

Gender Mainstreaming in Cambodia: Towards a Gender Equal Society?

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1. Introduction

“The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving political, social, economic, cultural and environmental security among all peoples.

-Beijing platform for action, 1995, Action for Equality, Development and Peace, The United Nation Fourth World Conference on Women

Institutionalizing the interests of women in all areas and sectors of policy at all levels has become a world-wide concern and gender mainstreaming has emerged as an

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effective strategy for addressing this issue.² Mainstreaming gender perspective is a policy process to empowerment of women that enables women to become a driving force to bring the sustainable development. In the process, empowerment of women, as a process of gender mainstreaming, is recognized as one of the most important factors for the suitable development of a country.

The importance of mainstreaming gender into the development context has been recognized in a number of international laws and policy platforms. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979 at the United Nations General Assembly, is the first and profound foundation to provide the full protection of women's rights in every aspect of their lives. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing, as quoted above, is also a policy foundation in realizing gender equality. BPfA is one of the key policy frameworks to bring gender mainstreaming as one of the key concept to realize gender equality³. The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (2000) also puts an emphasis on the gender equality as one of the goals. All those internationally agreed documents stipulate the importance of gender mainstreaming as a inevitable process for the poverty reduction. Gender Mainstreaming has become a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality.⁴

This small article attempts to provide an overview of the process of gender mainstreaming in Cambodia by highlighting the gender gaps in several key aspects in the development and a number of legislation and policies to tackle the gaps for the effective and sustainable development with social justice.

² Shirin M. Rai, "Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women: mainstreaming gender, democratizing the state?" Edited by Shurn M. Rai, published for and on behalf of the United Nations, Manchester University press, 2003

³ Three main concepts were introduced at the Beijing conference; gender, empowerment and gender mainstreaming. The paradigm shifts from "equality, development and peace" to "gender, empowerment and gender mainstreaming" was a corner stone to realize gender equality.

⁴ Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), see; <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>

2. Gender mainstreaming?

The concept of gender mainstreaming appeared for the first time in international areas after the United Nations Third World conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985 where role of women in the development were discussed. The Platform for action adopted at the Fourth World conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 then calls for the promotion of gender mainstreaming by stating that “governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming gender perspective in all policies and programmes, so that, before decisions are taken an analysis made of the effects on women and men respectively”.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 1997 defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows: ⁵

"Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality."

The Council of Europe also defines gender mainstreaming as follows;⁶

Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making. Gender mainstreaming cannot replace specific policies which aim to redress situations resulting from gender inequality. Specific gender equality policies and gender

⁵ See, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/gender/newsite2002/about/defin.htm>

⁶ See, http://www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Equality/02._Gender_mainstreaming/

mainstreaming are dual and complementary strategies and must go hand in hand to reach the goal of gender equality.

The Council of Europe focuses on four areas to mainstream gender in the field of employment; Active labor market policies, pay and career policies, reconciliation policies, and flexicurity policies.⁷

The importance of gender mainstreaming was recognized at the Beijing conference in 1995 when three main concepts of “gender, empowerment and gender mainstreaming” were agreed upon as keys for the sustainable development to realize a gender equal society as in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). The BPfA confirmed the importance of gender mainstreaming as a foundation for good governance as follows:

“...the social dimension of development should be emphasized. Accelerated economic growth, although necessary for social development, does not by itself improve the quality of life of the population. In some cases, conditions can arise which can aggravate social inequality and marginalization. In some cases, conditions can arise which can aggravate social inequality and marginalization. Hence, it is indispensable to search for new alternatives that ensure that all members of society benefit from economic growth based on a holistic approach to all aspects of development: growth, equality between women and men, social justice, conservation and protection of the environment, sustainability, solidarity, participation, peace and respect for human rights.”⁸

3. The International framework for gender mainstreaming

The first World Conference on Women (FWCW) was held in 1975 in the Mexico City with the theme “Equality, development and peace”, and this was also the beginning of “Women’s development decade”. The decade, world-wide, was the period that the improvement of the women’s situation was set as a goal.

