A parent has five main responsibilities:

- to educate children to do good;
- to educate children not to do what society prohibits;
- to support children to develop in their capacity;
- to arrange the marriage of children;
- and to leave inheritance for their children¹.

While these Buddhist tenets have traditionally guided parenting practices, the Khmer Rouge regime, that took over Cambodia's governance from 1975 to 1979, disrupted this status quo. It is noted that the most radical transformation of the regime was the "abolition of the family unit" (De Langis, Strasser, Kim, & Taing, 2014, p.22). Children were separated from their parents and were expected to cut emotional ties to their parents. They were expected to only pledge their loyalty to the regime and its revolutionary philosophy and propaganda. This approach indicates that the regime acknowledged the important role and influence that parents have on their children's lives. The Khmer Rouge took over the role of the parents: This takeover was most notable by the regime's arrangement of marriages, without choice or parental consent. The demise of the regime marked the beginning of the road to recovery as Cambodians strove to re-establish the family unit and family values while navigating traditional and global terrains.

While research has been done on child rearing practices involving children of 6 years and below (See, Prospero, 2006), a more comprehensive research of childhood and parenthood experiences in Cambodia is lacking. This research paper aims at offering a comprehensive understanding of the everyday reality of parents and children in Cambodia. It reflects on this reality against a body of theoretical work on child development and parenthood. By looking at current structural mechanisms supporting parenting, the paper hopes to give insight to policy makers and development actors on how to better support parents and children.

The paper is divided into seven chapters, starting with this introduction. The second chapter discusses the theoretical foundation on which the research was based. It highlights key group of needs essential for balanced child development as prescribed by child development researchers and practitioners. The following chapters assess the approaches taken by Cambodian parents, and children, in fulfilling these needs: Chapter 3 focusses on basic development needs; chapter 4 on cognitive and social development needs; and chapter 5 focusses on the emotional development needs. Chapter 6 critically assesses program and structural support extended to parents and children, with a particular focus on the equity health care program, positive parenting programs, and domestic violence redress mechanisms. The seventh and last chapter concludes with a summary of key research findings and offers recommendations to Cambodian policy makers and development actors operating in the country.

This paper is based on literary research and field research in urban and rural Siem Reap province, with the latter conducted between June 25 and July 6, 2018. Eight focus group discussions and twenty-three personal interviews were conducted with parents and children between fifteen and eighteen years of age. Incorporating both urban and rural respondents allowed for an assessment of how social-economic realities, as defined by the different geographies, influence parenting. Sixteen interviews were further conduc-

ted with government officials, local administrators, religion leaders, UNICEF, and international and local non-governmental organizations. Research ethics, most importantly, confidentiality and anonymity, were duly respected during field research and in the presentation of findings.

This research was sanctioned by the Heinrich Böll Foundation with the goal of understanding dynamics around parenting in Cambodia. The foundation currently supports a positive parenting program implemented by a partner organization in Siem Reap. Special acknowledgement to research assistant, Chamrong Chuon, and local NGOs, the Women Resource Center and the Bantaey Srei, who were instrumental in facilitating field research. Any errors in the report remains that of the author.

Map of Cambodia



*Map source: CartoGIS Services, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University
<http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/maponline/base-maps/cambodia-base>
 Siem Reap province has been highlighted by the author to indicate the research area

2. Parenting: A theoretical foundation

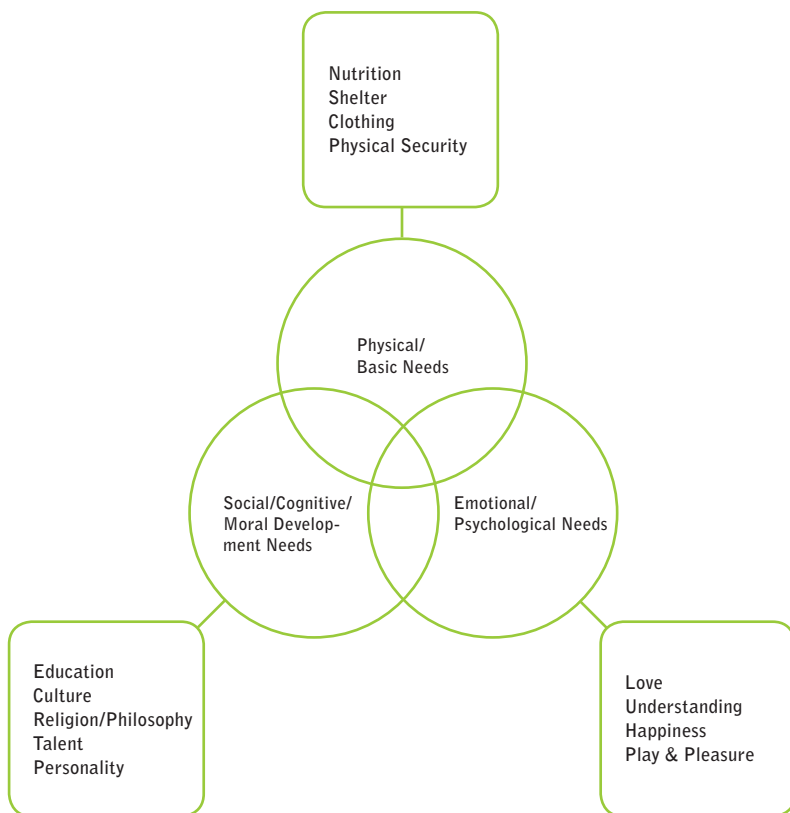


Figure 1: A theoretical framework on child development needs

The above theoretical framework informed both data collection and analysis. The framework draws from work by various theorists and practitioners in the field of childhood and parenthood as well as from the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Parenting has been defined as a “process or state of being a parent” (Chan, as cited in Morrison, 1978). This implies that the role of parents is one that evolves to meet evolving needs of children. As displayed in the illustration, these needs can be clustered into three groups of needs: The physical or basic needs; the cognitive and social development needs (also cited as moral development needs); and the emotional (also cited as psychological needs) (Convention on the Rights of the Children, 1989; Garbarino, 1993; Prospero, 2006; Benson, 2012; Saarni, Campos, Camras, & Witherington, 2006). While these needs are assessed as the needs for child development, they also represent needs of all human beings.

Basic or physical needs are those needs that are essential for survival and physical development. They include nutrition, shelter, clothing, and physical security. Cognitive, social, and moral development needs have been clustered in the one group due to their interconnectedness. Cognitive development needs represent the need of a child to learn about her/his environment and develop intellectually in terms of construction of thoughts and problem solving. Social development needs also represent the learning needs of a child but with a focus on behavioural expectations of society. Moral development is similar to social development in that it also represents social learning. Moral development, however, focusses on instilling a sense of morality based on popular religion or philosophy. In this paper, no distinction will be made between social and moral development needs since behavioural learning is contextual and inclusive of behavioural learning based on culture, tradition, as well as religion or philosophy. Lastly, emotional or psychological development entails enhancing the ability of children to express their emotions appropriately and to perceive the emotions of other people and react accordingly. For these needs to be met, a secure emotional connection between the child and her/his parents or caregivers is essential. Love, understanding, happiness, and leisure create an enabling environment for emotional development.

The chapters that follow will examine the groups of needs in more details and assess the approaches taken by Cambodian parents in fulfilling these development needs for their children.

3. Meeting basic needs

Basic or physical needs are needs that are essential for human survival and dignity. They include needs such as nutrition, water, sanitation, shelter, clothing, and physical security. These needs are recognised as human rights under the Universal Declaration for Human Rights and nations have committed to secure them through the Sustainable Development Goals. These needs are particularly crucial for children in their formative years. Good nutrition has particularly been described as the “bedrock of child survival, health, and development” (UNICEF, undated). These needs interact with other needs. For instance, good nutrition contributes to brain development and subsequently to the fulfilment of cognitive needs. Also, meeting the needs for shelter, sanitation, clothing, and physical security contributes to the emotional needs of a child.

Provision of basic needs to children was a big concern for parents who were engaged in the research. However, meeting these basic needs was of highest priority to parents living in rural areas and those with low incomes in urban areas. Parents in a relatively good financial situation prioritized social and intellectual needs and emotional needs of children. For these parents, basic needs are tenable and hence are able to strive to provide for the other needs. It is noteworthy, however, that even the parents who are not financially well-off, consider the non-basic needs as important when it comes to parenting. However, in some cases, particularly for low-income families, the reality of providing for the basic needs compromises on their ability to provide other needs. This contradiction will be discussed further in this and subsequent chapters.

Gendered roles

In Cambodia, the gender of a parent determines, to a great extent, the role the parent plays in providing children with the basic needs. There was a general consensus among parents, both in the urban and rural areas, that the primary role of a father is provision of a family's financial means. By providing these means, the father contributes to the family's ability to afford good nutrition, clean water and sanitation, a secure home, and adequate clothing. The mother, subsequently, complements her partner's efforts by taking on her primary role in undertaking domestic and care-giving work. In so doing, she actualizes the provision of basic needs to their children. For instance, while the father provides money for food, it is the woman who is expected to go to the market to buy the food, cook it, and feed it to the children. With regards to sanitation and hygiene, while the father might be expected provide money for drilling of a well and building of a latrine, it is the mother is expected to clean the children, clothes, dishes, and the house. Although these gendered

roles also exist in homes without children, studies have shown that parenthood crystallizes this division of labour (Sanchez & Thomson, 1997).

However, some interviewed fathers felt that it is important for them to contribute to domestic and care-giving work. To most of these fathers, this contribution is seen as a necessity where both parents are employed to work outside of their homes. This finding supports studies that have concluded, "The less the resource gap favours husband, the greater is the power of wives to narrow the housework gap" (Presser, 1994, p. 362). These cases are particularly common in urban areas where there are more opportunities to work outside the home and where the tradition of the 'woman's place at home' is challenged as a result of higher levels of education, among other factors. In middle income families where women also contribute to the family's income, parental responsibilities around domestic and children care-giving work are often negotiated. A middle-income father living in urban Siem Reap described a schedule negotiated between him and his wife, who owns a small business,

My wife and I alternate on duties. Sometimes, she leaves her business at 4pm to take care of the children to allow me to work until 9pm. If I get a chance to go home early, I take care of the children².

