

Beijing +20 Review

Key Messages from Civil Society in Cambodia

The Gender and Development Network (GADNet), the Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP), The Cambodian Women Caucus (CWC) and The Cambodian NGO Committee on CEDAW (NGO- CEDAW) are working to set this statement out for the global special occasion of the 20 years assessment of the Beijing Platform for Action. To contribute to the Beijing +20 Asia Pacific and global reviews, we would like to ensure that the women's issues in Cambodia are heard and responded to the Asia-Pacific and global reviews of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Our key concern is inequality gap between the rich and poor and between women and men as a result of a complex combination of social inequalities, deprivation of rights, exclusion from opportunities, limited social protection policies and weak enforcement of laws. We are concerned about the continued impunity for most perpetrators of gender-based violence despite legislative reforms, very slow progress on decreasing malnutrition among women and girls, and the impact of decreasing external funding for the HIV response, particularly for women living with HIV and entertainment workers.

We need equitable and sustainable development that ensure women's empowerment in all aspects including political and civic engagement, economic opportunities and financial decision-making and promoting positive social norms, women's rights and gender quality works. We strongly support a standalone goal on gender equality in the post-2015 sustainable development goals. We demand for gender equality is a high priority of the Royal Government of Cambodia and all relevant stakeholders at Sub-national and national levels including development partners, private sectors and Civil society Organizations. We also call for specific attention and responsive actions to address the key prioritized issues such as women in public decision making and leadership position; labor rights and protection; violence against women, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender; and health and HIV.

Women in public decision-making and leadership position

Cambodia fails to achieve Cambodian Millennium Development Goal (CMDG) and fail to fulfill the national obligations in according to international convention on CEDAW. It continues a pronounced inequality representation between women and men. This resulted from cultural gender norms, hierarchical social structures and a patriarchal political culture dominated by party affiliation at the expense of individual candidate merits as well as the lack of specific written policies and laws for supporting providing opportunities as temporary measures for women to participate at all levels.

From the first legislature National Assembly (NA) Elections 1993 to the fourth legislature NA Elections 2008, number of elected female at all levels kept increasing and women were actively involved in the election process. In the contrast, there is a decreased in the number of elected female parliamentarians for the fifth polling 2013. More than that, women are holding position as deputy which lead the decision-making to address women's issues is bias by men.

Labor Rights and Protection

Poverty and a lack of decent work opportunities leads many girls, women as well as boys and men to seek work outside of Cambodia. These workers, particularly those who are unskilled and/or migrate without documents are extremely vulnerable to exploitation, abuse and human trafficking. Only 3% of domestic workers in Asia are entitled to a weekly day of rest. There is lack of implementation of legal safeguards and policy measures in Cambodia, and in destination countries to ensure the safety and basic rights of migrant workers. Of immediate concern is the rapid increase in labor migration that is expected with the start of the ASEAN Socio – Culture integration in 2015.

Cambodian wages in the garment industry are among the lowest in the region and dropped in real terms for regular work by 16.6% in between 2000 to 2010. Around 90% of garment factory workers are poor young women from rural areas and their wages often are not sufficient to support their families and ensure a basic standard of living, despite the fact that the Cambodian Labour Law requires a minimum wage that provides workers with have 'as decent standard of living compatible with human dignity.' A major consequence is malnutrition. The ILO and French Development Agency recently conducted a study which found that 43.2% of garment workers suffer from anaemia and 15.7% are underweight. About two-thirds of those who participated in the study were food insecure and 8% were severely food insecure. With these women are in a child bearing age, this finding is worrisome for the future of their children.

Recommendations:

Women in public decision-making and leadership position

- Create a state funding policy allocate out of the national budget to finance to political party providing capacity development for political roles and elections to female candidates.
- Set up Women Parliamentarians Caucus in National Assembly to create space towards stronger movement for political, cultural and structural change to advance the enjoyment of women's rights.
- Government ensures the structural barriers are addressed to women's representation in the appointed and elected roles at all levels, and in the public sector, including unequal responsibilities for unpaid care and gendered perceptions of leadership.



Labor Rights and Protection

- Government ensure that its country strategy and related policy dialogues, programming and resourcing reflect both the significance rural-urban migration and its gendered dimensions, particularly the vulnerability of women to exploitation and violence
- Government ensure appropriated measure to push employers for fair labor wages, workers' rights, and work conditions by providing a minimum livable wage of U.S. \$177 a month to cover their basic needs.



Violence against Women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

- Urgent call for concerted action by all stakeholders to raise awareness to prevent and address sexual violence crimes at the household and community level, with specific actions aimed at changing negative and harmful behaviors of men, young men and male youth.
- Government strengthens its focus on advancing gender equality in Cambodia, including by considering gender disparity and its implications as a routine part of policy and programming.
- Sensitize the society as a whole to recognize the role of LGBT in the society.
- Develop appropriate policies and legal framework to protect LGBT from violence and discrimination.



Health and HIV

- Ensure policy and legal frameworks, particularly the Law on Prevention and Control of HIV and Law on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking, are implemented to protect the rights of and prevent stigma and discrimination against people with HIV and key affected populations
- Increase funding from the Government of Cambodia for the national HIV response and other areas as required.



Health and HIV

In 2005 Cambodia adopted the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims. However, research in 2014 showed there is a big gap between legislation and practice in Cambodia and 1 in 5 women continue to experience physical, sexual or emotional abuse from their spouse. Despite robust laws, the legal system, particularly at the local level, has not been sufficient to prevent violence or protect women. When violence is reported, local authorities – who often have little understanding of relevant laws – frequently, encourage victims to stay with their partner and undergo informal conflict resolutions processes rather than formal legal proceedings. Marital abuse is not just limited to physical violence. Women also face emotional abuse and forced limitations on personal freedoms by their husbands or intimate partners.

Lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual (LGBT) people in Cambodia face high levels of gender-based stigma, discrimination, social exclusion and violence in Cambodia. There are no laws and policy frameworks prohibiting homosexuality to protect the basic human rights of LGBT people in Cambodia. Only 6% of transgender respondents in a 2013 study reported higher than secondary schooling. 30% of the 149 lesbian, gay and transgender people survey in the study said that their family had discouraged them from attending school. Negative perceptions of LGBT people are often fuelled by discriminatory media coverage. Local Cambodian media is considered by most LGBT activists to be overwhelmingly negative in media stories on LGBT, using discriminatory words and broad generalisations.

Violence against Women, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

Cambodia has made significant gains in reducing maternal mortality overall, but rates remain high for poorest and most vulnerable, revealing persistent inequalities within the health care system. 31% of pregnant women in the wealthiest quintile make the recommended minimum of four antenatal visits compared to only 3% of pregnant women in the poorest households.

Cambodia has achieved a significant reduction in new HIV infections, with prevalence falling from around 2% in the late 1990s to 0.7% in 2013. Despite these gains, there are still around 70,000 people living with HIV and more than half are women. Low-risk females make up the highest number of new infections in Cambodia, and this is largely because their partners are clients of sex workers. These women face stigma and discrimination, particularly in health care settings. Of key and immediate concern is that external funding for HIV is expected to drop significantly in the coming years. As most of the national AIDS response is funded by donors, this could have devastating impacts on women living with HIV, sex workers and other at-risk groups.