3.1. The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

⁷⁷ European Commission, Manual for gender mainstreaming of employment policies, 2007

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/docs/2007/manual_gend_mainstr_en.pdf

⁸ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#statement>

Against Women (CEDAW)

With a number of global movements and activities during the women's decade, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 when equality between women and men in every aspect of daily lives was recognized as an important policy priority regardless of the level of the development of a country. In its preamble, the Convention explicitly acknowledges that for the development of a country a full participation of women is inevitable as follows;

*“ Recalling that discrimination against women violates the principles of equality of rights and respect for human dignity, is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men, in the political, social, economic and cultural life of their countries, hampers the growth of the prosperity of society and the family and makes more difficult the full development of the potentialities of women in the service of their countries and of humanity”*⁹

The Convention provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in, political and public life -- including the right to vote and to stand for election -- as well as education, health and employment. States parties agree to take all appropriate measures, including legislation and temporary special measures, so that women can enjoy all their human rights and fundamental freedoms.¹⁰

Cambodia ratified the CEDAW in 1982 without reservations, demonstrating the commitment to realize a gender equal society.¹¹ The state report to UN CEDAW committee is being prepared by the government and is soon sent to the UN.

3.2. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

⁹ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm#intro>

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>

¹¹ Cambodia is currently serving as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women (2008-2011).

The Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) held in Beijing, China, in 1995, adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). BPfA is a an agenda for women's empowerment. It aims at accelerating the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and at removing all the obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision making.¹²

Cambodia is also a signatory to the BPfA demonstrating the strong commitment to taking necessary measures to the critical areas of concern, including the increasing burden of poverty on women; unequal access to education and training, and to health care; violence against women; inequalities in decision-making at all levels; and the persistence of negative gender stereotypes.

3.3. The Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were set and agreed upon at the Millennium summit in 2000. MDGs sets an ambitious agenda for improving lives of the people by reducing the poverty. Goal 3 of MDGs set the goal to promote gender equality and empowerment of women as follows;¹³

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Cambodia is one of the few countries in the world to have developed country specific targets, including specific targets for the achievement of Gender Equality relating to reducing incidence of violence against women, and enhancing women's literacy.

The Royal Government of Cambodia has shown the strong commitment to realizing a

¹² Mission statement, the Beijing Platform for Action, see Chapter 1, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/Beijing%20full%20report%20E.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.mdgmonitor.org/goal3.cfm>

gender equal society through mainstreaming gender into all the policies and programs by its endorsement of international declarations and conventions.

4. The situation of women in Cambodia

4.1. Overview

The Cambodian constitution of 1993 stipulates the equality between women and men and Cambodia is also a signatory to a number of international conventions which obliges Cambodia to ensure that women's rights shall be protected at an internationally guaranteed standard. Although a steady progress has been made to improve the women's situation, the official statistics shows that women in Cambodia are not enjoying the equal rights as men in every respect of their lives. According to the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)¹⁴, of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which reflects women's political and economic participation and their role in decision-making, Cambodia ranks at 93 out of 108 countries world-wide. The global ranks Cambodia to 104th out of 134 countries. Those figures also show that women in Cambodia is, at an international level, living at a lower status than that of men.

Despite the progress made to improve the education for girls at all the levels of education, the enrolment rate to the school of male is higher than that of female, particularly at secondary and tertiary levels. That inequality in education results in women's lower rate to the employment opportunities and low representation of women in decision making process. Due to the long lasting civil wars, a huge gap in male and female adult literacy rates, especially in rural areas still exists. Rural women with little education find it extremely difficult to find an employment opportunity, which is also a factor to push young girls to migrate to the cities seeking for the employment opportunities to support poor parents in rural areas.

Women's participation to decision making process has been dramatically improved in recent years with the strong initiatives by the political leaders. Although women are still

¹⁴ The GEM tracks shares of seats in parliament, numbers of female legislators, senior officials and managers; numbers of professional and technical workers, and gender disparities in earned income.

under-represented in the civil service at both middle and high levels, women's representation in elected bodies such as the National Assembly and the Commune Councils has shown considerable improvement.