In this negotiation, therefore, availability of time is also important. Previous studies have demonstrated that, "The more hours husbands are not employed during times when wives are employed, the more likely husbands are to do housework that is traditionally done by females" (Presser, 1994, p.362).

In other cases where both parents engage in full-time employment, relatives, mostly grandmothers, and hired caregivers, are involved in the child care-giving. These caregivers play an important role in children's lives, particularly in the provision of basic needs. They are often left to ensure that children are fed, clean, and safe. As a mother working as a full-time banker in Siem Reap shared,

I have to work so I have no time to do all the housework, so I have someone to help me (a hired caregiver). However, I am in charge of cooking food and taking the children to school, and I shift (alternate) with my husband. Sometimes he picks them from school after I drop them there in the morning. We share the time together so that my husband can help when I am busy³.

For parents who lack the extra care-giving help, negotiating shared home responsibilities is key to reducing parental burden on either parent. The study indicated a correlation between level of family income and parental negotiation on domestic and care-giving work.

Mothers from low-income families in urban Siem Reap, where both parents engage in informal employment, find it difficult to negotiate shared domestic and care-giving work. It is worth to note that the level of education could be a contributing factor to this correlation. Working urban mothers from low-income families, in a focus group discussion, argued that while negotiating with their partners is the only way to reduce their work burden at home, it remains a challenge to do so as their husbands are often non-responsive and ignore such pleas. Where their husbands respond, their contribution in domestic and care-giving work is often inconsistent and hence unreliable. The burden of parenting responsibilities hence falls squarely on the working mothers. This statement by one of them women in the discussion resonated with most participating mothers,

I have to do a lot of things. I work very hard outside, where I get very exhausted and finally when I arrive home, I have to do a lot of housework, because the house is messy and there is no one to cook the food. This is a big challenge for women who work outside the home⁴.

Although the focus group discussion participants protested against the gendered roles that burdened them, they acknowledged that in reality, it would be difficult to share feminised responsibilities with their husbands. While some women resonated with the contribution that “women can go out to earn some money, and the man can do some house work as well”, there was consensus that in reality, “They (Men) mainly go out of the house to earn money but for the women, there are a lot of things to do in the house. Taking care of the house, buying some food, cooking the food, cleaning the house, taking care of the children and doing everything at home”. This contradiction points to the challenge of parents adapting to the dynamic parenting requirements under the backdrop of deeply seated traditions around gender roles.

While some women strive to get employment for their own career development and to financially provide for their families, they often have to resign due to the burden of domestic and care-giving work that come with parenthood. One participant shared,

For the woman, it is more challenging to go to work because they still need to take responsibility of the housework and also take care of the children. So opposite to the men, they go to work, they just go to work, they do not care about the children and home, and food to eat⁵.

Women who work outside the home due to their families' financial struggles, shared their resilience strategies ranging from coordinating child care-giving with neighbours to taking children to work.

Some men acknowledged the disproportionate parenting burden on women. A participant in a focus group discussion with urban fathers from low-income families acknowledged,

I recognize the issue of women having a lot of work to do at home because when I have a chance to go out, or something, I go, and all work comes under my wife. She does all the work at home like cleaning, cooking, and also takes time to knit things for selling so it is very busy for her⁸.

This statement, however, was not followed by an acknowledgment that the burden on women needs to be reduced. This could be due to his complacency with how society works and the leisure this affords him. A quantitative study conducted in 2015 indicated that a majority of Cambodian men viewed doing household chores as unacceptable and care-giving work as undesirable⁹. They only assist when “the women face times of tiredness, pregnancy, and during the post-natal period after birth”. (Sokhan, 2015, p.38). Conversely, the participant could have shied from admitting the need for him to take on feminized responsibilities to avoid stigma. Some participants in the study revealed that men do face stigma for sharing domestic and care giving work.

In rural Siem Reap, there are few opportunities for employment. While a majority of families can obtain food from their farms and ponds, family income is important to cater for other needs. In most cases under study, it is the men who sought employment, largely informal employment, outside the home, while the women stayed at home to do domestic and child care-giving work. As one rural father put it, “A wife is responsible only for some work at home, but a father has to be responsible to work outside home to earn money to support the family”¹⁰. A focus group discussion with rural mothers revealed a general acceptance of this gendered division of labour. One woman who pointed out that men could also help in domestic work such as “washing dishes, washing the floor, and cooking”¹¹, was met with a loud disagreement and a conclusion that, “no, this is not the work of a man”¹².

Another woman whose husband sometimes helps with domestic work shared,

In the community, when some people see my husband helping me with housework, they tell him to stop because this is not his responsibility, but that of the wife¹³.

Due to the prevailing hold on traditions and cultural norms, rural men are likely to face more social stigma, associated with men doing domestic and care-giving work, compared to urban men. Rural women who negotiate for share home responsibilities with their hus-

bands might also feel pressured not to do so. This, however, does not necessarily translate to rural men doing less domestic and care-giving work compared to urban men¹⁴.

While most rural fathers in the study indicated that they take on responsibilities at home, a majority of them described masculinised responsibilities like fetching water, irrigating family farms, and rearing of animals. Although these might count as domestic work, most responsibilities inside the home are still left for the women. While this gendered division of labour is not necessarily adverse, uneven distribution of housework labour where women feel over-burdened is. As one woman lamented, “The role of the woman is very dif-



Following a capacity-building training offered by a local NGO, in partnership with UN Women, R.T. received a certificate of completion which she hangs on a shed in front of her house to display her empowerment. She argued that economic empowerment was important to bring about equality at home.

ficult, but I don't know what to do. I cannot avoid it. I don't want divorce or cause conflict in the family, so I just persevere¹⁵”. However, some women expressed the joy they derived from domestic and care-giving work¹⁶.

Following a capacity-building training offered by a local NGO, in partnership with UN Women, R.T. received a certificate of completion which she hangs on a shed in front of her house to display her empowerment. She argued that economic empowerment was important to bring about equality at home.

An analysis of those who accept or challenge gendered division of labour at the family level in rural Siem Reap reveals a generational divide. Older women try to balance between contributing to family income and doing domestic and care-giving work by working at home or close to their home making handcrafts or farming. Younger mothers, especially those with child-care support, challenge the 'woman's place at home' by seeking employment in urban Siem Reap or migrate for employment. Younger fathers also expressed more willing to engage in feminised home responsibilities like cooking. This willingness was attributed to practical necessity, where both parents are employed, and harmony at home. One rural father explained,

We are both construction workers, so we go out to work together and when we arrive (home), I go to the market and cook some food. I also take care of other responsibility like watering plants around the house or other housework while my wife is responsible for washing clothes. So, we share each other¹⁷.

The extended burden

Many parents, who were engaged in the study, raised concerns around lack of financial means to cater for the basic needs of their families. Limited income opportunities, particularly in rural areas, places parents in a precarious position where they have to choose between competing yet equally important family and child development needs. The burden of health care was noted to cause a significant strain on family income and consequently on parents' ability to meet other basic needs. Some parents resort to traditional doctors instead of going to medical health centers or hospitals. Others choose to stay home and manage their illness by themselves. Others take loans so as to service hospital bills, with the risk of being driven further into poverty as key assets, mostly houses or livestock, are used as collateral. A rural woman noted,

The income from the cultivation of crop or vegetables can be enough when we are healthy, but when we get sick, we have to borrow money and later pay back so this has kept us in debt¹⁸.

A few, however, have access to free medical care in public clinics and hospitals through the government-controlled Health Equity Funds, hence reducing their financial burden. Others benefit from the generosity of non-governmental organizations which, among

other things, build latrines and boreholes, and even offer rice provisions to poor families. A majority of rural parents, however, have to manage whatever income they can garner to provide for themselves and their children.

The gendered division of labour, as discussed earlier, is hence counter-intuitive. If women are given space and support to pursue paid employment, then family incomes would be significantly improved. L.S. narrative puts this argument in context,

I have income from only one job that I do, and my wife is very busy at home taking care of the house. The income is still limited, and I have 5 kids, and I need to give them 5000 riel every day for school for each child to buy some breakfast or food (...). So, my challenge is about budget¹⁹.

L.S. operates a small business of rearing and selling ducks in the village. This means that his schedule could be flexible and that he could take on some domestic and care-giving work so that the wife can pursue paid employment. With both parents contributing to both paid and housework, family income would increase and consequently the burden of meeting the basic needs of the family would be reduced. Their ability to implement such a compromise would likely depend on L.S.'s and his wife's ideology as studies have indicated, "Husband's share of housework increases, as expected, when gender ideology of husbands and wives are more egalitarian" (Presser, 1994, 362).

Where the basic needs of a family cannot be met by parents, the burden of catering to these needs fall on children. The study revealed that children in Siem Reap province, particularly those from rural families, take on parental roles of providing for basic needs at home. School-going children are forced to drop out of school to take on full-time employment or to do domestic and child-care work at home. In some cases, under study, children went to work to earn an income while the parents stayed at home. The following factors were noted to contribute to this phenomenon in rural areas: illness of parents, negligence by parents, child-care by parents for young siblings, and limited mobility of parents to pursue employment in urban Siem Reap due to old age or poor health.

Focus group discussions with 14-18-year-old rural boys and girls indicated that the children had internalized their families' financial difficulties and felt the need to take on parental responsibilities that were not met by their parents. In other cases, parents instructed their children take on these responsibilities. A 15-year-old boy mimicked what his mother once told him,

If you don't stop studying, we won't have food to eat. We earn per day for eating so if you don't drop out of school and earn money, we will not have food to eat²⁰.

When asked about their biggest challenge, many rural girls shared their frustration

around their inability to financially support their family to obtain food and pay for their parents' health care. A rural girl who dropped out of school to seek employment, narrated how she shared with her siblings the responsibility of feeding the family,

(My biggest challenge is having) no food to support family. Normally we need 1 kg (of rice) per day. My brother, sister, and I share the responsibility to buy food. For example, we get 10,000 Riel (about 2.5 USD) from each of us to buy the rice²¹.

This statement, which resonated with other rural girls who participated in the Focus Group Discussion, points to a division of labour not only among siblings, but also a division of labour between parents and children in the provision of basic needs.

Financial burden as a result of illness was often given as a reason for taking on employment by many rural boys and girls. An interviewee shared, "When I dropped out of school, my mother was sick, and my family did not have money to support. I dropped out of school to work to support my family". Another added, "My father is always drunk and does nothing and my mother is sick, so she cannot do anything. This is why the burden is on me". Illness of a parent often translates to a diversion of family resources for treatment as well as lost income. Its impact is more adverse for single-parent families.

The study indicated that single-parent households are more likely to have children who take on roles that would ideally be reserved for parents. Of all parents engaged in the study, none of the single parents were fathers, and none of the single mothers received any financial support from the fathers of their children. Negligence of fathers in taking up their responsibility in providing their children with basic needs significantly increases the burden on single-mother families. A young girl shared,

Since the separation of my parents, we have had to work. My older brother works in Siem Reap. I used to rear ducks in a company farm but now I work in Siem Reap as a moto (motor bike) keeper in a garage²⁴.

Widowed mothers also face similar challenges. A 15-year-old pupil, whose father passed away when he was little, narrated how he and his two brothers contributed to family income as well as domestic and care giving work,

I have to work in the evening because I need to help my mom, even my young brother, 12 years old, also goes to work with my mother part-time, and my older brother has to take care of my grandmother at home after school- he is 17 years old. The three of us contribute²⁵.

Children's contribution to parental roles is not in itself adverse but it becomes problematic when this contribution compromises other essential childhood developmental needs. Young children are not psychologically, emotionally, and even physically ready to take on some types of labour. One girl narrated how her younger sibling almost drowned in a nearby pond while under her care because she was busy cooking and could not supervise her²⁶. Another girl shared how she had once locked her little sister inside the house by mistake and lost the house key²⁷. The two cases demonstrate how detrimental putting children in charge of domestic and care-giving work can be, when parents are absent from home for extended periods. Children might not be able to identify safety hazards at home or know how to deal with home emergencies hence compromising on physical security.

Some labour work directly exposes children to hazards that puts their health and security at risk. A shy, small-bodied 15-year old boy shared how exhausted he gets at the end of a working day after carrying heavy wood for villagers and returning home to take care of his family's cows²⁸. Another boy, who works in construction lamented,

*Construction work is very hard. I have to carry heavy things and climb high. It is dangerous. There is no protection. I am concerned about security because there are a lot of accidents at the construction sites*²⁹.

Due to limited employment opportunities in rural Siem Reap, most children and young adults work as informal construction workers, farmers, or porters. Such strenuous work is likely to result in physical, psychological, and emotional stress among children. In addition, child workers are susceptible to exploitation without redress due to their limited negotiation power.

In 2012, about 6% of the 19% (755,245) of Cambodian children in the labour market engaged in hazardous work (National Institute of Statistics, 2013, pp.26, 27). All the children aged 15-17, who represented 63.4% of the then economically active children, worked in hazardous labour (National Institute of Statistics, 2013, p.30). Siem Reap province was noted to have the second highest percentage of economically active children aged 5-17 in hazardous work in the country (National Institute of Statistics, 2013, p.30). With a majority of economically active children in Cambodia coming from rural areas (86.7%) (National Institute of Statistics, 2013, p.51)³⁰, rural children are more likely to participate in hazardous labour compared to urban children.

Working children work for long hours, with some working for more than 48 hours per week, for little pay of between 25 USD and 125 USD per month (National Institute of Statistics, 2013, p.p.41,45). While this income could represent up to 28% of family income (UCW project, 2006, p.24), it compromises on a child's education, which is important for

cognitive development of children, as well as play and leisure time, essential for both cognitive and emotional development. A 15-year old rural boy, who works as a porter, demonstrated how education and play are inter-connected, “I do not have time to play with my friends. I miss playing with friends. I feel unhappy not to play like other children. The last time I played with them was when I was in school”³¹.

In summary, there is a socialized and generally accepted gendered division of labour between mothers and fathers in their roles of providing basic needs to their children in Cambodia. This division of labour, while not necessarily adverse, can compromise parents’ ability to meet children’s basic needs. Where such needs are not met, children, particularly from rural settings, have taken on parental responsibilities. While child labour can be a resilience strategy for very poor families (Liborio & Ungar, 2010), it can compromise developmental needs of children. By prioritizing basic needs such as nutrition, water, and housing, and resorting to child labour, other basic needs such as health and security, as well as cognitive, emotional, and psychological needs of children can be compromised.

4: Cognitive and social development needs

Cognitive development shapes how people perceive their surroundings, construct thoughts, solve problems, and make decisions. Child cognitive development has popularly been understood using Piaget’s stages of development. The theory proposes that cognitive, sometimes referred to as intellectual, development of children occurs in four subsequent stages. Between ages 18- 24 months, children use their senses, such as taste and touch, to explore their environment. Physical mobility at this stage allows children to increase their cognitive development. Children also start to develop language skills. At the next stage, which lasts until age 7, language skills develop further, and children start developing imagination and memory. The next stage, from age 7 to 11, children develop logical, rather than intuitive, reasoning. At adolescents, children are able to solve more problems logically while considering multiple variables.

Cognitive development is closely linked to social development where a child learns how to interact with other people around them. While formal education and play has been observed to be a key contributor to cognitive development (Morrison, Smith, & Dow-

Ehrensberger, 1995; Seifert, 2004), socialization is noted to be important in social development (Sarsam, 2014; Garbarino, 1993). Socialization is very contextual and heavily influenced by the culture in which a child is raised. It shapes a child's attitudes, values, and behaviours. Garbarino (1993) argues that microsystems - the immediate environment of a child such as the family- as well as macrosystems, including ideological and institutional patterns, significantly influences a child's social and cognitive development. Gender has, for instance, been highlighted as a significant outcome of socialization which is "communicated through cultural values and practices of the macrosystem" (Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006, p.897).

Education and cognitive needs of children

Education is an important contributor to the cognitive development of children . While a child learns much from the parents, particularly with regards to language skills, formal education takes this early education at home to the next level of cognitive development especially as the brain continues to develop in capacity of understanding. Hence, taking a child to school is a significant contribution by parents and caregivers towards cognitive development. The importance of formal education was articulated by a majority of parents from both rural and urban areas during the study.

A rural parent informed during an interview,

As parents, we are responsible of taking care of children and giving them a chance for development like when they get 6 years, they need to register at the school and taking care of children to be good people³³.

This parent highlighted contributions that parents can make towards their children's cognitive and social development needs. One, his role as a parent in facilitating formal education and, second, informal education at home to socialize children to be 'good people' as defined by his society. The importance of education was also highlighted by parents as a means of social mobility, where a good education would lead to a good job with good income. Some parents also linked education to children's ability to support them when they get old.

As discussed in the previous section, gendered division of labour in Cambodia determines to a great extent the role each parent plays in their children's lives. Fathers engaged in the research emphasized their responsibility for providing the financial means to educate their children. The responsibility of taking children to and from school is often taken on by fathers, although urban mothers often share in this role. This observation could be linked to parents' access to means of transportation. Older children use bicycles or motor bikes to get themselves to school. Having a means of transportation is a significant asset

to parents and older students, and lack of it presents a big challenge with regards to access to education. Parent's involvement in the content of education, for instance, by helping children with homework, was noted to be a rare occurrence in rural areas. This could be a product of both time availability and parents' level of education. Urban parents were noted to be more engaged with the content of their children's education, particularly parents from middle income families.

Urban middle-income families sought to secure good education for their children by enrolling them into private or international schools. Learning of a foreign language such as English and Chinese was also noted as an aspiration. Urban lower income families and rural families aspired for a good education in public schools, which they argued is only possible if the ordinary classes are supplemented by private tutoring offered by the public schools. As the quality of education not only has a consequence on the level of cognitive development but also on children's professional outcome, parents expressed their keenness to offer their children the best possible quality of education.

As noted in the previous chapter, however, families in rural areas struggle to keep their children in school due to high levels of poverty. Few can afford paying for private tutoring offered after official school hours. While education until the 12th grade is tuition-free in Cambodia, there are associated costs that are incurred by parents. For instance, parents need to budget for breakfast and lunch, school materials such as books, uniform, shoes, bags, transport to and from school, and fees for extra-classes. A rural parent approximated that,

I have 5 kids, and I need to give them 5000 riel every day for school for each child to buy some breakfast or food (1000 riel for each child). It can get even higher if they get private classes (extra-class)³⁴.

L.S., the parent above, therefore, has to part with about 110,000 Riels (27.5 USD) every month just for food while his children are attending school. As a casual worker who earns about 150 USD per month, this represents about 18% of the family's monthly income. Drawing from a 2007 study which found that Cambodian parents spend 109,136 Riels (27.3 USD) on private tutoring per year on average for one child (NEP, 2007, p.16), L.S. would have to increase the percentage of monthly income he spends on education to 26% for all his children to attend private tutoring. This is a high demand on his limited income which also need to cater for competing needs such as housing, food, water, and health care, as well as other expenses associated with education.

Cambodian parents and students engaged in the study expressed their belief that private tutoring, offered by teachers in public schools before or after official classes, is necessary for academic success. This belief is not unfounded as prior studies have demonstrated

that Cambodian students who do not attend the private tutoring barely exceed the passing grade (Brehm & Silova, 2014, p.110). Private tutoring has been noted to complement rather than supplement official class as teachers use the extra classes to complete curriculum requirements (Brehm & Silova, 2014, p.107-108). The quality of education offered during the private classes has also been observed to be better both in terms of content and teacher-to-student ratio than the public classes (Brehm & Silova, 2014, p.108). One school dropout narrated as his reason for dropping out of school,

I did not have money to go to school. Sometimes I only had 200 Riel (0.05 USD) to go to school. This is not enough for me to study because when we study, we need to go to extra-class to succeed, so I felt that I could not continue with studies³⁵.