4.2. Gender roles of women in Cambodian society

Cambodia has, in recent years, experienced the social change in terms political stability with a rapid economic growth, traditional gender stereotypes still persist and it pressures women to remain as subordinate to men in every aspect of their daily lives. Women are educated, at both school and at home, to be gentle and subordinate to men, with “Code of women”, traditional teachings that deprives freedom of women. Cambodian society, where 80% of the total population lives in rural arrears, still places women to stay in the domestic and private sphere.

Women are, in general, obliged to take care of the household since an early childhood: helping mother to take care of house work while their male siblings are enjoying freedom, accepting the parents' decision to get married, supporting the husband to work outside and taking care of children. The teachings in the “Code of women” informing girls they shall be patient to their future husband also prevent them from questioning their legal rights. Approximately 25% of adult women report that they have ever suffered from domestic violence also show that women are educated to be patient to the violence by their husband.

Social values that women stay in a private sphere are deeply rooted in the rural areas which impede women to get independent and seek for her freedom since her childhood. Such an traditional value that women shall be obedient to her parents and eventually to her husband also limit the ability of women to fully participate in the society.

4.3. Women in Education

As in the “Education for all” policy and in the Cambodian millennium development goals, Cambodian government led by the ministry of education, youth and sports has

strived to achieve the universal education for all children by 2015. School enrolment rate to the primary school is more than 95% for both girls and boys. A perception change has been gradually made among parents that education is important for both male and female children.

A considerable progress has been made in improving literacy among children although illiteracy rate among adult women is still higher than that of men, especially in rural areas. 23% of women aged 15-24 are reported to be illiterate against 16% of men in the same age group; 40% of women aged between 25 and 44 are illiterate compared with 25% of men. However, with the higher level education, less female participation still prevails. The female share of school enrolment declines at each level of education from 47% at primary level to 35% in higher education. School-dropout rate among female students is higher than that of boys, and a number of reasons explain this phenomena. In rural areas, when the poverty pressures the family economy, there is still a traditional value that education is more important for boys than girls. Although parents may be well aware of the importance of education for their children, girls are the first ones to silently drop out from school, even when parents may not force them to do so. Traditional value that girls are also internalized obliges them to make such a decision.

4.4. Women and Health

Despite a steady progress to improve the health of women in recent year, the official statistics show that women's access to health is still limited and much remains to be done to improve the health condition of women. Female life expectancy is estimated to 64 years old (male expectancy is 58), demonstrating the weakest health indicator in the region.

The total fertility rate has been dramatically reduced, from 4.0 in 2000 to 3.4 in 2005.¹⁵ However, fertility levels vary dramatically with geographic location, education level and income quintiles. One of the serious concerns in terms of women's health is that the high maternity mortality rate (MMR). Despite all the efforts being made to provide necessary services for pregnant women, the MMR remains at a high rate with 472

¹⁵ Cambodia Health and Demographic Survey 2000 and 2005,

deaths per 10,000 live births. There are a number of factors which prevent the MMR to decline. One of the main factors is the inadequacy of obstetric services in rural areas where 80% of the total population lives. It is reported that only 43.8% of births are assisted by a health professional but their skills are basic and often cannot respond to the complications in the delivery. A lack of decent health facilities in rural areas also negatively contribute to the high MMR and only 21.5% of births take place in a health facility. Those factors are combined and when a complication occurs at the delivery in rural areas, it is often too late to rescue both mother and a child. Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has declined from 95 per 1000 live births (2000) to 66 per 1000 live births (2005).

HIV/AIDS has been also a crucial matter in Cambodia and it is reported that in 2006, 52% of people living with HIV were female, an increase from 38% in 1997. To tackle the issue, the government, the non-governmental organizations and development partners took various measures; from the awareness raising for the prevention of transmission to the elimination of the discrimination against the people living with HIV/AIDS.

4.5. Women in Decision-Making

With a high commitment of the senior leadership in the political parties, an increasing number of women have been elected to the National Assembly and Commune Councils. However, women still remain greatly under-represented in all three branches of the state: in the executive branch, legislative branch and the judiciary.

The 2008 National Elections saw an increase in women's representation in the National Assembly where they now constitute 21% of total representatives. There has been a progressive increase from the 5% female representation in 1993, bringing the level in Cambodia to above the regional average of 16.9%. In addition, women representatives chair 3 of the 9 commissions in the national assembly. One of the key for this progress was that the National Election Committee has integrated gender considerations into its regulations and procedure manuals.

4.6. Women and Economy

The female labour force participation rate is 71% of all women 15 year of age and older is in the workforce,¹⁶ which makes it amongst the highest in the region. However, the majority of female workers are self-employed or are unpaid family workers in the informal sector primarily in small-holder farming and small family enterprise. This is of particular concern as a great deal of the work in informal sector is contributing very little to economic growth or poverty reduction.¹⁷

Since 1998 there has been a shift from agriculture to other occupations in industry or services with new employment opportunities in the garment industry. The garment industry has become a particularly important job opportunity for young women, especially women in rural areas where little opportunity is available. However, the global economic crisis in 2008 has a huge impact over working women in the garment industry and it is reported that more than sixty thousand women have been forced to leave the job.¹⁸

Lack of decent job opportunity in rural areas also pressures a lot of women to migrate to the cities. Some migrate to work at the garment factories, while others migrate to other countries seeking for the better-paid employment despite the risk of trafficking at the destination. An alarming concern in recent year towards the safety of migrant women in foreign countries has been raised by both the government and the civil society, and to tackle the issue the labor migration policy has been drafted to protect migrant workers.¹⁹

¹⁶ Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey (2004)

¹⁷ Ministry of Women's Affairs, Cambodia, A Fair Share for Women, 2008

¹⁸ "In Cambodia, women and children hit hardest by Economic Crisis", UNDP <http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2009/april/in-cambodia-women-and-children-hit-hardest-by-economic-crisis.en>

¹⁹ The labour migration policy for Cambodia will cover the following key components:

- I. Promoting good governance on and regulation of international labour migration based on consultative process with social partners and civil society (Governance and regulation of migration);
- II. Providing effective protection, empowerment and services to migrant workers (Protecting migrant workers).
- III. Mobilizing development contributions of labour migration in terms of remittances,

Because of the traditional gender stereotypes regarding the appropriate job for women, there is in general a high level of gender-based occupational segregation with men being significantly better remunerated than women. The gap between women and men in obtaining the higher education also results in such a disparity in job opportunity and remuneration.

4.7. Violence Against Women

As in other countries, violence against women, such as domestic violence, rape and trafficking for sexual exploitation, has been a serious social problem in Cambodia and continues to violate the basic human rights of women and pressure the freedom of women. Violence against women is a serious problem in Cambodia with as many as 40% of women affected by domestic violence in some parts of the country.²⁰ Combined with the traditional gender roles of women to remain silent towards the violence by the husband, or to blame women for provoking men to commit sexual violence against them, also negatively contribute to occurrence of the violence against women.

An alarming issue surrounding violence against women is a rape by a minor against a much younger girl. The newspapers carry the article of rape by a minor almost every day. The non-governmental organization all report that the reported case of rape has been increasing, , however, given the nature of under-reporting of the case, the real magnitude of the problem is not yet clear.²¹

An emerging violence against women is sexual harassment in the work place. Rapid economic growth in recent years has allowed a lot of women to enter the employment, leaving them to face the risk of sexual harassment. In Cambodia, the concept of sexual harassment has been yet unknown to most of workers, including the management level

reintegration of returning migrant workers, and linking with transnational communities (Migration and development). See, http://www2.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/events/lang--en/docName--WCMS_118312/index.htm

²⁰ Cambodian Women's Crisis Center, see <http://www.cwcc.org.kh/>

²¹ Ministry of Women's Affairs, A Fair Share for Women, 2008

in both the government institutions and in the private sector, which makes female workers vulnerable to it.