Another study demonstrated that informal fees such as teachers' fees, parking fees for student's bicycles or motor bikes, maintenance, class supplies, fees for lesson hand-outs and exam papers, and ceremony fees, significantly impact on household expenditure (NEP, 2007, pp.42-47). Due to the high cost of education, some parents, particularly in rural areas under study, sacrifice their children's education to meet their families' basic needs. One rural parent explained how he had to choose between health care and education,

*When my daughter was sick, I had to take her to look for traditional treatment and spent a lot of money and so I was not able to support the studies of my other daughters to higher level. One daughter did not succeed in the national exams and the other stopped studying since she was 7 years old*³⁶.

Where the basic needs of a family and the educational needs of children are in competition, the latter is likely to be sacrificed. Not only are children forced to drop out of school, but some are forced to join the labour market in order to financially provide for their families. Just as children take on parenting roles in the provision of basic needs, as revealed in the previous chapter, they take on the responsibility of supporting the education of younger siblings. A 15-year-old shared,

My small brother will study until grade twelve. I earn money to support my small brother to go to school. I feel happy that my brother is able to attend school³⁷.

A 19-year-old construction worker who maintains she cannot go back to school to finish secondary school due to her responsibilities to support her family, informed,

I am earning money to support my brother to study. I cannot allow him to stop. I encourage my brother to study and if he needs some support, I support him. I told him that it is important to have good knowledge, otherwise you cannot have a good job³⁸.



Student bicycles parked in the compounds of a high school where one of the focus group discussion with children was held

Social development needs

Social development of children involves education through words, cues, and rituals, on how one should interact with others within the society. Through socialization, societal values which regulate expected behaviours are passed on from one generation to the next. Culture, tradition, and religion or philosophy are important contributors at the macro-level while family interactions are critical influencers at the micro-level. Interactions at schools, with peers, and other social groups also contribute to the socialization process of a child. Social development needs, when met, allow children to know how to interact with others within their societies as they explore their own individual personalities and ideas. In Cambodia, 95% of the population is Buddhist hence a majority of the people follow the Buddhist tenets on what it means to be a good person, a good parent, or a good child.

The religious values, which are closely linked to the Cambodian culture, are passed on through monks' teachings and reference of these teachings by parents and caregivers. The study indicated that even those who don't frequent pagodas (Buddhist place of worship), feel the need to listen to monks' teachings over the radio or seek monks' blessings in times of distress. According to Buddhist teachings, parents have an obligation to "educate children to do good things" and children have an obligation to "be good children, in order to get inheritance from their parents" and "maintain or improve family reputation"³⁹. Buddhism hence encourages parents to socialize children into what it means to be a good Buddhist and children are encouraged to be obedient to their parents. The Khmer saying that describes parents as the first teachers and the school teachers as second teachers demonstrates the primacy of the parents' role in socializing children.

When asked about the expectations they have of their children, some parents mentioned that they expected their children to be good people in the society and for the children to maintain family reputation. In the rural areas, particularly, fathers reiterated the need for children to safeguard family reputation. This could partly be due to how communities in rural areas are close-knit. One father mentioned, "I want to hear that my child is a good person in village, so that they do not talk badly about my family"⁴⁰. Another shared, "I want them to make good friends, sit with good people, then they become good people in the society, and not to commit any crime or what the society hates"⁴¹. The statement also indicates that a 'good person' is not only defined by religion and traditions, but also by Cambodian legal provisions, highlighting the reach of government institutions in children's social development.

Gender is an important aspect of socialization where children learn how they should behave and interact with others in the society based on their gender. Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum (2006, p. 897) noted that "Gender permeates every aspect of a child's social environment". Gender development begins at home and is particularly affirmed through family activities where some activities are assigned to children based on their gender. Children also observe activities carried out by each of their parents as well as how the parents interact with each other and with other people outside the home. In Cambodia, girls are expected to do domestic and care-giving work while boys are not encouraged to so: Households which encourage boys to do this work are exceptional. As one girl shared, "When at home, some parents just blame on girls that they do not do housework but for the boys, never blame. So, the boys can escape from these responsibilities"⁴². A girl shared what one of her parents once told her,

You are the girl and you will become a wife in the future, you have to do all the housework and need to know how to handle all the housework. This is opposite with the boys. The boys will become husbands and will be looking for a job to support the family. So, the way of living is different, so you cannot just do like the boy⁴³.

Gender roles as prescribed are hence passed on to the children through family interactions.

Girls are expected to stay at home while boys can go out and play. As one boy admitted, "Some roles (between boys and girls) are different. Like the boys sometimes go out to play but the girls stay home and do housework"⁴⁴. In observing this division of labour and differentiated expectations, one girl noted, "some boys are lazy and don't like to do housework"⁴⁵. Another lamented, "I have an older brother, but he doesn't do any housework. Even (washing) his clothes, he keeps for me to do all the things"⁴⁶. Studies have shown that "gender-typed environments" influence "children's preference and engagement in activities" (Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006, p.898). Different societal expectations and prescribed roles affords different childhood experiences based on gender, with an impact on a child's cognitive, social, and emotional skills. It is noted that gendered experiences in childhood can result in differentiated levels of self-confidence, independence, creativity, and problem-solving (Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006, p.899). Although counter-intuitive, masculinized expectation of boys can make them more vulnerable than girls as a professional on child rights in Cambodia revealed:

Men are expected to be strong, not to show emotions (...) There is (a Cambodian) saying for men- 'better to bleed than cry'. The biggest challenge for boys is lack of supervision. This is a form of (parental) neglect. Boys face the challenge of expectation from society. Boys are left alone so that they can go anywhere. This can be beneficial because the boy can be confident, but this can also put him at risk of being sexually abused, trafficked, accident, kidnapped and all that kind of thing. But girls are kept at home to do all the housework. No freedom, but they are more protected⁴⁷.

Other social influencers such as schools, NGOs, media, and interaction with people with an alternative perspective, also influence social development of children. Urban girls engaged in this research evoked gender equity concepts as they lamented about the different treatment between boys and girls. Using a new lens, rather than that offered by mainstream society, to interpret personal experiences, children can develop different perspectives on gender. A girl who received nods of agreement from other girls in a focus group discussion, shared:

I need support from society. They need to support equal rights between boys and girls. It is not fair that boys can go out until twelve (midnight) but the girl when you return home at about 8pm, they say "this is not a good girl". They (girls) make family reputation low, but for the boys it is ok. So, this is a form of discrimination⁴⁸.

The girl hence acknowledges her role as a child in upholding the reputation of her family, but also realizes that this role carries more ‘burden’ for her as girl. This social awareness would allow children to negotiate new gendered social norms. However, the extent to which the children can voice and act on this awareness would largely depend on their parents’ openness to social change. Cambodia parents have demonstrated this openness, particularly with regards to arranged marriages.

A rural mother shared:

For me, my parents arranged marriage for me. Now, our role is just to provide knowledge and support. It is difficult to arrange marriage in this generation. We support our children to choose their partners by themselves, but we want them to choose a good husband, one that will make their family happy⁴⁹.

This openness for change is significant because it contradicts an important cultural expectation that is reinforced by religion: It is the obligation of Buddhist parents to “arrange marriage for their children in order to ensure happiness for their children”⁵⁰.

This change was partly attributed to the agency of children in challenging social norms⁵¹.

Opening up spaces for questioning and negotiating social norms within families could be a way for parents to support social development of children, with a consequence to their safety, health, and emotional well-being. A gender equity professional noted that these spaces are opening up,

They (young boys and girls) can negotiate with parents not to follow culture, especially during the engagement and wedding. In some cases, they (young couples) go to the local authority to register their marriage. There are a lot of cases, but I think such cases are not reported. I think it is because the parents want to keep this silent- they do not want to show⁵².

Weddings are significant social and cultural events in Cambodia which can be celebrated for up to one week through traditional ceremonies and rituals. Therefore, cases of parents overtly or covertly consenting to civil weddings indicate social change at the micro-level. Even without a broader social change, Cambodian parents seem to attend to the evolving social needs of their children.



School-going boys hold hands in solidarity after a revealing focus group discussion in which many of them reflected about their life challenges and aspirations.

5: Emotional development needs

Emotional development, sometimes referred to as psychological development, connotes the evolving ability of children to express their emotions appropriately (this is often culturally prescribed) and to perceive the emotions of other people. Denham (1998) emphasises the need to allow children to experience and explore their emotions, encouraging positive emotions while supporting them to manage the negative ones appropriately. Children's emotions and their perception of other's emotions reflect in their behaviour and hence their social interactions.

The relationship between parents or caregivers and children has particularly been highlighted as a significant influencer in emotional development (Ashiabi, 2000) since children model the emotional expression and receptiveness of their parents or caregivers. As studies have shown, children's emotional expression reflects that of their caregivers (Cummings & Cummings, 1988). Parents can also play an active role on the emotional development of their children by coaching their children to explore and understand their emotions, as well as through their responses to their children's expression of emotions. Denham (1998) encourages tolerating negative emotions of children as this gives parents the opportunity to help children deal with powerful emotions. It is noted that children in secure relationships are able to regulate their feelings by seeking and obtaining help from their caregivers (Ashiabi, 2000, p.81).