Violence against women must be viewed in the context of a wider culture of violence and impunity in which violence is an accepted way of resolving conflicts and perpetrators are rarely punished.²²

5. Gender mainstreaming framework in Cambodia

5.1. The domestic laws

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia, adopted in 1993, stipulates that ‘every Cambodian citizen shall be equal before the law, enjoying the same rights and freedom and fulfilling the same obligations regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religious belief, political tendency, birth origin, social status, wealth or other status’. A number of other provisions in the Constitution also stipulate the equality between women and men in the employment, in joining political activities and in social life. Art. 36 of the constitution also guarantees women’s rights to work, and women are entitled to have freedom in choosing an occupation according to their ability to receive equal pay for equal work.²³ Art. 45 prohibits the exploitation of women in employment²⁴ and Art. 46 outlaws any discrimination against women because of pregnancy.²⁵

²² Ministry of Women’s Affairs, A Fair Share for Women, 2008

²³ Article 36 states, “Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to choose any employment according to their ability and to the needs of the society.

Khmer citizen of either sex shall receive equal pay for equal work.

The work by housewives in the home shall have the same value as what they can receive when working outside the home. Every Khmer citizens shall have the right to obtain social security and other social benefits as determined by law. Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to form and to be members of trade unions. The organization and conduct of trade unions shall be determined by law.”

²⁴ Art. 45 states, “All forms of discrimination against woman shall be abolished.

The exploitation of women in employment shall be prohibited.”

²⁵ Art. 46 states, “The commerce of human beings, exploitation by prostitution and obscenity which affect the reputation of women shall be prohibited. A woman shall not lose her job because of

Legal framework to provide the protection of the rights of women has been also enhanced, with the Labor law (1997) which has a special chapter for the rights of women in the employment.²⁶ To tackle the problems of violence against women, the law on the prevention of domestic violence and protection of victims was adopted in 2005 and the law on the suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation was adopted in 2008.

5.2. The royal government policy: “Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency” Phase II

In 2004, the royal government of Cambodia adopted its political platform with the title “Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency” which recognizes gender equality as a key component of the strategy and specifically states the importance of fostering the environment for the gender equality. The current government established after the universal election in 2008 adopted “Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase 2” which recognizes women as “the backbone of Cambodian economy and society”.

The Strategy reaffirms the importance of gender mainstreaming through the implementation of the gender policy. The strategy also states that women are equally entitled to access to primary and reproductive health care, to increase the female enrolment of girls in formal education through increased scholarship, to provide training and skills for women, to access to economic resources and activities, and to promote women in decision making positions at all levels of the governance. It also ensures the implementation of the law on the prevention of domestic violence and protection of victims (2005) and the law on the suppression of human trafficking and sexual exploitation (2008) by cooperating with relevant institutions and development partners so that women are ensured to have a legal right to the protection against domestic violence and trafficking.

pregnancy. Women shall have the right to take maternity leave with full pay and with no loss of seniority or other social benefits. The State and society shall provide opportunities to women, especially to those living in rural areas without adequate social support, so they can get employment, medical care, and send their children to school, and to have decent living conditions.”

²⁶ Chapter 8 of the labor law exclusively states about the rights of female workers and the protection of children who are employed.

5.3. The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP)

The National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006-2010 provides the framework for implementing the Rectangular Strategy and achieving the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals (CMDGs). The NSDP is the overall framework for the government expenditures and assistance from the various development partners thereby it is a key strategy for mainstreaming gender into the sector policy in order to achieve the commitment promised in the “Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency Phase 2”. The NSDP reaffirms the need to mainstream gender equality “across the whole spectrum of Cambodian life, including in all levels of government and in budgeting processes”. After the establishment of the current government in 2008, it has been preparing the NSDP-extension (2009-2013) which is scheduled to be adopted in April 2010. It is expected that gender equity is set as one of the priority areas, with the specific goals and objectives.