Parenting styles

An important determinant of emotional support provided to children is the parenting style adopted by parents or caregivers. Parenting style has been defined as "the manner in which parents treat, communicate with, discipline, monitor, and support their children" (September, S. J., et al., as cited in Slicker E., et al., 2005). It characterizes the approach taken by different parents in disciplining and/or rewarding their children to discourage or encourage certain behaviours emanating from particular emotions. There are four distinct parenting styles: authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved parenting styles. In Cambodia, as translated from Khmer language, these styles correspond to cold or small mouth, hot or big mouth, free, and neglectful parenting styles, respectively. Authoritative parenting style is characterized by high responsiveness and high control. A parent practicing this style, for instance, sets firm expectations and limits, explaining the necessity of such measures to her or his child. This parent also listens to the views of the child and responds to her or his needs. While a parent practicing authoritarian parenting style also enforces high control, she or he does so with little explanation and is not very responsive to the needs of the child. Permissive is characterized by low control and high

responsiveness, and uninvolved parenting style by low control and low responsiveness. While Cambodian parents do not practice any particular parenting style unanimously, a parent's upbringing and exposure to different parenting styles are important contributors to the choice of parenting style adopted. There was a general consensus among parents engaged in the study that traditionally, the most popular parenting style was authoritarian or the 'hot' approach, where parents expected complete obedience without considering a child's point of view or needs. Disobedience to set rules was met with punitive and, often, violent discipline techniques. "I have eaten more salt than you, so you must listen" was a popular Khmer saying used by parents to justify their authoritarian parenting style. The authoritarian upbringing, experienced by most parents interviewed, however, had mixed impact on the parenting style adopted by parents. While some parents adopt the 'soft' approach to parenting due to their negative experience of their own authoritarian parents, some parents continued their parents' style and laud it as the most effective parenting style. One parent noted,

Growing I was beaten of course (laughing). I did not copy my parents because I love my children. The way of discipline by violence or blame is not good. So, I had to find a positive way to do it, by explaining and advice in a good way. (...). So, we learn from this and reflect on ourselves. For me, I feel shy and scared. Perhaps this is the impact of violence that my parents used this style so that is why I learnt from other people, that I should change and think about how to make my children smarter and braver .

Another parent shared,

Sometimes I hit them (children) in order for them to listen. It is Cambodian culture I observe more or less people generally use violence to discipline children who do something naughty or don't follow the advice of the parents. (...). I am a victim of violence in school. For me it seems to be useful because I studied hard and managed good grade. Children who were not hit did not perform well⁵⁴.

A 2013 survey on violence against children in Cambodia indicated that punitive discipline techniques associated with authoritarian parenting style is still prevalent in the country. The survey revealed that parents and caregivers are the most common perpetrators of physical and emotional abuse of children, with most abuse associated with disciplining (Ministry of Women Affairs, Kingdom of Cambodia, 2014, pp. 75 & 79). The study also demonstrated how the cultural understanding that severe punishment of children is appropriate can result in unidentified child abuse. The survey report noted that in cases where physical abuse of children did not result in serious bodily harm, there was "little to no response by people in authority or other adults" (Ministry of Women Affairs, Kingdom of Cambodia, 2014, p.136). While physical abuse can be self-evident, emotional abuse that arise from blaming, cursing, and shouting at children is less evident. The survey, as well

this study, revealed that children who are punitively punished often do not understand the reason for their punishment. It is hence likely that children's consequent appropriate behaviour is an indication of their fear of punishment rather than their ability to manage negative emotions.

Authoritarian parenting style could also result in children emotionally detaching from their parents. As noted earlier, parental support for the emotional development of children involves enabling emotional competency of children by supporting them as they deal with negative emotions, among other things. Setting controls, as characteristic of authoritative parenting style, is one way of doing so. Reasoning with children when establishing controls, and reaffirming the controls through rewards or disciplinary measures, enhances the emotional development of children⁵⁵. In trying to give their children a different upbringing from the authoritarian one, some parents adopt the permissive parenting style. To contravene the high control they experienced in childhood, they apply low or no controls on their children and aim to fulfil most, if not all, the needs of their children. Exposure to different parenting styles has allowed some parents to reflect on the pros and cons of the various ways of parenting. In the study, parents attributed this exposure to positive parenting trainings by NGOs, interaction with foreigners or locals who have lived elsewhere in the country, and information on the internet. A man who used to work in the hospitality industry in Siem Reap town reflected,

When I see the foreigners bringing their kid to Cambodia to see the temple, they (foreign children) come to me and ask many questions so they are not scared of other people. This is (because) of the parents' advice to them so I have to change to a foreigner with regards to my kids. Don't hit when they do something wrong. You call them to a meeting and advise them with regards to their mistake⁵⁶.

Another parent informed,

I attended a parenting program offered by an NGO and I have learnt how to calm down and not to use violence because normally when we are angry, we always beat the children but through this course, I can try to manage not to use violence anymore or reduce the use of violence⁵⁷.

However, rural parents are less likely to get this exposure compared to their urban counterparts. This is due to, among other factors: limited interactions with foreigners, including tourists, who frequent Siem Reap town, lower education and limited access to internet services, and fewer NGOs working in rural areas. While parenting styles should ideally be shaped by the age of the child, culture, and circumstances, research shows that a child's need for structure, recognition, nurturing, and empowerment is constant (Pecnic, N., as cited in Devi, K.S., 2014).

Challenges of secure parent-child attachment

When asked about what they need from their parents, a majority of the children interviewed and engaged in focus group discussions, and particularly girls, pointed to their emotional development needs. 'Love', 'warmth', 'trust', 'peace', and 'support' were among the words used to describe these needs. Parents engaged in the research acknowledged these very needs for their children. However, children and parents alike admitted that these needs were met partially at best.

Some of the challenges to meeting these needs, as identified by both children and parents, include punitive discipline methods, time limitation, and domestic violence. These factors can breakdown communication channels, which could otherwise enable a secure relationship between children and parents. According to the attachment theory, poor responsiveness or unavailability of principal attachment figures, often parents, disrupts a child's sense of security resulting to psychological suffering (Van der Kolk, 1996). However, where a secure attachment bond exists, it could serve as defence against trauma-induced psychological suffering (Van der Kolk, 1996).

The lack of time between parents and children was particularly voiced by rural girls in a focus group discussion where they noted that the busy life of their parents, especially where parents had to migrate for employment, left little time for them to bond with their parents. Some girls lamented how they sometimes never saw their parents until the weekend and others noted that their parents work into the weekend in Siem Reap town. In the context of poverty, seeking basic needs can compromise on other needs. Emotional needs of children can easily be ignored as emotional responsiveness of parents and caregivers requires time and attention. The opportunity cost of spending time with children might be too high for some parents. However, the consequence of not incurring this cost is the lack of warmth, or emotional security, for most children.

Another challenge to emotional security for children is domestic violence. Domestic violence, where one parent commits violence against the other, was cited by girls and boys from both rural and urban areas in Siem Reap as an occurrence that affects them emotionally, as well as cognitively. Children expressed feeling of 'anger', 'shame', 'depression', and 'hopelessness' whenever domestic violence occurs in their homes. Some children noted how use of violence at home reduces their level of concentration in class and their desire to continue with schooling. Without a secure attachment bond with their parents, children might shy away from seeking guidance in dealing with these emotions and the resultant emotional distress. Witnessing violence at home particularly breaks trust between children and the transgressor-parent. Some children expressed helplessness as they can't defend the abused parent, often the mother. In some cases, children are physically abused as well. While children might be physically unable to defend themselves

or their abused parent, they struggle with the decision of whether or not to report cases of domestic violence to local authorities. Some children even seek to protect their transgressor-parent. This can be attributed to blackmail, children reasoning on the consequence reporting might have on their abused parent, or children's fear of losing one of their attachment figures, despite insecurities associated with such an attachment. One child articulated this struggle,

I am angry with my father, he always hits my mother. I don't want to report the case to the police or village chief because they (his parents) are getting old, they are around 50 years old.

While abused parents might want to protect their children from the emotional distress associated with domestic violence, they might not be in a position to offer emotional security because they themselves do not enjoy this security. Adults in abusive relationships are noted to often suffer from attachment problems because their emotional needs are not met by their abusive partners, and often tend to be emotionally dependent on their partners (Hwee, 2018). Research also shows that attachment problem might result in role-reversal attachment where parents draw emotional security from their children as the children seek to offer this security to their emotionally distressed parent (Hwee, 2018). A female victim of domestic violence shared,

They (her children) always pity me and don't make me sad. Even when they were small, they would never leave the house, to make me happy. I am happy with my children⁵⁸.

In this case, the interviewee's children seem to have sacrificed their needs of going out to play with other children so as not to aggravate the emotional distress of their mother or even to offer her comfort. While this role-reversal is not necessarily detrimental (Macfie, Brumariu, L. & Lyons-Ruth, 2015, p.32), it can burden children and make them ignore their emotional needs.

Domestic violence, as noted from discussions with boys and girls, also results in emotional insecurity due to resultant potential separation or divorce of parents. One boy lamented, "(Because of domestic violence at home), we are always concerned that one day we will lose father or mother". A girl shared, "Sometimes, it (domestic violence) makes children orphan. When parents have to divorce and live separately, this is not good for the children. Both the mother and father are important to the children"⁶⁰. The latter interviewee's use of the word 'orphan' indicates anticipated or observed negligence by parents who live separate from children following separation.

Emotional insecurity resulting from domestic violence creates a situation where children might consciously or unconsciously avoid developing meaningful bonds with their parents as a defense mechanism against potential future loss of a parent. Avoidant attachment, as coined by attachment theorists, often manifests itself in aggressive behavior by children experiencing emotional insecurity (Wiebe, 2006). This consequently diminishes the ability of a parent to contribute towards the emotional development of their children. Divorce or separation, as observed in the study, often results in the mother staying with the children, with little or no contact maintained between the father and the children. In some cases, children go to live with extended family when the mother remarries. While children can build bonds with the new caretakers, some children find it difficult to let go of their primary attachment figures. A boy, who was sent to live with his aunt since he was 3 years old when his parents divorced and married other partners, reiterated,

I feel warm with my aunt, but I think is not like with my own parents. It is difficult to live far from my parents, but I have no choice. My mom and dad, when I visit them, they always give me some money for school, but I don't feel warm. They do not come to visit me. My dad lives in my village, so it is better. I sometimes visit his home⁶¹.