5.4. The Governance Action Plan

The Government views good governance as an essential prerequisite to sustainable socio-economic development and social justice.²⁷ The Governance Action Plan identifies two categories of governance reform²⁸ where actions are likely to be critical to Cambodia’s development over the near and medium term and the first category involves crosscutting areas²⁹ including gender equity – an area critical to the Government’s objectives of poverty alleviation and social justice.

²⁷ Royal Government of Cambodia, The Governance Action Plan

²⁸ The first category is the cross-cutting issues and the second category includes two political policy issues; demobilization of the armed forces and natural resource management, including land, forestry and fisheries management.

²⁹ Five cross-cutting areas involves : (1) judicial and legal reform – through which basic rules of fairness and predictability are established; (2) public finance – which provides the financial underpinnings through which all government activities must take place; (3) public administration – which determines the effectiveness of government and its employees in carrying out public programs; (4) anticorruption – a cross-cutting area of actions that establish the framework of behavioral rules that set standards of probity in economic, social and political life; (5) gender equity – an area critical to the Government’s objectives of poverty alleviation and social justice.

5.5. Strategic Framework for Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D)

In 2005 the government adopted the Strategic Framework on Decentralization and Deconcentration Reforms.³⁰

This Strategic Framework for Decentralization and De-concentration Reforms is a policy statement of how the Royal Government intends to implement its vision of the sub-national governance system outlined in Strategic Framework Document, which outlines: (i) the objectives and priorities of the D&D Strategy; (ii) the scope of needed reforms to achieve the D&D objectives and priorities; and (iii) the structural changes in the existing governance system required to achieve the D&D objectives and priorities.³¹ The Strategic Framework also reaffirms the importance of gender mainstreaming in its process and clarify that the reform will introduce systems and procedures as ensure that people, especially women, vulnerable groups and indigenous minorities can participate in decision-making at provincial/ municipal, district/khan and commune/sangkat levels.³² The Strategy also sets basic policies for the Organic Law on the

³⁰ Basic principle for the reform of the sub-national governance system shall aim to: (i) consolidate and deepen the process of democratization at the grass roots, and (ii) promote local development and poverty reduction. The reform shall be guided by the following principles: Democratic Representation: Strengthen local councils which are democratically elected (either directly or indirectly) and expand their powers, responsibilities and resources. Popular Participation: Introduce systems and procedures for people's participation in decision-making at all levels of the sub-national governance system. Public Sector Accountability: Strengthen the accountability of public administration at all levels and facilitate people's oversight of the administrative and financial performance. Effectiveness: Bring providers of services closer to the users and allow users to participate in the planning and monitoring of public services delivery in order to make availability of public services responsive to local needs and priorities. Efficiency: Improve the administrative system, coordination, and management capacity of the sub-national governance system to improve quality and access to public services at all levels. Poverty Focus: Enhance the capacity of integrated territorial authorities at all levels to better target public expenditures to eradicate poverty by focusing on vulnerable groups and to achieve Cambodia's Millennium Development Goals. See, <http://www.ncdd.gov.kh/dnd-basic-principles-menu>

³¹ The National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development, See, <http://www.ncdd.gov.kh/index.php>

³² The Royal government of Cambodia, the Strategic Framework on Decentralization and

Administration and Management of the Capital, Province, Municipality, District and Khan (also known as the Organic Law).

5.6. The Neary Rattanak 3 – Five Year Strategic Plan of Ministry of Women's Affairs (2009-2013)

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), established in 1997, is the leading national mechanism to promote and protect the rights of women and their families. The current five Year Strategy Neary Rattanak 3 (2009-2013) consists of Key Strategic Areas and a Gender Mainstreaming Programme.

Strategic areas include:

- Women's Economic Empowerment;
- Promoting Women in Governance and Decision-making;
- Education of Women and Girls, including a programme on Social and Behavioural change;
- Combating Violence against Women;
- Health of Women and girls

A cross-cutting Gender Mainstreaming Programme focuses on national policy, sector policies, including formulation and monitoring of Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) and the government reform programmes: Public Administrative Reform; Legal and Judicial Reform; Public Financial Management Reform; and Decentralization Reform.

6. Institutional framework for gender equality in Cambodia

6.1. The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA)

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), established in 1997, is the leading institution as a National Women's Machinery in Cambodia and it has been mandated to promote and protect the rights of women and their families. Its mission is also to ensure that all policies and programs of the government institutions become gender responsive.

This includes work to increase the number of women in decision making levels, to promote economic empowerment of women, to support Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW) in promoting the implementation of the CEDAW, and legal protection of women through the development and enforcement of laws.³³

MoWA is also obliged to mainstream gender into the sector policies by supporting line ministries in developing and implementing their respective gender responsive policies and strategies. It also has a responsibility to supporting the development of legislation necessary for the legal protection of women and monitoring the enforcement of them. Promoting women's participation in decision-making at all levels of the governance is also a crucial task of MoWA as well as to contribute to the enhancement of women in economics through their empowerment.

6.2. The Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW)

In 2001, the National Women's Machinery the Cambodian National Council for Women (CNCW) was established. The CNCW is the national inter-ministerial council made up secretaries of state of line ministries and relevant institutions, who have responsibilities to support the royal government by facilitating, following up and evaluating the implementation of national laws and other regulations in relation to the promotion of women's status and welfare of women in Cambodia. In addition, the CNCW has special responsibility for co-ordinating the reporting on the implementation of the CEDAW and has conducted extensive training on this topic.

6.3. The Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G)

Within the framework of the Government-Donor Consultative Committee (GDCC) Technical Working Groups (TWG) have been established for most key sectors and also on cross-cutting issues including gender, partnership and harmonization, planning for poverty reduction, and decentralization and deconcentration.³⁴ The TWGs were

³³ The Neary Rattanak 3 – Five Year Strategic Plan of Ministry of Women's Affairs (2009-2013), page 15

³⁴ The GDCC-TWG mechanism is intended to attain the following objectives:

(i) Strengthen RGC's ownership and leadership of a partnership-based development process;

established as part of the government and donor commitment to the Paris Declaration and to implement the Harmonisation and Results Action Plan with the overall aim of improving aid effectiveness and strengthening government ownership and leadership of the development agenda. In line with the shift away from donor support to individual programs and projects towards providing Budget Support/Sector Program Support.

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- (ii) Promote alignment of development partners' support with national development priorities, policies and strategies identified in the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) and complementary sector and reform processes;
 - (iii) Harmonise DP procedures, seek to reduce the transactions costs of aid delivery, and strengthen RGC systems so that external resources can be channelled to priority RGC programmes through RGC systems;
 - (iv) Provide a forum through which the programming of all resources – domestic and external – can be discussed in a transparent manner so that overlap can be minimised and the financing of priority activities can be negotiated in a comprehensive and coordinated manner using appropriate aid modalities;
 - (v) Foster development of programme-based approaches and/or sector-wide approaches (SWAPs), moving away from project-based assistance toward programmatic assistance and, ultimately, to budget support;
 - (vi) Promote partnership and mutual accountability in the development and implementation of RGC's national and sectoral policies and strategies, including through the use of Joint Monitoring Indicators (JMIs) and the RGC Action Plan on Harmonisation, Alignment and Results (H-A-R);
 - (vii) Provide an opportunity to objectively monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of all resources – including through the use of joint analytical work and joint reviews - so that future strategy and resource use can be informed accordingly;
 - (viii) Identify and agree an appropriate approach to capacity development that promotes ownership in the use of technical assistance and provides for an objective means of assessing progress in strengthening RGC capacity;
 - (ix) By locating the GDCC at the centre of the TWG structure, to allow for effective monitoring of the overall coordination mechanism, which, in turn, is intended to promote lesson learning, identification of good practices and the overall implementation of the RGC aid effectiveness agenda. For details, see, The Royal government of Cambodia, The Government-Donor Coordination Committee (GDCC) and Technical Working Groups (TWGs) in Cambodia, A review, 2006.