6: Supporting parenting

The Convention on the Rights of the Child urges state parties to support parents and caregivers to act in the best interest of the child. Acting in the best interest of children entails meeting the three groups of needs essential for optimal child development. Previous chapters explored the reality of parents and children in trying to fulfil these needs. In addition, key parenting challenges facing both parents and children in Siem Reap province were highlighted. In line with the Convention, the Cambodian government, as well as international development agencies and non-governmental organizations, have established structural and program support for parents and children. This chapter assesses three of such support mechanisms which were highlighted by parents and children engaged in the study.

Equity card

The equity card was noted by rural parents as the most important support they receive from the government. Equity cards, as described by parents who have been beneficiaries, allows for parents and their children to access free medical care in any government health facility. Beneficiaries also receive compensation for transport to and from health facilities as well as lunch over the course of treatment. As discussed in chapter 3, costs associated with health care significantly affect household income, especially in rural areas where income opportunities are limited. Many parents are forced to go into debt and children are forced to contribute to family income to meet the family health care needs. In disaster or emergency cases, families with the equity card can also receive food given in the form of bags of rice by commune authorities.

The government of Cambodia established the Health Equity Fund, with support of international development partners, as a poverty-reduction measure. The fund was first featured in the 2003-2005 National Poverty Reduction Strategy with a goal of extending health care services to poor and vulnerable populations⁶². With the poor representing one fifth of the country's population, with a majority being women (GIZ, undated, p.1), this program was aimed at making a significant contribution to the lives of parents and children. With free health care, the financial, social, and emotional burden of parents would be reduced. Families would be able to access quality health care without compromising on household income or assets. Debts accumulated to access health care services could be significantly reduced hence allowing parents to focus on provision of other needs to their children.

In 2005, the Ministry of Planning, with technical assistance from the GIZ, developed a procedure entailing a standardised questionnaire to identify the poor so as to establish eligibility of poor Cambodians to benefit from the equity card, and other development programs. This identification procedure, known as IDPoor by development actors, was meant to involve villagers in assessing the poorest in their respective villages (GIZ, undated, p.2). While the IDPoor was meant to ensure that the poorest families benefit from the equity card, rural parents interviewed in this study felt that the identification procedure is not transparent or fair and that the poorest of the poor still do not benefit.

A commune official who was interviewed maintained that the eligibility procedure is clear and transparent. Village chiefs are typically the ones who are assigned, by commune chiefs, the task of assessing property of their villagers. They often do not assess all homes but assess property of villagers who seem or are known to be poor. Families with property value of less than 400000 riels (about USD 100) are awarded the equity card. This assessment takes place every four years. Every four years, the economic situation of those with the card is also reassessed to ensure that they still qualify for the equity card. During the

assessment, details such as the type of house a family house (made of stone or palm leaves), the type of television (whether it is coloured or black and white, big or small), means of transportation (bicycle or motorbike) are noted in a questionnaire.

As noted by villagers, this assessment does not consider family income flow or whether the property was acquired through loans or donations. This loophole is aggravated by the fact that village chiefs have the discretion to choose which families are assessed for the equity card based on how visibly poor villagers are.

In a focus group discussion, one parent shared,

I observe that the issuing is not fair in some cases, for example, a very poor family in my village, because they hire machine to plough the land, because of this, the village chief did not regard them as poor although villagers think that they are poor⁶³.

Another villager who had recently sold her family land to access health care lamented,

"I used to have the equity card but later on when I got the support of an NGO which bought me a motorbike, they cut me off. It (the equity card) helped me to go to the hospital, I did not need to pay. Sometimes I went every 2 months. It depends, at that time, I used to get sick several times. It was really useful. I still need the card, but they think that I do not need the card anymore because my children are already grown up"⁶⁴.

In the same commune, the number of equity cards in circulation among families in the villages has declined over the years. In 2005, 1005 families benefited from the card, while in 2017, 504 families benefited⁶⁵. This reduction was attributed to, "Development. Also, some facilities can loan money to build a house, or other material in the house, they have more than 400,000 riel worth-of-things in their home, including the house"⁶⁶. While the levels of poverty in the area might have reduced over the years, this logic is flawed in the identification of poor households. A more sophisticated identification model which accounts for property on loan and donations would be more reflective of real economic situation of families. Indebted families with difficulties in paying back their loan are vulnerable to income shocks and unexpected expenditures such as health care expenses. Although the names of equity card beneficiaries are published by commune officials, villagers expressed their lack of agency in influencing decision around eligibility.

This research revealed that while the equity card program stands to immensely benefit poor families and reduce parenting burden, there are improvement that could be made to increase its accessibility to poor families in rural areas. It is noteworthy that parents in

urban areas were not very informed about the equity card, some did not even know that this program existed. This points to the need for the program to be publicised and implemented, if not yet, to benefit poor families in the urban areas.

Positive parenting programs

Some of the parents, especially mothers, in the study shared that they had previously participated in positive parenting programs where they were trained mostly on how to positively discipline their children as well as how to manage their anger. Parents noted that being able to manage one's emotional stress was important in preventing use of violence and emotional abuse when children do not behave as expected. There is an increasing number of local NGOs which provide positive parenting trainings to parents on the ground. Recently, the Cambodian government adopted a Positive Parenting Strategy and its training toolkits with an aim of expanding such programs and integrating them into a national-wide program funded by the government.

The strategic plan was adopted in light of the 2013 survey on child abuse which singled out parents as the most common perpetrators of child abuse (physical and emotional). The plan envisages positive parenting as a remedy to preventing such abuse. The goals set to meet this vision include promoting safe, stable, and nurturing relationships between children and parents/caregivers, and positive and non-violent parenting styles and disciplining methods (Ministry of Women Affairs, Kingdom of Cambodia, 2017, p.3). Positive parenting is defined in the strategic plan as “warm, affectionate parenting behaviour that provides long-term guidance, boundaries and protection for children without using violent discipline, including neglect, while addressing children's problems and taking into consideration children's thoughts and feelings” (Ministry of Women Affairs, Kingdom of Cambodia, 2017, p.5). The vision of the 2017-2021 Positive Parenting Strategy is hence not only to safeguard the physical safety of children but also to support parents in fulfilling the emotional development needs of children.

The government program will be modelled on programs which have been implemented by local NGOs⁶⁷. The NGO ICS-SP (Improving Cambodia's Society- through Skillful Parenting), which runs a positive parenting program, has been engaged by the government for technical assistance. The positive parenting strategy acknowledges that for children's emotional needs to be met, those of their parents need to be met as well. One of the six modules in the strategic plan's training toolkit is parental well-being where parents would be trained on how to deal with stress and other negative emotions. It proposes that, “Parents and caregivers should be supported to better handle the stress of everyday life, including child rearing, and to deal in a positive way with anger” (Ministry of Women Affairs, Kingdom of Cambodia 2017, p.28).

The Commune Committees for Women and Child (CCWC), which have since 2004 worked at the commune level to address issues affecting women and children, is seen as the entry point by the MoWA⁶⁸. Training of CCWC members on the Positive Parenting Strategy and its training toolkits is underway. The Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) social workers at the district level are also being trained on the same. Interviewed implementation partners, however, noted two main challenges to the program's success: limited government personnel to implement the program and limited government budget commitment. An experienced NGO worker informed,

The ministry (MoSVY) has officials at the district level but they have only one or two persons (social workers) in one district. So how can you provide services in a district of more than thousands of communities? There are at least 10 communes in each district⁶⁹.

Each Commune Committee for Women and Children usually consists of the Commune Council, and officials from the police, school, and health center within the commune. Most of the every-day work of the CCWC is typically left to the committee chairperson, who is often a woman (Jordanwood, 2016, p.56). Two interviewed CCWC chairs admitted to having too much to do, with one working into the night in cases of domestic violence. In addition, CCWC chairpersons are elected commune officials actively involved in politics. At the time of the field research, a few weeks before the 2018 national elections, the CCWC officials were busy with their political party's campaigning activities. Securing an interview with them was subject to their party's activities. An additional task of implementing a positive parenting program in communes, which have between 10 and 14 villages, with each village having at least 200 families, would over-stretch an already bloated mandate. For this program to achieve its goal of reaching Cambodian parents, the government needs to consider increasing its social service personnel on the ground. Having one social worker in each village to implement the program with the CCWC as a supervisory body at the commune level, for example, would increase chances of program success.

The other challenge is that of budget. The Commune Investment Plan, which stipulates the budgetary spending of communes, allocates much of its budget to infrastructural projects and little on social services. In one commune, the budgetary allocation for social services for 2017 was one-eighth of the total commune budget (approximately USD 2500). A CCWC official in the commune noted that this budget allocation was a great success that followed persistent negotiation with the commune chief⁷⁰. Where the CCWC chairperson doesn't have good negotiation skills, this budget can be significantly less. A newly elected CCWC chair shared that,

For the budget (of the commune), as I am new, I am not really familiar on how to withdraw money from this budget in order to support the CCWC work. From experience, this budget only supports visits to students in the community, or when there is anything problem, sensitization, refreshment during CCWC meetings only. Some support also my transportation to visit the village chief sometime⁷¹.

Although the MoWA is planning to include budget for the positive parenting program in its 2019 budget and is negotiating for an increase in the commune budget for CCWC⁷², the capacity, of those implementing the program, to access the budget need to be considered.

The positive parenting program presents a platform that can be used to address other concerns of parents as well as allow for service referrals. While the parenting training has a great potential in improving the parenting experience and outcomes with regards to the emotional development of children, the strategic plan does not offer to support parents in meeting the other development needs of children. Due to the interconnectedness of these development needs, the ignored needs can adversely impact on the emotional development needs. For instance, by not addressing the economic situation of parents, the financial stress is likely to impact on how the parents interact with their children, and if children are forced to drop out of school to provide for their families this would have an impact on both their cognitive and emotional development. Although the strategic plan envisages the need to train parents on how to manage their stress, it doesn't go further into looking at the causes of this stress. The program could create a platform where these issues can be explored to inform the government's development programs. When asked about what they would like to see in a parenting program, many parents cited the need to learn about how to manage their family budget⁷³, with fathers also wanting to learn about agricultural skills. Mothers also emphasised the need for the program to engage men so that fathers can be more actively involved in parenting. Such feedback could inform government development programming to better support parenting.

The national positive parenting program hence has the potential of optimally supporting parenting if it is designed as an exchange between parents, children, and the government. In addition, local NGOs, particularly those which have implemented positive parenting programs in communities, are a great resource to the government. Cooperation, and potentially partnership, would allow for an exchange on technical and social know-how. Working together would also prevent overlapping and duplication of parenting programs.

Domestic violence

Domestic violence featured as big challenge for both parents, particularly mothers, and children. Interviewed women described suffering from physical, emotional, and economic abuse at home. The latter entailed misuse and destruction of family property. The

2014 Demography and Health Survey revealed that 31% of ever-married Cambodian women in the study (aged 15-49) had experienced spousal violence, with emotional abuse being the most prevalent form of abuse (National Institute of Statistics, 2015, p.269). The survey noted that spousal violence was highest in Siem Reap province. Interviewed women particularly highlighted their suffering from physical and economic abuse perpetrated by their husbands, mainly due to alcoholism and financial problems. Although it is likely that they also suffered from emotional abuse, they might have highlighted the two categories of abuse due to their visible outcomes. One woman showed her injured eye whose eyeball broke when her husband violently hit her. Another pointed to a bush where her husband would throw kitchenware and utensils when he got angry, and from where he had recently burnt the family motorbike. Often this violence is extended to children. As discussed in chapter 5, the effect of domestic violence on children goes beyond their direct experience. Addressing domestic violence hence would support parents and allow for children to develop into healthy adults, both physically and emotionally. Although there are support structures for domestic violence victims, these structures are largely inaccessible and ineffective.

The 2005 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims offers legal protection to victims of domestic violence and provides for action to be taken in case of a violation. It calls for appropriate assistance to victims such as provision of temporary shelter and medical assistance. It also calls for legal proceedings against perpetrators and protection orders in case of serious abuse. It also recommends mediation or reconciliation in cases that “mentally/psychologically or economically affected victims and minor misdemeanors or petty crimes” with consent from both parties (Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, 2005, Art. 26). While this law does offer protection and redress for victims of domestic abuse, it is inadequately applied on the ground.

In a typical case of domestic violence, a victim would report the case to the village chief who would then refer the case to the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC). If the case is determined to be serious by the CCWC, the police are involved. Militia police at the village level or police at the commune level writes a case report and forward it to the district-level police, who would then forward the report to the provincial-level police, who would then forward it to the inspector of police to seek warrant of arrest for the perpetrator. The case would be presented in court and, in some cases, protection order is granted. This process was noted by one commune official to be very time consuming⁷⁴. This not only delays protection for victims but also makes legal process an undesirable redress mechanism to local authorities. The preference is often to mediate and resolve the conflict between spouses⁷⁵. In one commune, the CCWC official could only remember of one case taken to court in 2017. The first time the 2017 case was reported, the CCWC mediated between the couple and made the perpetrator promise not to

committee physical violence on the wife again. After the mediation session, he signed a promissory note. Before long, he abused his wife again. Again, mediation was applied, but at the district level. He signed another promissory note. The case was only considered a police case when the husband threatened to kill the wife with a knife and injured her seriously⁷⁶.

This demonstrates that in some cases, local officials compromise on protection of victims in the hope that mediation would stop or deter serious abuse. During the study, victims of domestic violence lamented that it was not very useful to report the cases of abuse because the officials only mediated and that the promissory note did not prevent subsequent abuse. One woman even noted that her husband became more abusive after signing the document⁷⁷. Although the victims of domestic violence interviewed in the study did not narrate their mediation experience, previous studies reveal that there is an attitude of victim blaming (particularly towards women) by local authorities (Brickell, 2015). Victim blaming and poor outcomes of mediation are likely to deter victims from reporting to authorities. In one commune under study, community workers, who are trained and employed by a local NGO, address cases of domestic violence through mediation. The mediation by the community workers was, however, noted to be more effective than that offered by the local authorities. In a focus group discussion with fathers from that commune, one participant shared,

When you go to complain to the chief, you have to pay some money, sometimes 10000 riels or 5000 riel (USD 2.5 or 1.25, approximately) to get a promissory paper but no encouragement from the village chief. When you complain to them (the local NGO), you will get some knowledge and skills in handling issues in the family⁷⁸.

This indicates that mediation can be effective if it is applied tactfully, and with the agreement of both parties. Nonetheless, as indicated earlier, not all cases warrant mediation. Some domestic abuse cases require legal redress even if the abuse does not result in life-threatening injuries.

In cases of prolonged physical, sexual, economic, or emotional abuse, some people might opt to divorce their partners. The objectives of “protecting victims” and “preserving harmony within the household”, as stipulated in the 2005 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims, can at times be in conflict. Silence of victims might sometimes be confused with household harmony. Some victims of domestic abuse who have sort divorce, where harmony at home seem impossible, revealed that seeking divorce is not easy. “My issue is that we have a lot of conflict. I would like to divorce but the village chief and commune chief try to advice and give me a reason why we should not. They say that now that we have already made a family, we should not divorce”, a

victim of domestic violence narrated⁷⁹. Divorce is not a desirable outcome in Cambodia, both socially and legally. Just as in the case of domestic violence, a request for divorce is met with a series of mediation session which aim at preventing divorce.

A CCWC official informed,

We have received many cases of people wanting divorce, but we encourage them to live together as a family because we don't want the family to break up and most of them have children (...) So we mediate the first time, second time, third time, and sometimes fourth time. Tell them to calm down and make a promise in order to live together as they have already built a family and have children⁸⁰.

This approach is consistent with the Cambodian Civil Code which states, "Either party to a marriage may file a petition for divorce at the commune or sangkat council for the domicile or location of residence (...) In such a case the commune or sangkat council may attempt conciliation during the period of 15 days following its receipt of the petition. If the conciliation is unsuccessful, the commune or sangkat council shall forward the complaint to the court immediately as if a suit has been filed. (...) The court, taking account of all the circumstances, may dismiss [with prejudice] a demand for divorce if divorce would cause extreme hardship or anguish to the other spouse or the children." (The Civil Code of Cambodia, 2008, Art. 978, 982). Although this provision might have been set to protect women and children from abandonment, it has also had the effect of keeping women in abusive marriages.

Children's emotional needs, as discussed in the previous chapter, can only be met when the parents' emotional needs are met. Parents in abusive relationships would not be in a position to offer a secure attachment for their children. In addition, children witnessing abuse at home suffer from emotional distress. Having separate parents who are emotionally healthy might be the better option for children. During the research, it became evident that in most cases of separation or divorce, the mother stays with the children and the father cuts contact with his children. Divorced fathers often do not extend financial support to cater for their children's basic needs. The burden that comes with parenting, including the financial burden, hence squarely falls on divorced mothers. In a society where women have not previously worked outside the home, negligence of divorced fathers significantly compromises on child development.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This research paper explored the various ways in which Cambodian parents seek to fulfil the development needs of their children. Adopting a theoretical framework which draws from the work of theorists and practitioners in the field of child development, the paper focused on three groups of child development needs: basic needs, cognitive development needs (inclusive of social development needs), and emotional development needs. In doing so, challenges associated with parenting were also discussed. The paper also assessed support structures in place to ease the challenges associated with parenting. While this paper is informed by data collected in two communes in urban and rural Siem Reap province, it indicates the reality in other urban and rural settings in the country.

The study revealed a deep-seated gendered division of labour between mothers and fathers. Mothers are largely responsible for domestic work and child care and fathers are expected to be the primary, if not the only, financial providers in households. Mothers are largely the ones who provide for the emotional needs of their children and fathers often take the lead in nurturing their children's cognitive development.

The ability of parents to provide for their children's basic needs is highly determined by their economic situation. Poor parents, who struggle to provide for their families' basic needs, often lack financial and/or time resource necessary to fulfil their children's cognitive and emotional development needs. In some cases, this challenge forces children to take on parental roles by taking the lead in providing for the basic, cognitive, and emotional support for their family and younger siblings. To do this, some children drop out of school and join the labour market, often taking on hazardous work. This is a phenomenon that is particularly common in rural communes due to limited income opportunities. The government of Cambodia has adopted some policies that support parenting. The paper highlights three areas of support that stood out in the course of the field research: free health care provision through equity cards provision, positive parenting programs, and redress to domestic violence. While these programs have the potential of tremendously reducing the financial and emotional burden of parents, they suffer detrimental challenges. Although qualifying for an equity card is based on a family's economic status, family income is not assessed. The assessment of the value of family property is flawed because some family obtain property through donation and debt. These properties often don't have any impact on family income. At times, they can have a negative impact on family income where families use their land as collateral and are unable to pay their loans.

In line with its international obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Cambodian government adopted the 2017-2021 Positive Parenting Strategy which largely focusses on supporting parents to fulfil the emotional development needs of their children. This program is at its initial stages of implementation and faces the challenges of limited financial and personnel. The CCWCs (Commune Committee for Women and Children) are targeted as the key implementation bodies at the commune level yet the committees are already overstretched in their current mandate.

Domestic violence was cited as a major challenge by both parents and children. Domestic violence negatively impacts on both emotional and cognitive development of children. Redress for such abuse is, however, largely limited to ineffective attempts at mediating between the abused and abuser parent. Divorce is discouraged in both social and legal settings in Cambodia. Where parents separate or divorce, fathers often abandon their responsibility to cater for the needs of their children. These two factors likely influence the decision of mothers who stay in abusive relationships, consequently affecting the emotional development of children negatively.