In 2004, a Technical Working Group on Gender (TWG-G) was established as one of now 19 joint government–donor Technical Working Groups. The TWG-G is chaired by the Minister of Women’s Affairs with United Nations Development Program and Japan International Cooperation Agency as co-donor facilitators. Civil society organizations also participate in the TWG-G. Gender Focal Points are appointed in the other Technical Working Groups. The joint Monitoring Indicators (JMI) are identified annually by the TWGs and endorsed by the GDCC. The JMI identified by the TWG-G for 2009 is:

“Adopt laws and sub-decrees and relevant legal documents, and implement plans against all forms of violence and exploitation against women and children, according to international standards.”

6.4. Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs)

In 2005, with the strong advocacy and encouragement from the MoWA and the TWG-G, a number of Gender Mainstreaming Action Groups (GMAGs) were established in line ministries, replacing the previous system of gender focal points. GMAGs are chaired at Secretary of State level and should include male and female officials from every department. The priority task of the GMAGs is to prepare Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs) to provide a mechanism for implementation and monitoring of gender equality policy commitments made by the government in a given sector, and to harmonize the inputs of different stakeholders.

The development of GMAPs is one of the three gender core indicators for progress in mainstreaming gender equality in the NSDP 2006-2010 where it is stated that all line ministries/institutions will have formulated their GMAPs, and 15 ministries will be implementing their GMAPs by 2010. This goal has already been met.

7. Conclusion

Despite the progress made in recent years to promote the status of women in Cambodia, much more work need to be done to realize a gender equal society, as in the internationally made commitment such as CEDAW by the government. Improving the situation of women and children is central to the Government’s strategy to alleviate

poverty.³⁵ In addition, achieving good governance will require the active participation and commitment of all segments of the society, enhanced information sharing, accountability, transparency, equality, inclusiveness, and the rule of law.³⁶

Below are some of the critical issues to be tackled in realizing a gender equal society within the framework set by the government in mainstreaming gender.

- Full implementation of the Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs)

The Gender Mainstreaming Action Plans (GMAPs), a key policy document to mainstream gender in the sector policy, have been already adopted by the majority of line Ministries.³⁷ This shows the high commitment by the ministries to mainstream gender into their program and activities, also demonstrating the achievement by MOWA in advocating other ministries to adopt one. However, the huge challenge that each ministry has faced is to implement their GMAPs. The main reason of why each ministry cannot fully implement their GMAS is a lack of financial resources. Although much progress has been made in gender budgeting, line ministry needs more understanding in requesting the necessary budget for the implementation of their GMAPs.

Some ministries such as the Ministry of agriculture, forestry and fisheries and Ministry of education, youth and sports have successfully implemented some activities in their respective GMAPs with support from development partners in addition to the national budget. However, most ministries still struggle to getting the budget from the Ministry of economy and finance due to a lack of technical skills in doing so. Therefore, further work is necessary to fully implement their GMAPs by mobilizing the resource so that gender considerations in sector policy can be taken into consideration to achieve the national goal in the government strategy and NSDP.

³⁵ The royal government of Cambodia, The Governance Action Plan

³⁶ Position paper, The Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board and the Council for the development of Cambodia, see

http://www.cdc-crdb.gov.kh/cdc/7cg_meeting/position_paper_eng2004/7cg_04_1.htm

³⁷ As of December 2009, 16 ministries have adopted GMAP and six ministries have already drafted one and in the process for the approval by the senior leadership of their respective ministry.

- Strengthening the linkage between TWG-Gender and other TWGs

The appointment of gender-focal person in each TWGs in 2008 was a first step to establish a coordination mechanism for information sharing on gender-related programs/projects and further cooperation among TWGs. However, to date, little efforts were made to actually foster the collaboration among gender-focal persons.

- Gender mainstreaming in D&D process

A number of striking progresses have been made to mainstream gender into the D& D process. The establishment of women and children committee under the Organic law also provides an effective mechanism to mainstream gender into the policies and plans at the sub-national level. The D&D reform has been rapidly progressing and efforts have been made by concerned ministry, led by MOWA in terms of mainstreaming gender in the process. Further support is essential to ensure that gender equality considerations are fully included in all stages of D&D reform.