An improvement in how these three support frameworks are implemented and resourced could significantly improve parenting experience and child development. While supporting parents' ability to cater for emotional needs of their children is an important aspect in supporting parenting, the main challenge facing parents is that of limited financial resources. The research indicated that parents are not only able to cater for the basic needs but also emotional and cognitive needs of their children where their financial burden is lower and/or financial resources are more. Reducing the financial burden associated with parenting and/or increasing income-generating opportunities for parents should hence be at the heart of any program meant to support parenting and child development.

Below are key recommendations aimed at improving parenting support based on the research findings discussed in this paper.

To the Royal Government of Cambodia

- Reduce financial burden associated with private tutoring in public schools. Consider assessing the public education curriculum to ensure that the set curriculum goals can be accomplished within regular school hours.
- Support income generating activities in rural communes. Consider assigning financial and human resources in the assessment of how to optimize the financial potential of rural communes.

- Ensure that equity cards are offered to families that are most in need. Consider revising the economic status assessment criteria to reflect actual family income flow.
- Ensure that the Commune Committees for Women and Children (CCWCs) have sufficient financial and human resources to implement social programs mandated to them. A percentage of the Commune Investment Plan, commune budget, could be earmarked for social projects and made accessible to CCWCs.
- Design the national positive parenting program in a way that it can also act as a referral point for parents to other social programs supporting parenting at commune level. The program could also act as a learning tool which the government can use to learn about the needs of parents and inform other government development programs.
- Ease the process of redress following domestic abuse. Consider streamlining the process of gaining warrants of arrest for domestic violence perpetrators and protection orders for victims.

To the Commune authorities

- Support the work of the CCWC by easing the process of accessing funds necessary for their social programs.
- Increase credibility of selection criteria for equity cards by including villagers in the assessment process. Villagers could, for example, be engaged with village chiefs in the initial assessment stage by nominating families to be considered as beneficiaries.
- Strategically partner with local NGOs and international development partners to gain technical and social know-how in the implementation of social programs. Partnering with local NGOs who are running parenting programs could also avoid overlapping and duplication of program work.
- Apply mediation selectively in cases of domestic violence, as stipulated in the 2005 Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Protection of Victims. Where victims of domestic violence seek divorce, apply mediation as stipulated in the Cambodian Civil Code. Mediation should be applied without prejudice and with consent of both parties.
- Enforce parental responsibility of fathers following separation or divorce to protect children from abandonment.

To the local NGOs

- Promote community awareness on how gendered division of labour affects parenting outcomes
- Create awareness among parents on social programs run by the government
- Share technical and social know-how in the publicization and implementation of government social programs such as the national positive parenting program
- Seek partnership with CCWCs in implementation of social programs

To international development partners and donors

- Support programs which are aimed at increasing income-generating opportunities for parents, especially those living in rural communes
- Support government programs aimed at reducing financial burden on parents such as the equity card program
- Support government efforts in training CCWC and other social workers to implement the national positive parenting program
- Ensure that supported programs benefits parents and children in most need

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¹ Monk, personal communications, June 25, 2018

² V.B., personal communication, June 26, 2018

³ N.S., personal communication, June 27, 2018

⁴ Urban mother, focus group discussion, June 25, 2018

⁵ Urban mother, focus group discussion, June 25, 2018

⁶ Urban mother, focus group discussion, June 25, 2018

⁷ Urban mother, focus group discussion, June 25, 2018

⁸ Urban father, focus group discussion, June 27, 2018

⁹ Statistics were gathered through questionnaires filled by 60 married men from urban Phnom Penh and rural Siem Reap.

¹⁰ Rural father, focus group discussion, July 5, 2018

¹¹ Rural mother, focus group discussion, July 6, 2018

¹² Rural mother, focus group discussion, July 6, 2018

¹³ Rural mother, focus group discussion, July 6, 2018

¹⁴ One study indicates that rural men take on more domestic and care-giving responsibilities compared to urban men (Sokhan, 2015, p.41). This could, however, be due to factors unrelated to social norms. For instance, urban men are likely to have more demanding employment and hence face greater time constraints and they are more likely to be able to afford house helps.

¹⁵ O.S., personal communication, June 25, 2018

¹⁶ This finding supports an earlier study that found women's favourable and men's unfavourable attitude towards housework and child care are associated with women's greater contribution to household labour: See, Poortman, A. & Van Der Lippe, T. (2009). Attitude towards housework and childcare and the gendered division of labour. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 71 (3), 526-541. It is worth to note, however, that attitudes can be influenced by socialized ideologies.

¹⁷ Rural father, focus group discussion, July 5, 2018

¹⁸ C.S., personal communication, July 2, 2018

¹⁹ L.S., personal communication, July 2, 2018

²⁰ T.L., personal communication, July 5, 2018

²¹ Rural girl, focus group discussion, July 3, 2018

²² Y.H., personal communication, July 3, 2018

²³ Rural boy, focus group discussion, July 4, 2018

²⁴ P.N., personal communication, July 6, 2018

²⁵ K.N.K., personal communication, June 29, 2018

²⁶ Rural girl, focus group discussion, July 3, 2018

²⁷ M.S., personal communication, July 5, 2018

²⁸ T.L., personal communication, July 5, 2018

²⁹ Rural boy, focus group discussion, July 4, 2018

³⁰ In the report by the National Institute of Statistics of Cambodia, the 'child labourers' have been distinguished from 'economically active children' where the former is a subset of the latter. Economically active children were defined as "All children aged 5–17 who were engaged in economic activities for one hour or more or found not working but had a job or business from which they were temporarily absent in the reference week (the seven days prior to the survey interview)" (National Institute of Statistics, 2017, 7). Household chores – domestic and care-giving work- were considered non-economic, but unpaid family work which generates income was considered economic.

³¹ T.L., personal communication, July 5, 2018

³² While formal education is recognized as a key contributor to childhood cognitive development, it is important to note that the degree of this contribution is largely dependent on the kind of education a child receives. See: Borghans, L., Golsteyn, B.H., & Zölitz, U. (2015). School quality and the development of cognitive skills between age four and six. *PLoS ONE* 10(7): e0129700 ; and Klausmeier, H.J. (1977). Educational experience and cognitive development. *Educational Psychologist*, 12(2), 179-196

³³ T.T., personal communication, July 2, 2018

³⁴ L.S., personal communication, July 2, 2018

³⁵ Rural boy, focus group discussion, July 4, 2018

³⁶ L.L., personal communication, July 2, 2018

³⁷ T.L., personal communication, July 5, 2018

³⁸ Y.H., personal communication, July 3, 2018

³⁹ Monk, personal communication, June 25, 2018

⁴⁰ Rural father, focus group discussion, July 5, 2018

⁴¹ Rural father, focus group discussion, July 5, 2018

⁴² Urban girl, focus group discussion, June 28, 2018

⁴³ Urban girl, focus group discussion, June 28, 2018

- ⁴⁴ Rural boy, focus group discussion, July 4, 2018
- ⁴⁵ Urban girl, focus group discussion, June 28, 2018
- ⁴⁶ Rural girl, focus group discussion, July 3, 2018
- ⁴⁷ Executive Director- First Step Cambodia, June 12, 2018
- ⁴⁸ Urban girl, focus group discussion, June 28, 2018
- ⁴⁹ Rural mother, focus group discussion, July 6, 2018
- ⁵⁰ Monk, personal communication, June 25, 2018.
- ⁵¹ Rural mother, focus group discussion, July 6, 2018
- ⁵² Women's rights activist, personal communications, June 11, 2018
- ⁵³ N.S., personal communications, June 27, 2018
- ⁵⁴ Urban father, focus group discussion, June 27, 2018
- ⁵⁵ For more on the benefits of setting controls for children see Morin, A. (2018, October 29). Reasons why it is important to set limits with kids. Very Well Family. Retrieved from <https://www.verywellfamily.com/>
- ⁵⁶ Urban father, focus group discussion, June 27, 2018
- ⁵⁷ Urban mother, focus group discussion, June 25, 2018
- ⁵⁸ M.L., personal communications, July 2, 2018
- ⁵⁹ Urban boy, focus group discussion, June 29, 2018
- ⁶⁰ Urban girl, focus group discussion, June 29, 2018
- ⁶¹ D.M.S., personal communications, June 29, 2018
- ⁶² For more on the history of the equity card, see Annear, P.L., Bigdeli, M., Eang, R.C., & Jacobs, B. (2008). Providing access to health services for the poor: Health equity in Cambodia. *Studies in HSO&P*, 23, 189-226
- ⁶³ Rural mother, focus group discussion, July 06, 2018
- ⁶⁴ M.L., personal communications, July 02, 2018
- ⁶⁵ CCWC official, personal communications, July 04, 2018
- ⁶⁶ CCWC official, personal communications, July 04, 2018
- ⁶⁷ For a comprehensive assessment of a positive parenting program by a local NGO, see ICS-CP. (2015). Project evaluation of investing in children and their societies, ICS parenting project in Siem Reap, using sensemaker as a piloted evaluation tool.
- ⁶⁸ MoWA official, personal communications, August 08, 2018

⁶⁹ NGO official, personal communications, June 11, 2018

⁷⁰ CCWC official, personal communications, July 04, 2018

⁷¹ CCWC official, personal communications, June 25, 2018

⁷² MoWA official, personal communications, August 08, 2018

⁷³ Some organizations like ICS-SP and Women Resource Center include financial training in their positive parenting training modules.

⁷⁴ CCWC official, personal communications, July 04, 2018

⁷⁵ See Brickell (2015) for an in-depth analysis of the challenges to legal redress for women victims of domestic violence.

⁷⁶ CCWC official, personal communications, July 04, 2018

⁷⁷ Rural mother, focus group discussion, July 6, 2018

⁷⁸ Rural father, focus group discussion,

⁷⁹ C.S., personal communications, July 02, 2018

⁸⁰ CCWC official, personal communications, July 04, 2018

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